

# CHILDREN'S MINISTRY SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY TEMPLATE

## PURPOSE

**Ministry Name** understands that the world of technology keeps changing. Therefore, we are committed to ensuring that we embrace modern methods of communication and sharing the gospel. However, we also understand that some digital methods of communication require regulation so that they can be more effective. This policy provides guidelines for church staff, volunteers, and leaders when using social media tools on behalf of or in the role of **Ministry Name** or when **Ministry Name** engages or participates in social media dialogue. These policies are set in place to protect the children, families, volunteers, leaders, and church **Ministry Name** when engaging in digital discipleship. We ask all our staff, leaders, and volunteers to read and understand the social media policies listed below thoroughly and comply with these guidelines when serving with **ministry name**.

## APPLICABLE CONTEXTS

This policy applies to all online and mobile platforms for sharing content and information, whether hosted by **Ministry Name** or hosted by others. "Social media" refers to social networking services, short-message services, message boards, wikis, podcasts, image/video sharing sites and other methods for sharing real time information among users. Due to the ever-changing speed of social media, this policy applies to all new social media platforms, whether or not they are mentioned. All social media platforms are relevant and included.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Internet postings must respect copyright, privacy, fair use, financial disclosure, and other applicable laws.
- Claim, maintain and monitor your congregation's social media profiles and websites. Take care to keep the online profiles, websites and administrative responsibilities current.
- We shall not engage in, encourage or condone cyberbullying. Children's ministry volunteer training sessions should include in its teaching and ministry Code of Conduct a session on the types and consequences of cyber-bullying, including how to identify it and how to report it.
- Phone conversations and face-to-face meetings are the preferred mode of communication, when responding to emotionally driven communication or pastoral emergencies, and should be used when possible to provide the appropriate level of support.
- We shall educate young people in the effective ways of using social media and technology to live out their Christian witness in what they write, post, share, and view. We all must understand, and teach to minors and vulnerable adults, that once something is posted on web, sent via email or

sent via text, it is impossible to fully recover or erase it. There should be no expectation of privacy or reasonable expectation that the information stops with the person for whom it was intended.

- Internet postings should never disclose sensitive or confidential information, unless written consent to share said information is obtained from the individual it concerns. This includes but is not limited to personal and/or medical information. Examples of information that should **not** be shared or engaged online via any **Ministry Name** digital platform or media include:
  - A child or volunteer's name (first and last)
  - Identifying characteristics such as (but not limited to) grade, school, neighborhood, sports team, etc.
  - Posts or interactions that violate **Ministry Name** policies, including harassment and confidentiality issues.
  - Partisan political messages or paid advertising.

When posting pictures that include children from **Ministry Name**:

- Blur or black out any identifying name tags on children and volunteers.
- Written consent from a parent or legal guardian must be given prior to posting any child's picture on any of **Ministry Name's** social media or digital platforms. Written consent can be submitted via email, text, or may be included in an annual registration form.
- We strongly encourage the respect and dignity of every person depicted in an image. Only pictures depicting children in an appropriate light should be posted. "Appropriate" pictures may include goofy pictures that the child's parents are comfortable being posted. If a picture would make a child or parent feel self-conscious, vulnerable, or would subject the child or parent to ridicule, the picture should not be posted.

## **GUIDELINES FOR INTERACTING AS MINISTRY NAME ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

- Be selective! Use the right medium for the message. For example, don't use a Facebook post to communicate sensitive or private information.
- Be smart! A blog, community post, or social media post is often visible to the entire public and can/will be shared by others in various ways that cannot be controlled at any level. Be extremely wise with all content posted.
- Use grace! Always use Biblical wisdom when utilizing social media. For example, if someone has offended you, consider speaking with them privately on the matter. Do not post offense responses publicly.
- When in doubt, be positive! Whether someone has posted something mean, rude or distasteful, take the high road at all times and give them the benefit of the doubt.

- Ask! In areas where this policy does not provide a direct answer for how members of our community should answer social media questions, please check with **Ministry Name's** leadership team before speaking as a representative of the church or ministry.
- Hashtags used by **Ministry Name** include, but are not limited to: (insert hashtags used by your ministry here)
- Be accurate. Review the content of your posts for factual and grammatical errors.

### **DIGITAL SOCIAL GROUP GUIDELINES:**

- If you would like to create a social media group or profile for a specific ministry, you must first get approval by [senior pastor/communications committee/communications director].
- Each church related social media site, group or page must have a minimum of two unrelated administrators, who are either church leaders or adult volunteers engaged in the ministry.
- Sites and groups must be monitored frequently to allow for quick responses in the event urgent or crisis concerns are posted.
- Groups should remain private to protect the discussions and conversations within the group.
- Administrators should frequently review the members of the site/group to keep the member list updated and remove:
  - Adult leaders who no longer actively participate in the ministry
  - Former child/youth members, and their parents, who no longer actively participate in the ministry

### **VOLUNTEER-SPECIFIC GUIDELINES**

- Unless your specific volunteer role requires or includes it, we ask all volunteers to stay off of social media and digital platforms while serving with our ministry.
- We ask volunteers to share any pictures they take while serving in the **Ministry Name** with our staff to share safely instead of posting on their own personal social media pages, and/or reaching out to confirm the use of the picture on a personal social media account prior to posting.
- When communicating with children and family via social media, volunteers must adhere to **Ministry Name's** youth communication policy and set up definable boundaries for interacting online. Just as we ask no volunteer to be alone with a child in-person, we ask that no volunteer contacts a child directly and privately. All digital communication with a child under the age of 13 should be done in a public forum or with another adult involved, and the initiation of the communication should always come from the younger party, not the volunteer.

- As a team member of **Ministry Name**, remember that your online presence and posts can have the potential to affect the ministry of **Ministry Name**. For this reason, it is imperative that you conduct your online interactions in accordance with the Employee/Volunteer Handbook, **Ministry Name's** Statement of Faith and with the Code of Conduct. If you have any questions in this area, inquire with the leadership team for clarity.

Team members (staff or volunteer) who misuse **Ministry Name's** social media resources in ways that violate the law or other ministry policies are subject to immediate disciplinary action and/or dismissal.

---

Ultimately social networking is about connecting and community. **Ministry Name** staff, leaders, volunteers, and families will use **Ministry Name's** digital presence to connect with and serve the families who connect with **Ministry Name** online and in person while complying with these policies and guidelines to ensure the safety and integrity of all parties and persons involved.

*\*\*Note: This is a template. Your church or ministry is responsible for compliance with all applicable laws. Accordingly, this template should not be used or adopted by your organization without first being reviewed extensively and approved by an attorney. Deeper KidMin assumes no liability in connection with the use or distribution of this template.\*\**