SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES & STANDARDS
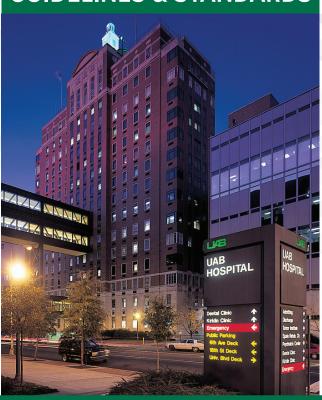
These guidelines and standards apply to:

UAB Medicine

UAB Health System

UAB School of Medicine

UA Health Services Foundation

Callahan Eye Hospital and Clinics

UAB MEDICINE

The University of Alabama at Birmingham

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Social Media 101

What is Social Media?

Social media is user-generated content (UGC) and interactive sites where the public shares content using highly accessible technologies, including blogs, microblogs, videos, webinars, podcasts, content sharing, photo galleries, instant messaging, images, surveys, and more. Examples include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Flickr, Snapchat, LinkedIn, and Foursquare. UGC is intended to facilitate communication and influence interaction between peers and with public audiences.

Getting Started

Social media relies heavily on developing a sense of community. Within that community, connecting, engaging, communicating, and being consistent all are key to an effective social media handle. One of the main differences of social media compared to traditional media is the real-time aspect. You are able to monitor, revise, and track all activity with the click of a button.

The use of social media in health care has grown over the last several years due to the ease of use, effective reach, and potential impact targeted health messages can have. Specifically, this guide will address mostly department/organizational social media platforms. If general consumers and patients are the target audience, each department should first utilize the global brand accounts. If you would like to develop or are thinking about developing a social media presence for your academic division, department, organizational group etc., please contact your marketing or communications manager. Many times, your group/department/division etc. may be able to post your content on channels that are already managed by your unit's communications team or the established UAB Medicine or UAB School of Medicine channels.

It should be noted that the UAB Medicine and UAB School of Medicine Marketing and Communications team should be the only ones handling paid social media with the exception of grant-funded clinical trial efforts.

UAB Medicine Digital Media and Communications Philosophy

UAB Medicine website(s) and social media will support the vision of the University of Alabama at Birmingham Health System (UABHS)/UAB Medicine to be recognized as a world leader in patient care, research, and training. The sites will reflect the care and professionalism the community has come to expect from this award-winning institution, while informing, educating, and updating users on the latest in quality health care provided by UAB Medicine as well as providing reliable platforms for customer interaction.

Social Media 101

Why We Use Social Media
- Builds relationships
- Ability to deliver targeted content
- Personal engagement
- Real-time
- Two-way conversation
- Keeps brand top of mind

Types of Channels

Twitter

Twitter is an information network made up of short messages from all over the world via a computer, tablet, or phone. Twitter is a part of many social media platforms and has a goal of creating a network of users who can communicate throughout the day with short messages known as "tweets."

The platform functions as a message dashboard. A tweet can be typed via mobile device or computer and it is sent by the user to Twitter's server, which relays it to a list of other users/followers who have signed up to receive the sender's tweets. Twitter is unlike other social media platforms because it restricts character limit by only allowing 280 characters per tweet.

Some of the key features of Twitter include retweeting another user's tweet, Twitter polls, the use of hashtags, and obtaining content in real time. In health care, Twitter is seen as an educational platform and more for peer-to-peer interaction compared to Facebook, which is more for consumer interaction. Twitter also has become popular in health care for national reputation rankings and referral methods.

Facebook

Facebook is a social media platform used to connect with friends, family, and other people you may or may not know by sharing photos, videos, sending messages, and posting status updates. A Facebook business page is used as a digital storefront or a way to increase awareness of your business with a free online presence.

Facebook business pages are seen as a way to connect people with your products or services. It is best for the main company or business entity to have a Facebook page. In health care, it is not recommended that a service line or department have a public facing Facebook page, unless a special exception is needed.

Social Media 101

Instagram
Instagram is a photo- and video-sharing social networking service owned by Facebook. It has an emphasis and focus on the image or video itself and not so much the text of the post. Having clear, high-definition images and videos under 60 seconds are necessary for this platform. Instagram can be seen as a good way to share photos from an event or get your message across in short clips/highlights in real time. In health care, it is not recommended that a service line or department have a public-facing Instagram handle, unless a special exception is needed.

LinkedIn
LinkedIn is a platform that allows you to manage your professional identity, build and engage with your professional network, and access knowledge, insights and opportunities. LinkedIn is seen as a great way to connect with potential employees, search for jobs, and give others an inside look at your company. In health care, it is not recommended that a service line or department have its own LinkedIn account.

