



**Human
Resources
Professionals
Association**



**Watch out! Social media
pitfalls HR should avoid**

January 25, 2023

Housekeeping

- This webinar is eligible for 1 CPD hour. You will receive the CPD code as part of the post-webinar survey.
- This webinar will be recorded, and the recording, slides and Q&A will be posted on our website under Professional Development – eLearning & On Demand—on-demand webinars—Office of the Registrar.
- Time has been set aside for Q&A at the end, but please feel free to add your questions to the chat box at any time during the presentation.

Introductions



Gabrielli Nolasco
Digital Strategist
Manager,
HRPA



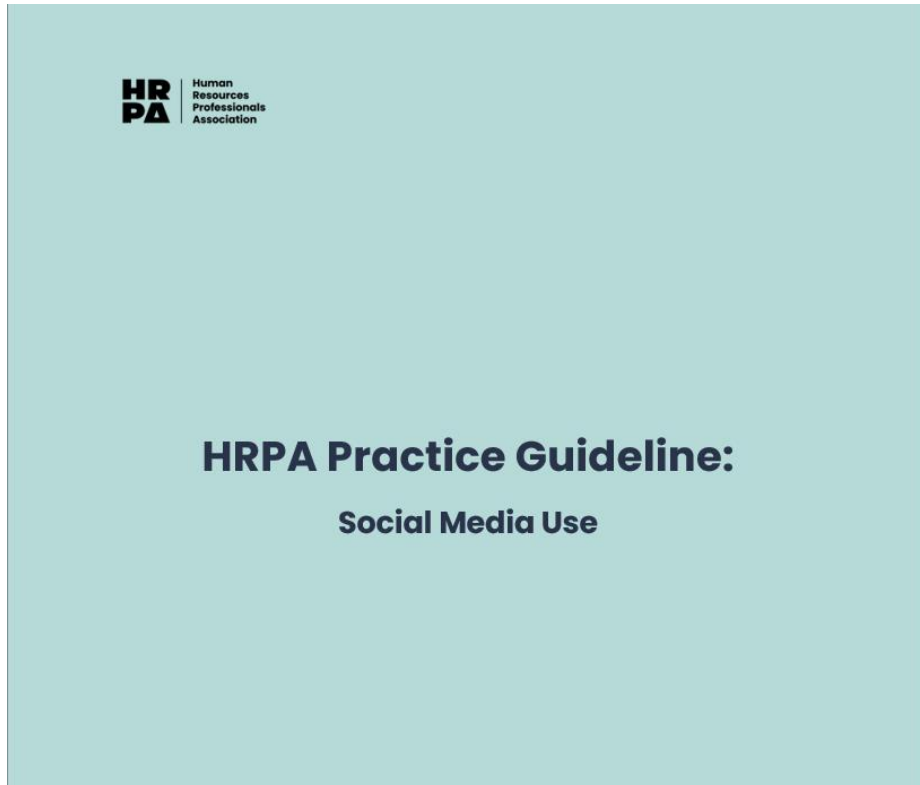
Rochelle Pereira-
Alvares
Senior Policy Analyst,
HPRA

What is social media?

Involves any sort of electronic communication or use of online tools for the purpose of social interaction and the creation and/or sharing of content, including:

- commenting on forums,
- blogging,
- using social networking websites (ex. Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, Facebook), &
- using an online chat room or personal websites.

HRPA's New Practice Guideline



- Topic identified as one of the highest-ranking risks of harm stemming from the practice of HR
- Meant to help you mitigate risks and avoid common pitfalls
- Helps supplement the **Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct**
- All HRPA members and students are expected to review

