**Internet Content and Social Media Policy**

**Policy**

Members of the Coroner’s Office must maintain a high ethical and professional standard of conduct both on and off duty. It’s important that we respect the privacy and dignity of others when we discuss work-related matters publicly, whether it’s about an investigation or about our day at work. This includes, but is not limited to, conduct related to materials posted on the internet or disseminated electronically. Employees are reminded that posting or other dissemination on the internet may last forever. Employees are responsible for all personal online content and neither the Coroner’s Office nor Kootenai County assumes responsibility or liability resulting from posted content.

**Procedure**

1. ***County Use***
2. **Approval Required.** Those who are authorized to publish internet content and/or engage in social media on behalf of the Coroner’s Office must obtain the Coroner’s approval for the following:

Creating an internet outlet or social media presence on behalf of the Coroner’s Office; Using Coroner’s Office seals, logos or emblems;the appearance of any internet sites or social media profiles for business purposes; andexpressing an opinion of the Coroner’s Office or the conclusion of an investigation.

1. **Guidelines.** Any authorized use of social media must be conducted in a manner that is professional, respects the privacy and dignity of those whose personal information we learn and protects the Coroner’s Office’s integrity and reputation.

1. ***Personal Use***
2. **Prohibited Conduct.** Employees are reminded that the Coroner’s Office is entrusted with highly personal, sensitive and confidential information. The consequences of improper disclosure not only include compromising judicial proceedings related to a Coroner’s investigation, but also the trust and confidence that law enforcement agencies, colleagues and the public have in our office.

**EMPLOYEES SHALL NOT:**

* Discuss evidence or personal opinions of an investigation, investigations generally, law enforcement agencies, victims, witnesses and/or colleagues and co-workers;

* Discuss, comment on, or disclose confidential information, or information that belongs to someone else;

* Disclose personal information about co-workers, colleagues, or anyone related to or involved in an investigation;

* Disclosing protected health information in violation of HIPAA, even if you do not identify the person by name;

* Publish images, photographs, and/or video content obtained while in the performance of duty with the Coroner’s Office without the Coroner’s express permission;

* Use social media in a way that erodes the confidences of jurors, law enforcement agencies, other agencies, private parties (related to the prosecution or defense in a criminal investigation), colleagues, judges and the general public in the Coroner’s Office;

* Maintain content that has both a reference to the employee’s employment with the Coroner’s Office and which contains content that is unprofessional, unbecoming, or illegal, such as lewd sexual conduct, excessive alcohol consumption, or similar behaviors that may create a negative public image;

* Misrepresent the Coroner’s Office. If you choose to discuss personal opinions that could reasonably be attributed to those of the Coroner’s Office or Kootenai County, state that it’s YOUR opinion;

* Using social media in a way that constitutes libel, copyright or trademark infringement, harassment, professional misconduct, or a violation of privacy rights or other rights protected under the law.

1. **Guidelines**. The Coroner’s Office respects the rights of its employees to use social media. Your responsibilities as an employee of the Coroner’s Office does not end when you are off the clock. For that reason, use the following guidelines to prevent compromising your role as a Coroner’s Office employee and to help safeguard the confidential and private information you are entrusted with:

* Assume that your professional life and your personal life will merge online regardless of the care you take in separating them. Therefore, act responsibly and ethically and respect your audience;

* Don’t comment on work-related matters unless you have been authorized by the Coroner’s Office to do so. Don’t respond to an offensive or negative comment about the Coroner’s Office or Kootenai County;

* Assume that everything you write, exchange, or receive on a social media site is public, even if you use privacy tools (e.g. determining who can view your profile page); and

* Social media sites are not a constructive place for venting personal complaints about supervisors, co-workers, the Coroner’s Office, or Kootenai County. Seek to resolve conflicts constructively and address your concerns with your supervisor, manager, the Coroner, or Human Resources.

1. ***Related Laws, Regulations and Policies*.**
2. **Social Media Sites’ Terms of Service.** Using social media sites means that you (and the content you exchange) are subject to those sites’ terms of service. This can have legal implications, including the possibility that your interactions could be subject to a third-party subpoena. The social media site has access to and control over everything that you disclose to or on that site.

1. **Law and Regulations.** The content published on behalf of the Coroner’s Office is subject to all laws and regulations governing information storage, retrieval, disclosure and public information requests, including the Idaho Public Records Law, federal and state privacy laws and HIPAA.

1. **Kootenai County Policies.** The following policies apply to using social media:

Be advised of Kootenai County Code for USE OF COUNTY WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA # 505

1. ***Violations.*** Any violation of this policy may subject an employee to discipline, up to and including termination.