

## **TAFCS Social Media and Computing Guidelines**

Social media is the new term commonly given to websites, online tools and other interactive communication technologies which allow users to interact with each other in some way. Individuals may share information, opinions, knowledge and interests. Social media (blogs, wikis, social networks, virtual worlds and search engine optimization) is an evolving area of activity and its elements continue to grow. It is now appropriate for TAFCS to update its 2007 technology guidelines for officers and members on how your social media should be handled. The TAFCS social media guidelines were approved by the Board of Directors March 2010. The following guidelines have been produced to advise and demystify social media issues (the potential and the pitfalls).

**Engage responsibly in innovation and dialogue.** Whether or not a member chooses to create or participate in a blog, wiki, online social network or any other form of online publishing or discussion is his or her own decision.

**Learn.** As a family and consumer sciences-based profession, we believe in the importance of open exchange and learning between TAFCS members and the many constituents of our emerging community and societal ecosystem.

**Contribute.** TAFCS makes important contributions to Texas families, the community, practicing professionals, and public dialogue on a broad range of societal issues.

**Be your self.** Some bloggers work anonymously, using pseudonyms or false screen names. TAFCS advocates integrity, transparency and honesty. If you are blogging about your work, use your real name, be clear who you are, and identify your position. Nothing gains you more notice in the online social media environment than honesty (or dishonesty). If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, be the first to point it out. Also be smart about protecting yourself and your privacy. Be aware of professional competence; limit projecting expertise to that work for which you are suitably skilled and experienced. What you publish will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully and also be judicious in disclosing personal or confidential details.

**Be thoughtful about how you present yourself in online social networks.** The lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in online social networks. By virtue of identifying yourself as a TAFCS member, you have now linked the association and other members to your posting.

**Engage in open dialogue and the exchange of ideas.** TAFCS regards blogs and other forms of online discourse as a form of communication and relations among individuals. When the association wishes to communicate a policy or position, it has a formal avenue to do so. Only those officially designated by Bylaws and Board of Directors have the authorization to speak on behalf of TAFCS.

**Promote responsible involvement.** TAFCS continues to advocate responsible involvement today in this rapidly growing social media space of relationship, learning and collaboration.

## **Social Media and Computing Guidelines Summary:**

1. Know and follow TAFCS bylaws, handbook policies and the AAFCS Code of Ethics.
2. Officers and members are personally responsible for the content they publish on blogs, wikis or any other form of user-generated media. Be mindful that what you publish will be public for a long time—protect your privacy.
3. Identify yourself, name and, when relevant, TAFCS role, when you discuss TAFCS or TAFCS-related matters. Write in the first person. You must make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of TAFCS.
4. If you publish content to any website outside of TAFCS and it has something to do with work you do or subjects associated with TAFCS, use a disclaimer. Officers please note: This standard disclaimer does not by itself exempt TAFCS officers from a special responsibility when blogging. By virtue of their position, one must consider whether personal thoughts you publish may be misunderstood as expressing TAFCS positions.
5. Respect copyright, non-disclosure agreements, fair use and financial disclosure laws.
6. Avoid providing any confidential or other proprietary information. Ask permission to publish or report on conversations that are meant to be private or internal to TAFCS.
7. Avoid citing or referencing members, institutions or vendors without their approval. Where possible, link references back to the source.
8. Respect your audience. Don't use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in poor conduct. You should also show proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be objectionable or inflammatory.
9. Be aware of your association with TAFCS in online social networks. If you identify yourself as a TAFCS officer or member, ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to colleagues, institutions and clients.
10. Avoid soliciting conflict. Be the first to correct your own mistakes. Don't alter previous posts without indicating that you have done so.
11. Try to add value. Provide worthwhile information and perspective. TAFCS is best represented by its people and what you publish.

Ethical guidelines and laws provide the foundation for TAFCS policies and guidelines including blogs and social computing. The same principles and guidelines that apply to TAFCS activities in general, apply to TAFCS activities online. This includes forms of online publishing and discussion, blogs, wikis, file-sharing, user-generated video and audio, virtual worlds and social networks. Virtual worlds also present a number of unique circumstances around identity, behavior, appearance and intellectual property.

In summary, TAFCS fully respects the legal rights of members; however, activities that impact the TAFCS mission and/or the participation of members delineate the focus for this policy.

Adoption date: March 2010