

Chief Judge  
David J. Reader

Circuit Court Judge  
Michael P. Hatty

Probate Court Judge  
Carol Hackett Garagiola



*Livingston County Trial Courts*  
204 S. HIGHLANDER WAY, HOWELL, MI 48843

District Court Judges  
Theresa M. Brennan  
L. Suzanne Geddis  
Carol Sue Reader

## LIVINGSTON COUNTY COURTS

### SOCIAL NETWORKING POLICY

- 1. PURPOSE:** To provide guidelines to employees of the Courts of Livingston County<sup>1</sup> who are engaged in online social networking and to define appropriate uses of social networking in their professional capacity.

This policy must be considered in the context of other adopted Court policies governing appropriate employee conduct, including policies regarding harassment, discrimination, confidentiality, ethical behavior, and workplace violence. The Model Codes of Conduct for Trial Court Employees (Attachment A) and Juvenile Probation Officers (Attachment B) adopted by the Supreme Court and other codes of conduct adopted by the Court must also be considered.

- 2. POLICY:** The Chief Judge of the Courts in Livingston County respects the right of any employee to engage in online social networking using the Internet and other technology during their personal time. This specifically includes websites such as Facebook, MySpace, You Tube, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Wikipedia, as well as various chat rooms and blogs. It is imperative that employees recognize that everything written or received in social networking is public and can be accessed by anyone with access to social networking sites. Regardless of how careful an employee might be in using social networking, there is overlap between professional and personal use.

This policy covers instant messages, text, video, photos, and audio. While an employee's right of self-expression is respected, in order to protect the Court's interests and integrity, and ensure employees focus on their job duties, Court employees must adhere to the following guidelines:

- A.** Court employees may not engage in social networking activities during work time or at any time with County equipment or property without the approval of the Chief Judge or the designee(s) of the Chief Judge. Appropriate uses of social networking include communication, collaboration and exchange of information with other courts, and federal, state, and local agencies and individuals in a professional work related capacity (See also the Livingston County Courts

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<sup>1</sup> The Courts include the 44<sup>th</sup> Circuit, 53<sup>rd</sup> District and 47<sup>th</sup> Probate Courts.

Information Technology Policy and the Livingston County Information Technology Resources Policy.)

- B. All Court policies<sup>2</sup> regarding confidentiality and personnel policies such as the policy prohibiting harassment and discrimination should be followed. For example, racially derogatory or sexually graphic or explicit material of any kind shall not be posted by the employee on any form of social media or social networking site. Racially derogatory or sexually graphic or explicit material posted by others to the employee's social media or social networking sites shall be immediately removed by the employee. Information regarding persons receiving Court services must not be disclosed. The privacy rights of fellow employees must be respected.
- C. Information published on social media networks that has to do with any aspect of Court business must comply with Court confidentiality requirements, HIPAA, and Court Policies. This also applies to comments posted on other blogs, forums, and social networking sites.
- D. Court employees may not create a social networking site or online service to conduct Court business without the approval of the Chief Judge or the designee(s) of the Chief Judge, in accordance with Court guidelines or policies that may be established.
- E. If an employee mentions the Court while engaging in social networking and also expresses a political opinion or an opinion regarding the Court's actions, the person must specifically note that the opinion expressed is his/her personal opinion and not the opinion of the Court. This is necessary to preserve the Court's integrity and standing with stakeholders such as State and County offices/departments, other funding and regulatory bodies, referral sources, families, attorneys, and other Court users. Court Administrators, supervisors, managers, program coordinators, and other Court leaders have additional responsibility for their professional actions when using social networks.
- F. Social networks are not to be used for official Court communication with, or among, employees regarding Court business.
- G. Copyright laws, public record laws, and privacy protection laws must be adhered to. Plagiarism also applies to online communications and documents.
- H. Any conduct that is illegal if expressed in any other forum is expressly prohibited.
- I. Court and/or Livingston County logos and branding may not be used.

The Court encourages all employees to consider the manner and the speed by which information can be relayed using technology and how such information can be misunderstood. Additionally, employees must keep in mind there may be an inability to rescind submitted information. The Court promotes an environment that is sensitive to

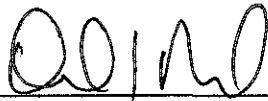
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<sup>2</sup> Court policies include Livingston County policies adopted by the Courts.

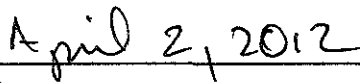
cultural and individual skill differences. The Court expects that any employee who is engaging in social networking is sensitive to disabilities as well as cultural, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation, and other beliefs. While an employee's free time and personal equipment are generally not subject to any restrictions by the Court, employees are strongly urged not to post information about the Courts, Livingston County, or their jobs which could lead to morale issues in the workplace or which could detrimentally affect the Courts' interests. The Chief Judge or his or her designee expressly reserves the right to discuss questionable posted material with the employee.

Employees should use their best judgment. If an employee is considering posting comments or material that is personally uncomfortable or that could be offensive to others, the expectation established by this policy should be reviewed before acting.

3. **COMPLIANCE:** Users must immediately report violations of this policy to their immediate supervisor, as well as to the Court Administrator.
4. **ENFORCEMENT:** The Chief Judge, Court Administrators, managers, and supervisors are all responsible for enforcing this policy. Employees who violate this policy are subject to discipline up to and including termination from employment, professional discipline, or criminal prosecution, in accordance with the Personnel Policies, Discrimination and Hostile Workplace Policies, Confidentiality Policies, and Information Technology Policy, Model Codes of Conduct for Trial Court Employees and Juvenile Probation Officers that have been adopted by the Michigan Supreme Court, and other codes of conduct adopted by the Court. .



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Chief Judge



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Date