

Guidelines and Best Practices for Managing Social Media Tools, Both Personal and on Behalf of Barrier Islands Free Medical Clinic

The following guidelines lay out general boundaries and best practices for Barrier Islands Free Medical Clinic (BIFMC) staff and volunteers while using various social media tools, both privately and on behalf of the Clinic, and is in accordance with current HIPAA guidelines.

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide information about the use and misuse of social networking sites in relation to BIFMC. We encourage approved use of social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, blogs, and other similar forums to promote BIFMC in productive ways. Our goal is to both promote BIFMC and the work we all do, as well as avoid the potential harm and liability that can result from inappropriate or unethical use in both an official and unofficial capacity.

Remember that you are always acting as an ambassador for BIFMC when working online, and the general rules of conduct apply. If you have any questions about using social media, contact the Clinic Director or Marketing and Communications Specialist. Due to the rapid changes that occur within social media platforms day-to-day, this set of guidelines and best practices is also subject to change at any point in time.

Managing Accounts On Behalf BIFMC

1. Obtain Official Approval Before You Create a Social Media Presence

Creating social media accounts using the Clinic's name, logo or likeness/affiliation requires permission from the Clinic Director. Identifying the audience and intended outcomes of the communication is an important part of the justification for creating a social media presence. All uses of social media must follow the same ethical standards that BIFMC employees must otherwise follow.

2. Agreements and Stipulations

After receiving approval for the creation of your social media outlet, all log-in information must be shared with the Clinic Director and Marketing and Communications Specialist. This is to prevent "abandoned" accounts, should a person or group cease their usage of the networking site. This also allows BIFMC to take down inappropriate or incorrect postings, should they occur, and remove pages that are not acting in accordance with these guidelines.

3. Setting Up Your Account, Page or Profile

- If you need assistance in setting up social media accounts and their profiles or settings contact the Marketing and Communications Specialist.

- Protect your own privacy by limiting access to information that is personal. Be mindful of posting information that you would not want the public to see.
- If you are setting up a Facebook page, add the Clinic Director or Marketing & Communications Specialist as a Page Admin and have review page set up before you go live or promote it.
- Wherever possible, link official BIFMC accounts as a favorite or the BIFMC website as an additional resource.
- In the event that you are blogging on behalf of BIFMC, staff and volunteers are prohibited from blogging anonymously, using a pseudonym or false name. Each individual must identify themselves as an employee or volunteer of the Clinic.

4. Promote

There are several ways to promote your social media presence. Here are some with intended audience:

- Newsletter news item (All-community)
- BIFMC Homepage News & Blog (All-community)
- BIFMC Facebook Page post and link (All-community)
- BIFMC Twitter account (All-community)
- BIFMC Instagram account (All-community)
- BIFMC YouTube account (All-community)

In order to request postings in any of the abovementioned outlets, contact the Marketing and Communications Specialist. Cross-posting on multiple platforms, comments and sharing are the best ways to promote social media. Ideally it will happen organically, but you will need to actively promote your content or utilize paid promotions to gain new audiences.

5. Manage

- Set goals and stick to them. Continuity and interesting content will better engage your audience. Use photos, videos and links often, and link back to the BIFMC website whenever possible. Linking to albums, news stories and videos from www.bifmc.org will drive traffic to our site and aid in promoting our programs.
- Staff and volunteers are prohibited from using photos of patients without gaining documented permissions prior to use. Never use patients' full names, especially when linked to a photograph, without documented permission.

- **Be Honest:** Posts or messages will appear to be affiliated with BIFMC, giving the viewer the understanding that the Clinic is behind each one. Do not say anything that is dishonest, untrue, or misleading.
- **Respect copyright laws:** You should never quote more than short excerpts of someone else's work, and always attribute such work to the original author/source. It is good practice to link to others' work rather than reproduce it (ex., link a url or share a post from another user). This also applies to use of photos and music. For free images, visit a copyright free image download site such as Pixabay.com.
- **Photos:** Digital photos should be appropriate for viewing by all. Photos of persons aged 13 and over, which is the default age to join most social networks, is a general rule for use. Do not post graphics, photos, clip art or artwork of any kind that is not an original production by a BIFMC member (give credit) or that has proper licensing and can be credited to an external author. Google Images is NOT an acceptable place to obtain safe-copyright-free images. Google images is simply a search engine finding images on the site, many of which are licensed and require fees for use.
- **Respect your audience:** The public, and the BIFMC community, reflect a diverse set of values and points of view. Don't be afraid to be yourself, but do so respectfully. This includes not only the obvious (no ethnic slurs, offensive comments, personal insults, obscenity, etc.) but also proper consideration of privacy and of topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory. BIFMC reserves the right to delete any post it deems contrary to Clinic values.

6. Final Tips

- **Quality matters.** Use a spell-checker.
- **Carefully review the privacy settings on any social media site.** Be smart about posting personal information.
- **Review content before posting.** If you are unsure about something, have a colleague review it. Remember that even a deleted post may have been shared by someone or through an RSS feed or screen-shot.
- **Look to other medical social media sites for best-practices.** There are some really interesting and successful uses of social media by physicians, clinics and hospitals.

Best Practices For Maintaining Personal Accounts While a Member of BIFMC

1. Creating Personal Posts

- Use common sense and discretion when using social media tools. Do not use commentary deemed to be defamatory, obscene, proprietary, or libelous toward BIFMC or our patients or colleagues. Exercise caution regarding colorful language, obscenity, copyrighted materials, legal conclusions, and derogatory remarks or characterizations.
- Weigh whether a particular posting puts your effectiveness as a staff member, care provider or volunteer at risk. When in doubt, remember that you are an ambassador of BIFMC. Keep in mind that while you work or volunteer for BIFMC, you are always a representative of the Clinic, even at home, during off-hours, and online in personal interactions that may be viewed publicly.
- Imagine a patient, potential volunteer or donor visiting your personal profile and how it could be perceived. Make adjustments to your online profiles accordingly. Posting on social media is not like posting something to your website or blog and then realizing that a story or photo should be taken down; on a social networking site, once you post something, it may be available even after you have removed it from the site.
- Do not discuss patients or coworkers, publicly criticize BIFMC policies or personnel, or share confidential information. Don't assume that anything online is private.

2. Friends and Followers

- Staff and volunteers are prohibited from accepting current patients as friends on personal social networking sites, and decline any patient-initiated friend requests, in accordance to HIPAA.
- Do not initiate Facebook friendships with patients. Remember that people classified as "friends" have the ability to download and share your information with others.
- If you wish to use networking protocols to educate or connect with patients, please work with Brenda Falls and Carrie Moores to help identify proper ways to do it.

3. Security

- Visit your profile's security and privacy settings. At a minimum, staff should have all privacy settings set to "only friends." "Friends of Friends" and "Networks and Friends" open your content to a large group of unknown people. Your privacy and that of your family and friends may be a risk.
- If any member of the staff learns of information on the social networking site that falls under the mandated reporting guidelines, he/she must report it as required by law.
- Please do not hesitate to contact the Clinic Director or Marketing & Communications Specialist if you have any questions or concerns.