

Using Social Media

Practice Notes provide a brief overview of important topics directly related to the practice of early childhood education and offer supporting information to enhance Registered Early Childhood Educators' (RECEs) understanding of them.

Social Media: Exploring Benefits and Managing Risks

As online communication continues to grow in popularity and expand in scope, social media is changing how RECEs communicate in both their personal and professional lives. RECEs must consider the benefits and risks of the personal and professional use of social media. In the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice (2017)*, Standard V reminds RECEs that they are required to maintain professional boundaries with children, families and colleagues when using technology and social media. As professionals, RECEs ensure that any communication online, whether professional or personal, is consistent with the ethical and professional standards they are required to uphold.

While social media may be used in the context of an RECE's employment role and setting, this Practice Note focuses on the use of social media by RECEs outside of work.

What is Social Media?

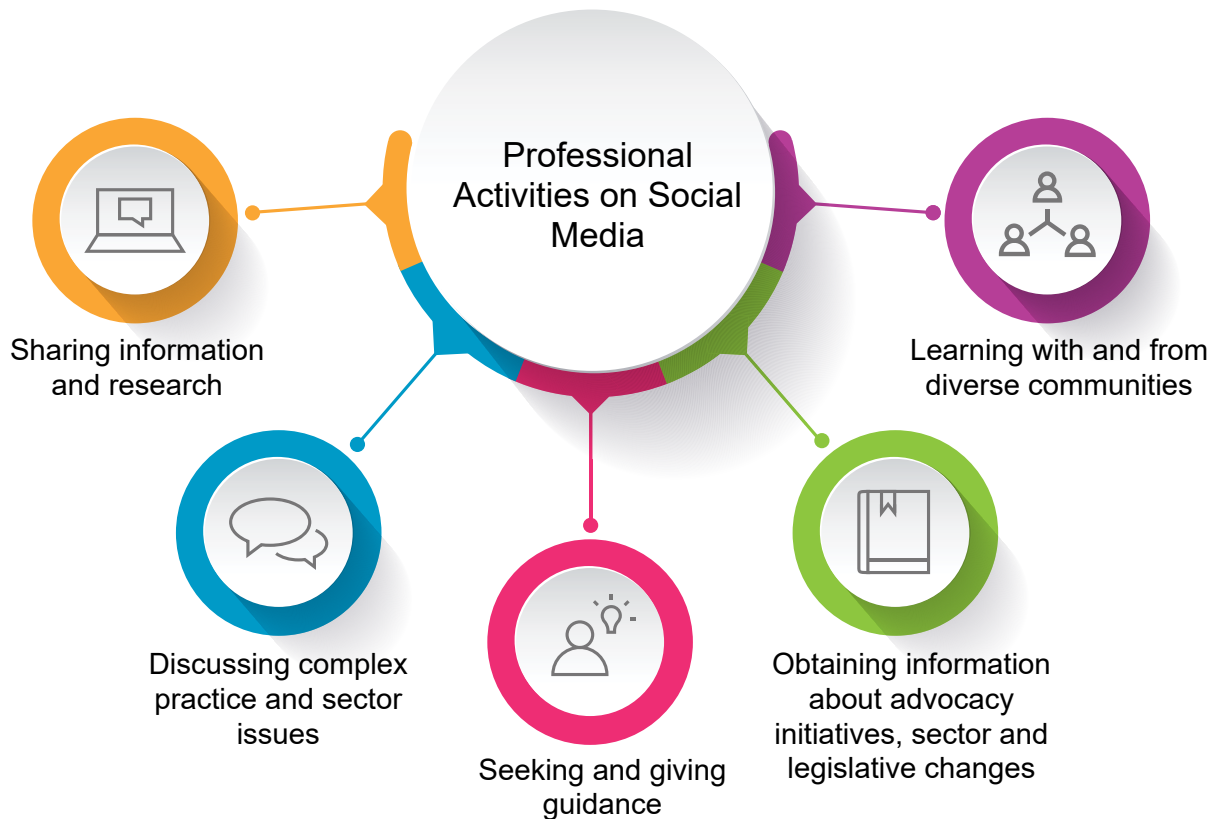
Social media refers to internet platforms and applications where individuals post and share personal and professional information with others online. Posted information may include images, videos, ideas, opinions, news articles, research, event invitations and more.