Snapchat
Snapchat is a multimedia app that lets users talk with followers through pictures and chat in a limited time set by the user before it expires. You can also view Live Stories from around the world and explore news in the Discover section. Snapchat is seen as a way to document real-time events and happenings. It is usually best for the main health care brand to be the only one with an account on this platform.

Pinterest
Pinterest is a platform that helps you discover new interests and tailored information based on search or categories. You can visually share those by posting, known as "pinning", the images or videos to your board. You can also browse what other users have pinned. Pinterest is seen differently than typical social media outlets like Facebook, Twitter, etc. because it is a network focused more on content that provides inspiration or displays items for sale. It is usually best for the main health care brand to be the only one with an account on this platform.

YouTube
YouTube is a video sharing platform. It is seen as a way to share your voice directly to consumers and patients through marketing, educational, and other types of video. For brand consistency, it is not recommended that a service line or department have its own channel. It is usually best for the main health care brand to be the only one with an account on this platform.

Social Media 101

Official UAB Medicine and UAB School of Medicine Handles

Official pages are those that are developed, managed, or supported and approved by UABHS Marketing & Communications.

Official Channels:
- **Facebook (link):** @UABMedicine and @uabschoolofmedicine
- **Twitter (link):** @uabmedicine and @uabsom
- **Instagram (link):** @uabmedicine and @uabschoolofmedicine
- **LinkedIn (link):** UAB Medicine and UAB School of Medicine
- **YouTube (link):** UAB Medicine and UAB School of Medicine

Key Social Media Terms to Know

- **Analytics –** the process of following metrics on your social media performance and using those data to improve your strategy
- **Algorithm –** also known as 'feed algorithm', is the set of rules a social network uses to automatically decide which posts come first in your feed
- **Average response time –** the average time it takes a brand or someone to reply to questions or complaints on social media
- **Boosted post –** a social post you put money behind that started out as an organic post (this should only be handled by UAB Marketing & Communications)
- **Click-through rate –** the percentage of people who see your post by clicking on it
- **Conversion rate –** the percentage of users who see your post or ad and then take a specified action
- **Comment –** when someone publishes a response to your post, either with text or a piece of content
- **Direct message (DM) –** Direct messages are private messages sent from one account to another account(s). You can use direct messages for one-on-one private conversations or among groups.
- **Engagement rate –** a social media metric that tells you how much a post is motivating people to interact with it
- **Feed –** generic term for the stream of content you see from other users and is usually the homepage (newsfeed)
- **Followers –** followers are other accounts that have chosen to receive your posts in their home timeline or feed
- **Handle –** username on social media that starts with the @ symbol ex: @username
- **Hashtag –** a hashtag is any word or phrase immediately preceded by the # symbol. When you click or tap on a hashtag, you'll see other posts containing the same keyword or topic.
- **Impression –** a social media metric that measures how many times your post has been shown in users' feeds. Each social network counts impressions differently.
- Like – If you like something, you acknowledge that you have seen or appreciate it.
- **Mention –** when someone tags or mentions you in a post
- **Organic post –** post with no money put behind it
- **Pins –** ideas that people on Pinterest find and save from around the Internet
- **Profile –** your social media account

Setting Things Up

- **Post –** content you share on your social media channel
- **Reach –** how many people have seen your post
- Retweet – the act of sharing another account's Tweet to all of your followers by clicking or tapping on the Retweet button
- **Tag –** used when an individual, business, or any entity with a social profile mentions someone in a post or comment
- **Tweet –** content on Twitter that may contain photos, videos, and/or text
- **SEO –** search engine optimization (SEO) is a way to increase the online visibility of a website or a web page when results are pulled organically for a search engine
- **Share –** when you post someone else's content on your own channel by clicking the share (or Retweet) button
- **Story –** feature that lets users post real-time photos, videos, and text that vanish after 24 hours (used on Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat)
- **Viral –** term describing content that spreads exponentially on social media
- **Vlogging –** video blogging
- **@ –** the @ sign is used to call out usernames in Tweets or on Instagram

Expectations for Your Handle

Do you want to create a social media platform for your department, division, team, group, etc.? While social media platforms are free and simple to use, they require many resources. It might be best to use one of our existing UAB Medicine or UAB School of Medicine channels as a platform for your content rather than creating a new one. If you believe it is best to create a handle for your team, please contact your department communications staff or reach out to somcomm@uab.edu or your marketing service line representative. Then, consider the questions below and take our social media readiness assessment (link):

- What is the purpose of your social channel?
- Who are you trying to target and reach on your social channel?
- What would you like to accomplish? What are your goals?
- What content do you want to share, and do you have enough content to meet the standard listed in the best practices below? If not, it might be best to use an established UAB Medicine or UAB School of Medicine channel to push out your content.
- What is the goal of this handle? (i.e. to communicate events, make peer-to-peer connections, drive traffic to your website, boost brand awareness)
- Do you have the bandwidth needed to run a social media channel? It is a long-term commitment that needs dedicated resources and attention for years. Followers don't simply happen overnight.
- Will there be a designated person or group of individuals to run your account?
- How often do you plan to post (daily, weekly, bi-weekly)?

