

Social Media

Media Relations | Social Media

*click the video link for practical tips from law enforcement agency personnel



Purpose and Common Uses

Social media engagement can be effective in addressing public safety concerns, seeking information related to ongoing investigations, sharing information about initiatives and services, and cultivating community trust. Agencies can post information to large audiences about circumstances affecting their safety, like major traffic incidents impacting travel patterns and changes in crime trends. Social media can also be used to ask the public to provide information about missing people, specific crimes with unidentified suspects, and specific suspects that have not been located. Community members can learn about agency processes, initiatives, and specific services that are offered through social media posts. To augment strategies that enhance community trust, it is essential that agencies use social media engagement to protect individual civil liberties while promoting transparent communication.

Media Relations Tip Sheet

Victims' Rights Connections

Although victims' rights in each state and the federal system are unique, they often include the rights for victims and co-victims to treatment with fairness and dignity, privacy around access to personal information, notice of and be present at justice system events, confer with system professionals, express views and accompaniment of support persons at key system intersections, reasonable protection from the accused, and information about processes and services. When engaging in social media use, agency personnel should adjust practices whenever possible to ensure proactive and consistent access to these rights for victims and co-victims.



Victimization Considerations

When agencies use social media to address public safety concerns, rights and needs of victims and co-victims must be considered. Communication with loved ones of traffic incidents resulting in serious injuries or death is essential prior to posting information. Victims and co-victims learning that suspects have been identified, arrested, or released from custody through social media can affect their ongoing communication with agency personnel. This can be critical when the prosecution of cases is reliant upon affirmative victim participation.



Victim Services Role

Victim services personnel can provide essential assistance around the use of social media – to victims, co-victims, law enforcement agency personnel, and media representatives. Victims and co-victims benefit from advance notifications of social media posts by agency personnel that are case related. They also benefit from supportive contact to review benefits and challenges of posting information on personal accounts and review of anticipated reactions to associated public comments. Law enforcement agency personnel and media representatives often benefit from input related to trauma-informed language and practices. Victim services personnel can also ensure that victims and co-victims are aware of agency actions, initiatives, and collaborations that are promoted through social media.