This resource focuses on the use of social media including, but not limited to the following:

- Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Pinterest)
- Blogs
- Video sites (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo)
- Online chat rooms and forums

Benefits of Social Media

Using social media can create opportunities that may be beneficial to an RECE's practice. Social media can be a valuable professional learning tool that allows RECEs to connect and interact with other professionals outside of their practice. Through social media, RECEs join or develop communities of practice virtually anywhere and anytime. Some useful professional activities that may occur via social media are:



Managing the Risks of Social Media

Accountability and Professionalism

RECEs have both personal and professional lives. Yet, it is important that RECEs understand that their decisions, actions and communications, in all areas of their life, impact both their personal and professional lives. Everything RECEs present to the world on social media can impact the public's perception of, and trust in, the profession. An RECE demonstrates responsible use of social media by modelling professional values, beliefs and behaviours in their online activities at all times.

Review the practice scenario: "Posting on social media" in the [Practice Guideline: Professionalism](#)

Upholding the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* and using good professional judgment outside of work is essential to demonstrate accountability, professionalism and leadership. RECEs need to thoughtfully consider how comments made on social media might impact others. Posting content that could be perceived as unprofessional and inappropriate should be avoided. Engaging in online harassment, bullying or activities that marginalize or discriminate against others is not permitted and may be considered an act of professional misconduct.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Standard VI from the Code and Standards outlines RECEs' obligations to respect confidentiality and privacy of information related to children, families and colleagues. RECEs must also follow legislation related to privacy and information sharing.

Some social media posts may be of interest to families or intended for professional learning in communities of practice. Before posting or using any image, video recording or other information about a child, family or colleague, RECEs must ensure that they have obtained consent from families and colleagues.

Social media groups that are labeled *closed groups* may give the wrong impression that they are *private*, and this is not the case. RECEs need to remember that their social media posts can be retrieved, saved and reposted by any person or entity with access to the online platform or application. As needed, legal authorities can also gain access to electronic posts. Therefore, an RECE needs to pause and carefully reflect on the content of their communication before they post or share anything on social media.

Professional Boundaries and Dual Relationships

As communicated in Standard V, RECEs are responsible for maintaining and managing professional boundaries with children, families, and colleagues. Using social media can create challenges for RECEs because the boundaries between their personal and professional lives have the potential to become blurred. An RECE needs to consider whether accepting an online friend or follower request from a child under their professional supervision, a child's family member, or colleague is appropriate and whether or not the professional boundaries are clear.

By accepting a friend or follower request, an RECE may also be entering into a dual relationship with the child, their family member or a colleague. RECEs continually assess and evaluate to what extent a dual relationship may impair their professional judgment or lead to risk of harm to a child. RECEs take steps to end a dual relationship if it is leading to impaired professional judgment, a risk of harm to children, a boundary violation or a conflict of interest. Dual relationships can also create other unwanted and unintended consequences such as a violation of professional boundaries or a conflict of interest.

Resource: [Practice Guideline: Dual Relationships](#)

Reflect on the College Vignette: [Do You Really Know Who Your Friends Are?](#)

Note: The information presented in this Practice Note does not address the use of electronic devices, such as cell phones, tablets, and computers. It also does not address the use of electronic and online communication used in the context of an RECE's employment role and setting such as email, websites, social media and mobile applications. However, the information presented in this resource would also generally apply.