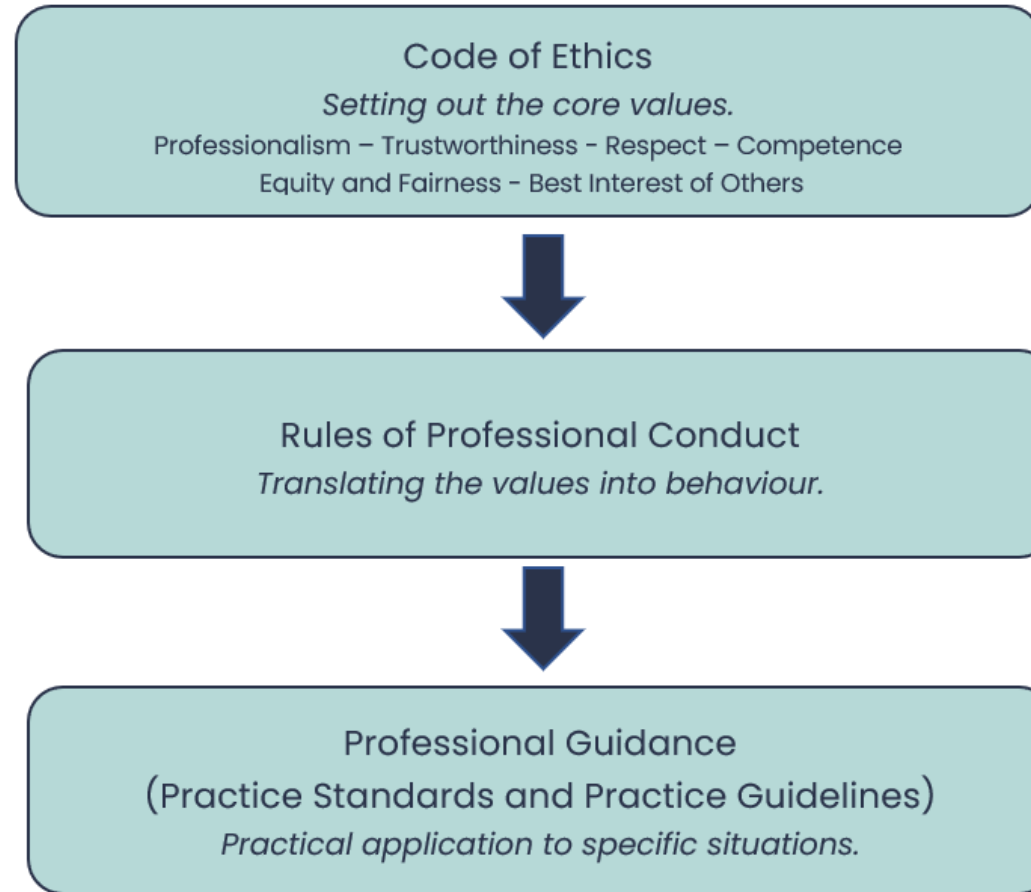
Recap on Practice Guidelines

Practice Guidelines provide guidance on how a Practice Standard and/or the Code/Rules should be interpreted and aspects to consider as it relates to a specific HR topic.

They also:

- Show the public what they should expect from registered HR professionals
- Play a key role in HRPA's mandate of public protection
- Are not a substitute for professional judgment, but provide guidance on how to act in particular circumstances – keeping in mind that not all provisions will apply to everyone

Guidance Hierarchy



What does the Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct State?

All registered HRPAs professionals, students and firms must comply with HRPAs Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct, which includes exhibiting **professionalism** and **trustworthiness** by:

- Ensuring that all communications related to your professional activities, including those made on social media, reflect the high standards and accountability expected of the profession.
- Only disclosing confidential information if you have permission, the law allows or requires it, or it is necessary to protect public safety or prevent harm to other people. You take care to ensure that no more information is provided than is required.

How the Guideline was developed

Extensive research from a wide variety of sources

In consultation/collaboration with subject-matter experts, including legal counsel, HRPA's Professional Standards Committee (PSC), and HR professionals

Thorough approvals process:

PSC → Governance & Nominating Committee → Board of Directors

Risks of Harm to the Public

Improper social media use can result in:

- Online release of confidential information
- Crossing of professional boundaries
- Making/sharing inappropriate, harassing, malicious, misleading, inflammatory, obscene or discriminatory remarks or images
- Exposure to, and liability for, claims for monetary and other damages under human rights, occupational health and safety, and criminal laws
- Mistrust and negative views of the profession

How can I use the Guideline in practice?

- Regularly review the Guideline, including but not limited to when:
 - Questioning appropriate professionalism and/or professional boundaries as it relates to social media,
 - planning policies and practices to help prevent/address improper social media use, and
 - you need a reminder of appropriate practices when it comes to social media use
- While the Guideline cannot address every situation, it can be used to supplement professional judgment.
- The Guideline is public and can also be shared with your colleagues.



Pitfalls & How to Avoid & Address Them

Pitfall #1: Thinking posting on private accounts or groups is safe/anonymous

- I'm posting on a private account without my name or identifiers or in a private group – so no one will ever trace the posts or messages back to me! = Big misconception.

Examples:

- “Anonymously” from a social media account criticizing colleagues, employers, clients, employees, job-seekers or other HR professionals with malicious intent.
- “Anonymously” from a social media account posting or sharing inappropriate, malicious, misleading, violent, obscene and/or discriminatory remarks, threats or images.
- “Anonymously” from a social media account having inappropriate conversations with clients, colleagues, employers, family members of colleagues, etc.

Pitfall #2: Using social media to discuss, report and/or resolve confidential workplace issues

Examples:

- Making posts about an ongoing workplace investigation and what is happening in it, even if from a “private” or “anonymous” account.
- Exposing online the name and/or other personal identifiers of the alleged victim or perpetrator that is part of a workplace issue or investigation.
- Sharing the salaries of employees online with enough information that the employees could be identified.

Pitfall #3: Not considering how “liking” a post or image can be seen as condoning or even endorsing what is posted

Examples:

- “Liking” a post that makes jokes at the expense of someone’s gender, sexuality, religion, race, etc.
- “Liking” a post that encourages exclusionary hiring or promotional practices based on protected grounds under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.
- “Liking” images that are of extreme violence against a group or individual person.

Pitfall #4: Not having separate personal and professional social media accounts

- A lack of separation between personal and professional accounts can lead to blurring of professional boundaries, potential conflicts-of-interest, and privacy/confidentiality concerns.

