



# Charleston County Sheriff's Office Policy and Procedures Manual

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**Sheriff Carl Ritchie**

2-18

## Social Networking

- ☐ NEW
- ☒ REVISED
- ☒ REVIEWED

ACA Standards Reference:  
CALEA Standards Reference: 54.1.1  
NCCHC Standards Reference:  
SCLEA Standards Reference: 27.3  
SC Minimum Standards:

*This policy dated 1/28/2025 replaces prior policies cited above and supersedes all previously issued directives.*

I. Purpose:

To establish guidelines for the use of the internet, social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, TikTok, YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram, etc.) and personal web pages by all personnel of the Charleston County Sheriff's Office. To ensure personnel use appropriate discretion so as not to discredit their integrity or the Charleston County Sheriff's Office. (Ref: CALEA 54.1.1)

II. Policy:

It is the policy of the Charleston County Sheriff's Office that the use of the internet, personal web pages and social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, TikTok, YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram, etc.) by all personnel of the Charleston County Sheriff's Office be permitted; however, personnel must be mindful of the negative impact of inappropriate or unauthorized posting upon the Charleston County Sheriff's Office and its relationship with the community. This policy identifies prohibited activities both on and off-duty by personnel on such web sites and supplements agency *Policy 2-11 Agency Rules and Regulations*.

III. Definitions:

- A. For purposes of this procedure, the word "deputy" applies to all agency employees with a certification classification of Class I, Class II, Class III, or Reserve Deputy, as defined by the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy.

The following terms are used interchangeably; however, they carry guidance to specific employees based on usage of the term:

1. Deputy, deputies, deputy sheriff, detention deputy, sworn employee, uniformed sworn employee, sworn administrative employee, and
2. civilian, non-sworn employee.

- B. *Employee*: When used without further clarification, the term employee is inclusive of all agency members (sworn and non-sworn).

IV. Procedure:

- A. The Charleston County Sheriff's Office recognizes that the use of the internet, personal web pages, and social networking sites is a popular activity. Nevertheless, to achieve and maintain the public's highest level of respect, personnel must place reasonable restrictions on their conduct and hold to

standards of conduct whether on or off-duty.

- B. Professionalism, ethics, and integrity are of paramount importance in the law enforcement community. Personal actions must never bring the agency into disrepute, nor should conduct be detrimental to its efficient operation.
- C. Prohibited activity and guidelines for Charleston County Sheriff's Office employees regarding the internet, personal web pages, and social networking sites: (Ref: CALEA 54.1.1, SCLEA 27.3)
  - 1. Except in the performance of an authorized assignment, personnel shall not post, transmit, reproduce, and/or disseminate information (i.e., text, pictures, video, artwork, audio, etc.) to the internet or any other forum (public or private) that would tend to discredit or reflect unfavorably upon the Charleston County Sheriff's Office, the Sheriff Al Cannon Detention Center (SACDC), or any of the agency's personnel.
  - 2. Except in the performance of an authorized assignment, personal use of agency computers to access personal web pages, social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, TikTok, YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram, etc.) blogs, or bulletin boards is prohibited.
  - 3. Posting the following types of criminal justice information to internet, personal web pages, and social networking sites is explicitly prohibited:
    - a. confidential, sensitive, or copyrighted information to which employees have access due to their employment with the Sheriff's Office.
    - b. information from an ongoing criminal or administrative investigation including photographs, videos, or audio recordings.
    - c. photographs of suspects, arrestees, SACDC inmates, evidence, or crime or collision scenes.
    - d. personal statements about an on-duty use of force incident.
    - e. comments related to pending criminal prosecutions or civil actions involving the Sheriff's Office or Charleston County.
    - f. any images, photographs, videos, or audio recordings from the

security or IT systems of the SACDC.

- g. any images, photographs, videos, or audio recordings of SACDC inmates or employees in uniform or on-duty.
- 4. Personnel are prohibited from posting content that is inconsistent with their duties and obligations with the Charleston County Sheriff's Office. Examples include, but are not limited to, racist or sexist comments, comments insulting groups on the basis of national origin, Charleston County inmates or the general public that tend to undermine the public trust and confidence of the Charleston County Sheriff's Office.
- 5. Personnel are prohibited from posting, transmitting and/or disseminating any artwork, pictures or videos of official Charleston County Sheriff's Office uniforms, badge, patches, vehicles, training activities or work-related assignments without the express written permission of the Sheriff or designee.
- 6. Personnel shall not identify themselves directly or indirectly as an employee of the Charleston County Sheriff's Office while utilizing these sites.
- 7. Negative and/or inappropriate comments on the internal operations of the Sheriff's Office or the specific conduct of supervisors or peers that impacts the public perception of the agency is not protected First Amendment speech, in accordance with established case law.
- 8. If co-workers are included in an employee's social network, personnel should ensure that content is consistent with governing policies regarding interactions with co-workers. An example would be content that would violate policy against sexual harassment or racial intolerance.
- 9. Personnel must be mindful that their posted content has the potential to be shared broadly, including individuals with whom communication was not intended. The adverse consequences of these postings include future employment, cross-examination in criminal or civil cases, and public and private embarrassment that would tend to undermine public confidence in the Sheriff's Office.
- 10. Internet sites deemed inappropriate, whether by an employment association or not, bringing discredit to the Sheriff's Office, SACDC, or to an agency employee, or promoting misconduct, whether on or

off-duty, may be subject to criminal and/or administrative investigation.

11. Personnel may comment on issues of general or public concern (as opposed to personal grievances) so long as the comments do not disrupt the workplace, interfere with intra-agency relationships or efficient workflow, or undermine public confidence in the employee or agency. These incidents will be evaluated on an individual basis.