As a department, division, UAB Medicine or UAB School of Medicine group, etc., how would your channel be in the best interest of UAB Medicine's or UAB School of Medicine's mission statement and goals?

Setting Things Up

Social Media Readiness Assessment

If you have answered the questions under the previous section, the next step is to take the social media readiness assessment. After completing it and answering the questions above, if you would like to move forward in the process by creating a social media handle that would represent your UAB Medicine or UAB School of Medicine department/division/group, the next step is to meet with your representative in marketing.

Overview of the Process of Getting a Department or Division Handle:

- Decide on what type of channel best suits your goals and desired audience.
- Contact your communications or service line marketing manager.
- Acknowledge expectations.
- Complete the Social Media Readiness Assessment.
- Meet with the UAB Medicine Marketing & Communications or UAB School of Medicine Communications and sign the Moderator Agreement.
- Launch your handle, if approved.

If at this point you feel that having your own social media handle or platform is not appropriate, here are next steps:

- Submit events, news, announcements, research findings, etc. to the UAB Medicine or UAB School of Medicine social media team for consideration for established UAB Medicine or UAB School of Medicine handles. Do this by emailing getsocial@uabmc.edu or somcomm@uabmc.edu or contact your service line marketing manager.
- Follow and share content from the established UAB Medicine or UAB School of Medicine handle from your personal page.

If you are a UAB employee outside of the School of Medicine, and would like to create a UAB department or division handle, contact University Relations for specific standards and social media guidelines.

If at this point you feel that having your own UAB Medicine or UAB School of Medicine department/division social media handle is appropriate – and you have submitted the Social Media Application form or are creating a personal handle and would like to know more – please read the guide below.

Practices and Policies

Best Practices

Overall
- Have a strategy.
- Develop your tone of voice and content approach specifically for the channel you plan to use.
- Define your target audience and follower goals.
- Determine the aesthetic of your channel so that it is cohesive every time you push content.
- All accounts should have a brand-compliant profile image (requested through UAB Medicine Marketing or University Relations)

Plan
- Coordinate and leverage a mix of traditional and interactive strategies.
- Create an editorial calendar to keep track of content. You should have 4-6 weeks of content planned before the launch of an account.
- Try to diversify your topics and mediums used to deliver your content (video, image carousel, listicle, graphic, etc.)
- Remember that most consumers will be viewing your social media platform on their phone or tablet. So when creating a post or graphic, take into consideration what it will look like on mobile devices.
- You should plan to post consistently—at least once a day or every other day on major platforms like Facebook and Instagram. For Twitter, more frequent posting is preferred.

Action
- Provide consistent, timely, and relevant information (daily posts, activity).
- Correct any errors quickly and visibly.
- Ensure privacy and safety (policy posted and enforced).
- Review analytics and make adjustments in your content strategy.
- Be responsive. Respond to all comments and complaints, though a response may not be warranted in special circumstances. Be tactful when responding to negative messages and comments. Responses should be made within 24-48 hours. If you have an issue that you do not know how to handle, please contact your communications manager at getsocial@uabmc.edu or, for the School of Medicine, somcomm@uab.edu.
- Be prepared to respond to negative comments or posts if they require a response; some will not, while others should be taken seriously. Do not delete negative comments unless they violate the terms of service. Otherwise, deleting comments can be viewed as a cover-up or a lack of transparency.
- For specific or personal comments, it is best to initiate a private conversation by inviting them to Facebook Messenger or Instagram/Twitter direct messaging for a private conversation. This also can be helpful if you need to address something that involves an outside department or staff member.

Social media requires daily maintenance and engagement with others. It should not be used as a platform to only push out messages occasionally. It also should not be a platform that is ignored and left inactive and unresponsive. Keep these things in mind when creating a handle or channel.