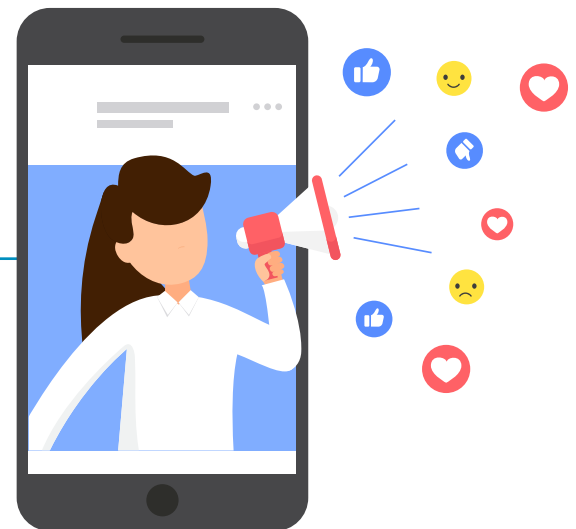
Simpson, R. L. (2014). Social media creates significant risks for nursing. *Nursing Administration Quarterly*, 38(1), 96-98.

Before You Post on Social Media

In the context of using social media outside of work, RECEs must continue to use sound professional judgment, engage in ongoing reflective practice and continuously assess their use of social media.

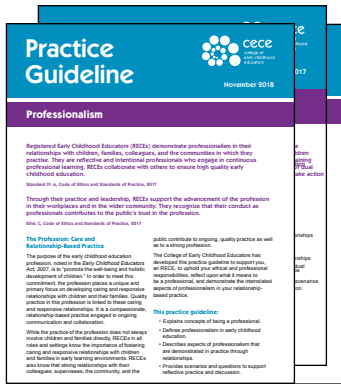
The following should be considered **before** posting on social media and used to **review** existing social media accounts:

- ✓ Nothing is private on social media. Review relevant legislation, standards and policies regarding confidentiality and the release of information before posting any information about a child, family or colleague.
- ✓ Obtain consent before you post anything related to a child, family or colleague. Review relevant legislation, standards and policies regarding consent and permissions before posting any information.
- ✓ Consider who the post is designed for and who else may view it.
- ✓ Reflect on whether the post can negatively impact a child, family, colleague, your professional reputation or the profession as a whole.
- ✓ Remember that posts are instantaneous, can be widely shared and often have a permanent record.
- ✓ Be aware that accounts have various privacy settings that may change over time. Review all accounts for updates and consider your shared content, followers, friends, membership to open/closed groups and other relevant information.



Additional Resources

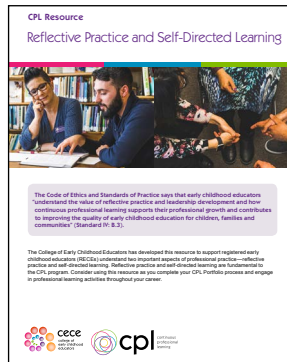
For opportunities to reflect on your practice, review and discuss the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* along with the following College resources:



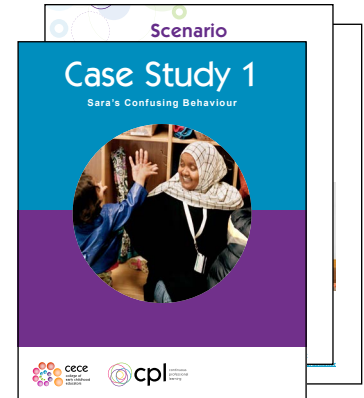
[Practice Guideline: Professionalism](#)

[Practice Guideline: Dual Relationships](#)

[Practice Guideline: Inclusion of Children with Disabilities](#)



[CPL Resource: Reflective Practice and Self-Directed Learning](#)



[Case Studies and Scenarios](#)

College of Early Childhood Educators

Telephone: 416 961-8558

Toll-free: 1 888 961-8558

Fax: 416 961-8772

Email: practice@college-ece.ca

Website: college-ece.ca



Cette publication est également disponible en français sous le titre : *Note de pratique – Utilisation des médias sociaux*

If you require an accessible format and/or communication support, please contact the College at 1 888 961-8558 / communications@college-ece.ca.

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