Examples:

- Professional boundaries may be blurred when becoming a “friend” or “followed”/otherwise connected online by any means with a client, employee, and/or colleague.
- Personal views posted on a shared professional account may be viewed as your organization’s/employer’s views.

Pitfall #5: Sharing photos, videos or identifiable information about employer, clients or colleagues without consent

- It is always a good idea to obtain appropriate consent from your employer, client, employee, and/or colleagues before sharing photos, videos, or other identifiable information about them online.

Example of where not doing so could go wrong:

- Sharing a photo of a colleague on the company's social media page without their express permission, and not realizing the colleague is a victim of domestic violence and does not want their place of work to be known publicly as it could put them at risk of harm.

Pitfall #6: Speaking on behalf of employer, client, employee, or HRPA without proper consent/approvals

Examples:

- Commenting on an ongoing workplace investigation at your workplace as if you are the decision-maker/person of authority on the investigation, when you are not.
- Posting about your employer's (or client, employee, HRPA's) position on certain topics as a matter-of-fact, such as topics related to health mandates– without proper approval to do so.

Pitfall #7: Sharing or posting misleading, inaccurate HR-related advice or content

Examples:

- Providing/offering online advice that encourages HR professionals to hire only certain types of personalities or people with certain beliefs as doing so will lead to better workplaces.
- Promoting HR-related products, services or practices that provide “guaranteed” results or satisfaction when such a guarantee is not possible.
- Providing HR-related advice or content that goes against evidence/research on the topic at hand.

Pitfall #8: Violating legal, professional, and/or regulatory obligations

This is an overarching pitfall, where HRPAs members, firms and students should always ensure they are following and abiding by all legislation related to social media use, including:

- Privacy laws
- Occupational health and safety laws
- Human rights laws
- Laws related to cyber-bullying, criminal social media use, defamation, copyright, and plagiarism
- Social media user agreements and privacy policies
- HRPAs Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct

Real Life Examples of Social Media Posts Gone Wrong

Examples in the Media



Search

Sign In

Nova Scotia

Former chiropractor ordered to pay \$100K related to anti-vaccine posts

Dena Churchill admitted to professional misconduct after N.S. College of Chiropractors investigation launched

[Michael Gorman](#) · CBC News · Posted: Jul 04, 2019 3:13 PM AT | Last Updated: July 4, 2019

NATIONAL POST



Toronto cosmetic surgeon known as 'Dr.6ix' suspended over social media posts of intimate cosmetic surgeries

Posting photos and videos on social media became a routine part of his operation, while his website promotes the clinic's breast augmentation, facelifts and 'mommy makeovers'

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Examples in the Media

Toronto

Realtors apologize after including #AmberAlert in tweets about homes and new listings

Police were searching for a 4-year-old girl when the tweets were published Friday morning

[Laura Fraser](#) · CBC News · Posted: Mar 10, 2017 8:56 PM ET | Last Updated: March 11, 2017



Wilma Fournier

@JustShoutWilma

Follow

7 Mistakes By First Time Home Buyers.....bit.ly/2iaqPjg

[#realestatecanada](#) [#property](#) [#AmberAlert](#)



Wilma Fournier is one of two Royal LePage sales associates whose Twitter accounts included the hashtag #AmberAlert in promotional posts. Fournier apologized and said the tweet was published by a third party advertiser. (Twitter)

Before Posting, Commenting, “Liking”, etc. on social media, HRPAs members, firms and students should ask themselves:

Would I be comfortable with any colleague, client, member of the public, court, tribunal or the HRPAs seeing this?

How does this reflect on my professionalism and on the HR profession as a whole?

Would I say or condone this in-person?

If I saw another HR professional posting this, how would I feel or think others would feel?

Do I have consent from the individual(s) I am making a post or sharing an image of?

Is what I’m sharing something that is confidential or private?

Am I breaching any laws or regulations (ex. privacy, copyright, criminal)?

Is this in compliance with HRPAs Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct?

What if I Need Additional Help?

- We have a dedicated email address for any questions about guidance issued: guidance@hrpa.ca.
- You can also email us with any feedback you may have on the Guideline.
- If you prefer reaching out to us by phone, you can schedule a phone call appointment online, or call us at: 1-800-387-1311 or 416-923-2324.

A Note About Other Guidance + Webinars

Visit www.hrpa.ca/guidance to access professional guidance and webinars, including:

- ✓ HRPAs modernized Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct
- ✓ Practice Guideline on Addressing Racism and Racial Discrimination
- ✓ Practice Standard on Conducting Workplace Investigations
- ✓ Practice Guideline on Social Media Use
- ✓ Practice Guideline on Terminations — **Upcoming free webinar about the Guideline Feb. 1st, 2023, 12-1 pm, register now!**
- ✓ Practice Guideline on Fostering Mental Health in the Workplace — **Upcoming free webinar about the Guideline Feb. 8th, 2023, 12-1 pm, register now!**

Questions



You can also submit questions
after this webinar by emailing
guidance@hrpa.ca



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Thank You!