



NORTH CAROLINA RESPIRATORY CARE BOARD
125 Edinburgh South Drive, Suite 100
Cary, NC 27511

SOCIAL MEDIA POSITION STATEMENT

The North Carolina Respiratory Care Board has been charged by the General Assembly with responsibility to ensure the competency of respiratory care in this state and to protect the citizens of North Carolina from the unqualified practice of respiratory care. In keeping with this responsibility, the Board is issuing this position statement to address the responsible use of social media, since improper use is considered a violation of North Carolina General Statute § 90-659(a)(1)(d) and Board Rules 21 NCAC 61 .0307 (10).

The Board recognizes that freedom of expression is one of our country's founding principles; therefore, the Board supports responsible use of social media. However, health care practitioners are held to a higher standard than others with respect to social media because health care professionals, unlike members of the lay public, are bound by ethical and professional obligations that extend beyond the workplace. Therefore, the NCRB has adopted the following position with permission from the North Carolina Medical Board.

The informality of social media sites may obscure the serious implications and long term consequences of certain types of postings. The Board encourages its licensees to consider the implications of their online activities including, but not limited to, the following:

- ☐ A licensee's publicly available online content directly reflects on his or her professionalism. Therefore, improper use of social media can reflect poorly on the individual and the profession. It is advisable that licensees separate their professional and personal identities online (maintain separate email accounts for personal and professional use; establish a social media presence for professional purposes and one for personal use, etc.).
- ☐ Licensees must understand that the code of conduct that governs their face to face encounters with patients also extends to online activity. As such, licensees interacting with patients online must maintain appropriate boundaries in accordance with professional ethical guidelines, just as they would in any other context.
- ☐ Licensees have an absolute obligation to maintain patient privacy and must refrain from posting identifiable patient information online.
- ☐ Because privacy is never absolute, considerations of professionalism should also extend to a licensee's personal accounts. Posting of material that demonstrates,



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or appears to demonstrate, behavior that might be considered unprofessional, inappropriate or unethical should be avoided.

- ☐ The online use of profanity, disparaging or discriminatory remarks about individual patients or types of patients is unacceptable.
- ☐ Licensees should routinely monitor their own online presence to ensure that the personal and professional information on their own sites is accurate and appropriate.

The Board also endorses the Model Policy Guidelines for the Appropriate Use of Social Media and Social Networking in Medical Practice adopted by the Federation of State Medical Boards which can be accessed at <http://www.fsmb.org/pdf/pub-social-media-guidelines.pdf>