



Registered Nurses Association of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut
(RNANT/NU)

Position Statement – Social Media

RNANT/NU Position:

The RNANT/NU promotes the responsible use of social media by Registered Nurses (RNs) and Nurse Practitioners (NPs) in the Northwest Territories (NT) and Nunavut (NU).

Purpose:

The purpose of the position statement is to communicate RNANT/NU's regulatory expectations for RNs and NPs and the benefits and risks of using social media. In addition, the purpose is to provide information and recommendations to RNs and NPs, their employers, nursing students, and educators regarding the responsible use of social media tools both within and outside the workplace.

Background:

Social media describes the online and mobile tools that people use to share opinions, information and experiences, images and video or audio clips, and includes websites and applications used for social networking. Common sources of social media include, but are not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram, blogs (personal, professional, anonymous), discussion forums, and message boards (International Nurse Regulators Collaborative, 2014).

The use of social media has increased over the last several years. Recently, there has been a push to educate individuals about the use of social media both personally and professionally. In Canada, many institutions are developing policies surrounding the use of social media in the workplace; this practice should extend to the individual's use of social media outside of the workplace. Personal and professional worlds are rapidly blurring giving rise to potential risks to privacy, confidentiality, reputation, intellectual property, and public confidence. It is often the inappropriate use of social media outside of the workplace that finds the RN, NP, nursing student, and educator facing potentially serious consequences (College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia, 2012).

Benefits

Using social media allows for rapid, convenient, and efficient exchange of information. Social media promotes education, research, and evidence based practice by providing opportunities for health care professionals to network, collaborate, and disseminate knowledge. Social media provides a platform for nurses to engage in advocacy and promote the nursing profession.

Risks

RNs and NPs must be aware of the professional and legal risks associated with the inappropriate use of social media. Such risks include: confidentiality and privacy breaches, violation of professional boundaries, damage to professional integrity, defamation of character (nurse, client, and/or organization), public mistrust, and employment consequences. Violations may result in disciplinary action by RNANT/NU leading to loss or suspension of nursing license, and/or civil or criminal proceedings by individuals or organizations.

Accountability:

Inappropriate use of social media by RNs, NPs, nursing students, and educators could be considered an infringement of the NT Nursing Profession Act (2004), the NU Nursing Act (2004), *RNANT/NU Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners* (2014), the Canadian Nurses Association *Code of Ethics* (2008), and agency specific policies.



Accountable use of social media is a multidimensional responsibility. It begins with each nurse taking **personal** responsibility for their utilization of social media. It is important to consider the benefits and risks when posting socially as it may impact your **professional** role. It is imperative to consider how the use of social media could affect your professional role and reputation as a nurse as well as your colleagues. A breach of **employer policy** may result in disciplinary action and possible reporting to the **RNANT/NU**. The mandate of RNANT/NU is protection of the public. Through adherence to relevant **legislation** such as the *NT Nursing Profession Act (2004)*, the *NU Nursing Act (2004)*, the *NT Health Information Act (2014)*, and the *NU Consolidation of Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (2003)*, RNANT/NU has been authorized to establish bylaws, policies, and standards in order to self-regulate RNs and NPs in the NT and NU.

Responsibilities of RNs and NPs:

When participating in social media, think about the following:

- **Purpose** – Before you participate in social media, reflect on the intent and possible consequence of your online behavior.
- **Privacy** – Consider who can access and share your information. Understand, set and maintain privacy settings which can help limit access to your personal information. Do not share any client or workplace information on social media sites. It is your ethical responsibility to uphold client and workplace confidentiality and report any known breaches using the appropriate means.
- **Professional** – Consider, if someone posted **this** about you how would you feel? Maintain professional boundaries, professional character and conduct. Protect your integrity and the integrity of your nursing profession. Think before you identify yourself online as a RN, NP or nursing student as you may be asked for advice.
- **Permission** – Clients have the right to know what is being posted which pertains to them. Consider, have you obtained the client's permission to post? When sharing other's information, have you credited their work appropriately?
- **Permanent** – Posts to social media sites are usually permanent and cannot be deleted easily. Even though posts may be deleted from social media sites, information may still exist on other forums or search engines. Due to the ease of sharing information online, the author of a post does not have control over who can see and use information (Canadian Nurses Protective Society, 2012).

References

Canadian Nurses Protective Society. (2012). Social media. Retrieved from <http://www.cnps.ca/index.php?page=147>

College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia. (2012). Position statement: Social media. Retrieved from http://www.crnns.ca/documents/PositionStatement_SocialMedia.pdf

International Nurse Regulators Collaborative. (2014). Social media use: Common expectations for nurses. Retrieved from <http://www.cno.org/news/2014/046/new-social-media-guidelines/>

University of Alberta Health Sciences Council. (n.d.). Savvy student's guide to professional use of social media. Edmonton, Canada: Author.

Further Resources

Canadian Nurses Association. (2008). *Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses*. Ottawa, Canada: Author.

Government of the Northwest Territories. (2004). *Nursing Profession Act*. Retrieved from <http://www.justice.gov.nt.ca/Legislation/SearchLeg&Reg.shtml>

Government of the Northwest Territories. (2014). *Bill 4 – Health Information Act*. Retrieved from <http://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca>

Government of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. (2011). *Consolidation of Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Regulations*. Retrieved from <http://www.atipp.gov.nu.ca>

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Registered Nurses Association of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. (2014). *Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners*. Yellowknife, Canada: Author.

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