

Caldwell County Social Media Policy

This policy provides guidance on appropriate use of Caldwell County Social Media to educate and communicate with citizens and stakeholders about the County's mission and work. While the County is required to comply with the law, including the Free Speech Clause of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, false or illegal speech is subject to being removed.

DEFINITIONS

1. Social Media means digital content created by the County and communicated on platforms which allow sharing, commenting, and engagement by the public. Examples include Facebook, X, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn.
2. Comment(s) means any digital content, information, links, images, videos, or any other form of communicative content posted in reply or response to a Social Media account post posted by the County.
3. User means a member of the public who views or interacts with one or more County Social Media sites.

EXPECTATIONS

1. Honest and civil discussion provides the best environment for citizens and other stakeholders to understand the work of government.
2. For respect and legal reasons, profanity, slurs, personal attacks, bullying or false information is prohibited.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. These guidelines apply to all County Social Media sites.
2. Comments and replies to posts, including direct or private messages sent to the County, may be subject to the North Carolina Public Records Law.
3. The County's Social Media accounts are not monitored 24/7 and no one should use Social Media accounts for emergencies.
4. County staff do not respond to all comments or messages.
5. Departments and divisions must report all Social Media accounts, and provide access to, the County's Public Information Officer (PIO).
6. Beginning August 30, 2024, departments and divisions must submit a written request to the PIO before creating any Social Media page or account. The request must contain the department or division name, purpose of the account, person(s) responsible for the account, plan for frequency of posts, and building an account following. The PIO will review the request within 5 working days.
7. Accounts created prior to August 30, 2024, must have a minimum number of followers. If pages fail to meet the minimum standard within 6 months, the PIO will delete the page. Additionally, by February 1, 2025, the following must be met:
 - a. Facebook pages must have a minimum of 1,500 followers.

- b. Instagram, LinkedIn, and other Social Media accounts must have a 1:2 follow ratio (number of accounts followed by the County account/number of followers) with a goal of reaching a 2:10 ratio.
8. Regularly posting on Social Media accounts builds engagement. Departments and divisions must post on their pages a minimum of 4 times per month. Repeated failure to regularly post on pages will result in the deletion of the account.
9. Comments and replies to those posts, and any direct or private messages sent to the County, are subject to disclosure under the Public Records Law. Departments and divisions are not required to respond to comments nor monitor accounts 24/7.
10. Because the County seal represents all departments and divisions, the seal is reserved exclusively for the County's Facebook page. The PIO will assist with developing profile pictures for each County entity.

CONTENT MODERATION

1. The County's Social Media accounts are created and maintained as limited public forums in accordance with law. The County invites members of the public to view and, where permitted, provide comments or other engagement on the County's Social Media posts. The law permits the County to hide and/or delete comments which are not legally protected speech.
2. The County may hide or delete the following:
 - a. Comments advocating direct violence or other illegal activity.
 - b. Comments containing or linking to obscenity, including sexually explicit or pornographic content.
 - c. Comments expressly encouraging or advocating the County illegally discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age or disability.
 - d. Comments containing links to malware and/or malicious content which could affect the functioning of computer systems, servers, or browser.
 - e. Duplicate comments posted repeatedly within a short time.
 - f. Defamatory comments including those against a specific person or organization, either determined by a court of law or by easily discovered facts.
 - g. Comments containing images or other content violating intellectual property or copyrights.
 - h. Comments containing a hyperlink to any website other than one controlled by the County.
 - i. Content generated by artificial intelligence, terrorist organizations, Bots, or fake Social Media accounts.
3. If a comment is removed based on a reason stated in Section 2 herein, the content, along with any reason for the removal, may be retained pursuant to the NC Records Retention requirements.

APPEAL

1. A user may appeal a decision to remove a comment by sending an email or letter to the PIO within 5 business days of the removal. Anonymous letters or emails will not qualify for an appeal.
2. The County's attorney will review the appeal, the law and advise accordingly.

3. Where possible the County will notify the user, describe the violation(s) and explain the appeal process. If the appeal is successful a blocked or banned user will be reversed.