

## ASHA Social Media Guidelines for ASHA Employees

ASHA's mission focuses on promoting communication, a basic human right that should be accessible and achievable to all. Along those lines, we seek to foster an atmosphere of open communication and teamwork among staff, one that values diversity of thought and culture.<sup>1</sup>

Blogging and other social media applications have become increasingly important arenas for the kind of engagement and communicating we encourage. Online social media enables individuals to communicate their insights, express their opinions and share information within the context of a globally distributed conversation. Each tool and medium has proper and improper uses. While ASHA encourages all of its employees to join a global conversation, it is important for staff who choose to do so to understand what is recommended, expected and required when they discuss ASHA-related topics, whether at work or on their own time.

The same principles and guidelines that apply to ASHA employees' activities in general, apply to their activities online, both at and outside of work. This includes all forms of online publishing and discussion, including blogs, wikis, file-sharing, user-generated video and audio, social networks and other social networking applications.

ASHA is currently using several social networking applications to engage members and educate the public about Communication Science and Disorders (CSD). This work is related to a Web & Knowledge Strategy Team Tier 2 Strategic Objective: Improve usability, accessibility, and relevance of online communication. That Tier 2 objective is in support of the Improve External Communication Tier 1 Strategic Pathway objective. If you need support for developing an official presence for ASHA on any social network, please contact the Web & Knowledge Strategy Team first.

## General ASHA Guidelines and Policies

Know and follow ASHA's [Code of Conduct](#); [Non-Endorsement of Programs, Products, or Procedures policy](#); [Confidential and Proprietary Information policy](#); and [Computers and Communications Usage Policy](#).

## Executive Summary

1. Only staff authorized to do so by the Executive Director may speak for ASHA. Similarly, only members of the Web & Knowledge Strategy Team may establish an ASHA presence on a public social network (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, etc.).

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<sup>1</sup> These guidelines are adapted from the following documents: [IBM Social Computing Guidelines](#), [Intel Social Media Guidelines](#), and [Blogcouncil Disclosures Best Practices Toolkit](#).

2. When staff communicates through social media, unless authorized to speak on behalf of ASHA, they are representing themselves. If staff communicate any information about ASHA in Social Media, they should refer to ASHA policies about communication of ASHA information by individuals who are not authorized ASHA spokespeople.
3. It is a good rule of thumb to think of ALL social media as the same as writing a signed letter to the editor of a newspaper. Don't speak for ASHA, clearly state who you are and your relationship to the topic, make it clear you are representing your own ideas, and finally, don't write anything that you would be embarrassed about seeing printed on the front page of a print publication.
4. If you aren't sure about the wisdom of pursuing a form of social media outreach, or have a question about it, discuss it with your coach. You should use the same good judgment about discussing ASHA's information as you would in an elevator or any location where non-staff may overhear.

### Specific Guidelines

- **ASHA regards blogs and other forms of online discourse as primarily a form of communication and relationship among individuals.** When the Association wishes to communicate publicly —whether to its members, the media, or to the general public—it has well-established means of doing so. Only those officially designated by ASHA have the authorization to speak on behalf of the Association.
- **Respect your audience.** As an organization that values diversity, we would expect that you would not use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in ASHA's workplace. Also, don't talk down to your readers, and communicate clearly.
- **Be who you are.** Some bloggers work anonymously, using pseudonyms or no name at all. ASHA discourages this when employees participate in online conversations or blog posts that relate to ASHA or issues with which the Association is engaged. We believe in transparency and honesty. If you are blogging or posting about your work for ASHA, use your real name, and identify that you work for ASHA. Staff should not use social media applications for covert marketing or public relations. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, be the first to point it out. Of course, staff should not discuss internal personnel or other staff issues on a blog.
- **Be smart about protecting yourself and your privacy.** What you publish will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully and exercise caution when disclosing personal details.
- **Be thoughtful about how you present yourself in online social networks.** The lines between personal and professional lives are blurred in online social networks. If you choose to identify yourself as an ASHA staff person within a social network (e.g.

Facebook), you are then connected to your colleagues and other ASHA members. You should ensure that content associated with you is consistent with your work at ASHA, and that if you discuss ASHA information that you are authorized to do so.

- **Use a disclaimer.** If you write anything related to your work at ASHA on a blog or some other online space, make it clear that what you say there is representative of your views and opinions and you are not presenting yourself as a spokesperson for ASHA. Use a disclaimer such as: "I am an employee at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association; however this is my personal opinion." or something to that effect. Of course, this would only apply to writings that mention ASHA business-related topics.
- **ASHA respects employees' right to free speech.** Employees are free to express themselves and their opinions in whatever way they see fit as long as they are clearly representing themselves as individuals and not employees of ASHA. Again, employees only need disclose their affiliation with ASHA if they're writing specifically about ASHA. For example, if an employee writes a blog post about his/her personal experience at an ASHA-sponsored charitable event they do not need to do so with a disclaimer that they work for ASHA. In that context, affiliation with ASHA is incidental and no disclaimer is necessary.
- **Managers and executives have a unique responsibility.** A standard disclaimer does not by itself exempt ASHA managers and executives from a special responsibility when blogging or otherwise communicating in online public spaces. By virtue of their position, ASHA managers and executives must consider whether personal thoughts they publish may be misunderstood as official ASHA positions. Also, a manager should assume that his or her team will read what is written. A public blog is not the place to communicate ASHA policies to ASHA employees.
- **Be accurate and factual.** It's important to stick to the facts and to identify your actual ASHA affiliation. Here and in other areas of public discussion, make sure that what you are saying is factually correct, and do not make inflammatory statements or attempt to engage in an aggressive or defensive way. When you see misrepresentations made about ASHA by media, analysts or by other bloggers, you should inform an authorized ASHA spokesperson and they will decide if or how to respond. While you may certainly use your blog—or join someone else's—to point out discrepancies, do so respectfully, factually and with the disclaimer that the views you are expressing are your own and you are not speaking on behalf of ASHA.
- **Use your best judgment.** Remember that there can be consequences to what you publish in any format. Assume that what you post on social networking sites or blogs will be part of a permanent public record, accessible to members, colleagues, friends and members of the media. If you're about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, review the suggestions above and think twice about

posting it. If you're still unsure, and it is related to ASHA business, refrain from commenting and discuss it with your coach, or the CSO for Communications. Ultimately, however, you have sole responsibility for what you post to your blog or publish in any form of online social media.

- **Remember your day job.** Engagement in social media will vary, depending on its relevance to a person's job at ASHA. Discuss with your coach how much of your job—if any—necessitates your on-the-job participation in social networking of any sort, and act accordingly. If your position doesn't relate specifically to ASHA's social media outreach, refer to ASHA's [Computers and Communications Usage Policy](#) with regard to time spent online while at work.