Guideline: E-Professionalism & Participation in Social Media

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this guideline is to assist NESA BN Programs students, faculty, and program staff in maintaining professionalism when participating in social media activities.

DEFINITIONS:

Social Media - websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

"**E-Professionalism** is defined as the attitudes and behaviors that reflect traditional professionalism paradigms but are manifested through digital media" (Kaczmarczyk et al., 2013). E-Professionalism incorporates the use of social media such as websites, applications, and networking platforms that enable users to create and share content, or to participate in social networking. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, email, etc., are commonly used. Although the intent of social media use is to be positive, there have been unintended negative consequences. As regulated health professionals, nurses need to understand their professional and ethical obligation to protect the public and maintain conduct that reflects trustworthiness and integrity, including their online presence. (CRNA, 2021, p. 2).

BACKGROUND:

Social media is an innovative way to facilitate free flowing communication exchange between people, organizations, and communities. Opportunities to engage in social media may present in a myriad of forms such as blogs, Twitter, YouTube, social networking sites (e.g. Facebook), picture sharing, email, instant messaging, etc.

Nurses are increasingly using various forms of social media - both in their professional and personal lives. It is important, however, to recognize that despite the many benefits of social media, there are also inherent risks regarding its potential effect on personal and professional relationships, patient privacy and confidentiality, legal obligations, and professional conduct. Some of the potential risks of social media result from:
- o   The extensive scope of information distribution
- o   The permanence of posted information

- The difficulty of effectively concealing confidential information
- The potential for misinterpretation by the person(s) receiving information
- The possible damage to personal and/or professional reputations
- The potential for legal consequences associated with breeching privacy and confidentiality
- The potential to breach professional boundaries

Social media can be extremely valuable to those engaging in its use and nurses can use social media to enhance learning, communicate ideas, reflect on new or meaningful experiences, and share important information. "Nurses must be aware of social media's evolving culture, understand ever-changing technology, and have the skills and judgment to use it appropriately" (International Nurse Regulator Collaborative, 2014 as cited in CRNA, 2021, p. 2).

CRNA outlines the importance of maintaining e-professionalism and provides guidance when making informed decisions about the responsible use of social media in their document: Social Media and e-Professionalism for Nurses (March 2021).

GUIDELINE SCOPE:

This guideline applies to all NESA BN Programs instructors, faculty members, staff members and students enrolled at the Lethbridge College and University of Lethbridge campuses.

SPECIFICS OF THE GUIDELINE:

1. Self-reflection and professional behavior are important components of professional practice. As registered nurses or as students of the profession, it is necessary to demonstrate professionalism in all actions.

2. Students should make informed decisions when considering the use of any electronic form of communication. "The purpose [of CRNA's Social Media and E-Professionalism Guideline for Nurses] is to provide guidelines that support critical thinking and decision-making in the responsible use of social media." (CNRA, March 2021, pp 2-11).
   Guideline 1: Nurses understand their professional and ethical obligation to protect the public and maintain conduct that reflects trustworthiness and that does not harm the integrity of a client, person, employer, another health professional, colleague, or organization including their online presence.?
   Guideline 2: Nurses follow relevant legislation, standards, policy, and employer requirement when using social media and other electronic forms of communication.
   Guideline 3: Nurses maintain professional boundaries in the use of electronic communication and social media.
   Guideline 4: Nurses maintain professionalism when using social media.
   Guideline 5: Nurses follow employer requirement regarding the use of social media in their practice setting.

Guideline 6: Nurses ensure any posts and comments they make regarding health information is evidence-based.

Guidelines 7: Nurses protect the privacy and confidentiality of their clients when using social media and electronic communication.

Guideline 8: Nurses provide evidence-informed health information to clients through professional social media accounts or an employer approved platform and only to those with whom they have a nurse-client therapeutic relationship.

Guideline 9: Nurses are responsible to use their professional judgement with respect to their online presence and avoid posts or comments that could be considered negative, disparaging, or demeaning.

Guideline 10: Nurses are competent in the use of social media and understand the risks of its use.

Additionally, students should critically reflect on and apply CRNA's *Six (6) "P's" Principles of Social Media E-Professionalism* before posting on social media. (CRNA, 2021, p 11):

- Professional: Act professionally at all times
- Positive: Keep posts positive
- Patient/person-free: Keep posts patient or person free
- Protect yourself: Protect your professionalism, your reputation and yourself
- Privacy: Keep your personal and professional life separate; respect privacy of others
- Pause before you post: Consider implications; avoid posting in haste or anger

3. Should you have any questions regarding the implication of social media participation, please consult with your instructor or program leadership at the appropriate institution.

APPENDIX:

None

RELATED POLICIES/ASSOCIATED GUIDELINES:

REFERENCES:
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Canadian Nurses Association. (2017). *Code of ethics for registered nurses.* Retrieved from

https://www.cna-aiic.ca/html/en/Code-of-Ethics-2017-Edition/files/assets/basic-html/page-1.html

College of Registered Nurses of Alberta (2021). *Social Media Guidelines and e-Professionalism – Guidelines for Nurses.* Retrieved from

https://nurses.ab.ca/protect-the-public/standards-for-rns-and-nps/guidelines/

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University of Lethbridge Social Media Guidelines (Dec. 21, 2021)

https://uleth.sharepoint.com/sites/Policy/Policies/Forms/AllItems.aspx?q=social%20media&id=%2Fsites%2FPolicy%2FPolicies%2FSocial%20Media%20Guidelines%5FApr%2028%5F2012%5FEditorial%20Revisions%20Dec%5F21%5F2021%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FPolicy%2FPolicies&parentview=7

Revised By/date:	Approved by/date:
Policy Review Committee: March 2015	Not Required: editorial and formatting
Policy Review Committee: April 2016	Not Required: no change
Policy Review Committee: March 2017	Not Required: no change
Policy Review Committee: December 2017	Not Required: editorial changes; link update
Policy Review Committee: January 2019	Not Required: editorial changes
Policy Review Committee: December 2019	Not Required: editorial changes
Policy Review Committee: January 2021	Not Required: added CARNA info
Policy Review Committee: April 2022	NESA Joint: May 2022