Practices and Policies

Writing for the Appropriate Audience

If the target audience is consumers and/or the general public, it is a best practice to use "plain language" when posting. However, the main UAB Medicine or UAB School of Medicine handles might be better suited for your content than a division/department handle, so please contact your marketing/communications manager or email getsocial@uabmc.edu. If the target audience is peer-to-peer or academic, this does not apply.

Using plain language helps meet the reading level and literacy needs of the average American. This is a best practice and an evidence-based strategy that evolved from hundreds of studies done throughout the past 10 years. Keep in mind that:

- One in four Alabamians is functionally illiterate.
- One out of five American adults reads at the fifth grade level or below.
- Most health care materials are written above the 10th grade level.

Instead of this	Use this
anaphylaxis	shock, sudden and severe allergic reaction, stop breathing, life-threatening allergic reaction
chronic	constant, never-ending, does not go away, long-term, long-lasting
mitigate	make less harmful, soften, lessen, reduce
myocardial infarction	heart attack

Things to Remember
- Identify the intended audience and give them the most relevant information, not all the information.
- Get to the point right away.
- Avoid jargon.
- Define acronyms and abbreviations, and use them sparingly.
- Keep the content short.
- Use an active voice.

Practices and Policies

Faculty & Staff Social Media Accounts

Benefits of Social Media
- Establishes physicians and entities as thought leaders/experts in their fields
- Allows industry leaders to keep track of developments in their field
- Allows for communication among likeminded professionals and encourages collaboration on clinical cases and research
- Plays a role in increasing national reputation among physicians in key areas (U.S. News & World Report voting, etc.)

Department or Division Account
- A "UAB Medicine Social Media Account" is defined as any account associated with UAB Health System, including departments, divisions, organizations, units, etc.
- A "UAB School of Medicine Social Media Account" is defined as any account associated with the UAB School of Medicine, including departments, divisions, organizations, units, etc.
- Before creating a UAB Medicine or UAB School of Medicine department or division social media account, talk with your service line marketing manager or communications manager.
- Use of the UAB Medicine or UAB School of Medicine name and variations is subject to trademark rules, so no account should be created using the UAB Medicine or UAB School of Medicine logo or variations of the logo without the approval of the UAB Medicine Marketing & Communications or UAB School of Medicine Communications team.

Overview of the Process of Getting a Department or Division Handle:
- Decide on what type of channel best suits your goals and desired audience.
- Contact your communications or service line marketing manager.
- Acknowledge expectations.
- Complete the Social Media Readiness Assessment.
- Complete the Social Media Application form.
- Meet with the UAB Medicine Marketing & Communications, UAB School of Medicine Communications team, or UAB School of Medicine department-specific Communications team member, and sign the Moderator Agreement.
- Launch your handle, if approved.

Practices and Policies

Personal Account
- If you identify your role at UAB Medicine or UAB School of Medicine publicly on social media, you are representing UAB Medicine or UAB School of Medicine and therefore must adhere to UAB Medicine's conduct policies.
- Employees who publicly identify themselves as UAB Medicine or UAB School of Medicine employees are speaking and representing their own personal views and opinions, not the views and opinions of UAB Medicine or the UAB School of Medicine.
- Employees should recognize that their communications about UAB Medicine or UAB School of Medicine carry an implication of official information and therefore can have unintended consequences.
- Many employees act as ambassadors on social media for UAB Medicine or UAB School of Medicine and are known UAB Medicine or UAB School of Medicine employees. Even if employees do not identify themselves as UAB Medicine or UAB School of Medicine employees – either on their profile or in posts – they may be known to recipients of a message as UAB Medicine or UAB School of Medicine employees.

General Tips
- Paid Social Media: No one except UAB Medicine Marketing & Communications or UAB School of Medicine Communications can launch or manage paid campaigns on social media platforms.
- Job postings must follow UAB Health System Human Resources (HR) established processes. Social media should not be used in place of HR processes.
- Remember, all content you put out on social media platforms can immediately be shared, saved, and searched.
- If you would like your department or division content pushed out on our social media channels, please email the content to your service line manager.
- If contacted by the press or media outlets related to anything about UAB Medicine or UAB School of Medicine that you have posted, please notify your direct supervisor and let the UAB Media Relations Team know before you respond.
- UAB Medicine and UAB School of Medicine are not responsible for any comments or advice obtained through social media. All participants joining social media do so at their own risk.
- Reliance on information obtained through social media is at the risk of the user.
- Complaints:
  – If patients or family members post complaints about a service or other issues, the response time should be 24-48 hours. The first response should be to ask them to private message you their contact information and see if they would like to be put in touch with a patient advocate. If they do, please collect their contact information and send it to your communications manager for help or ask UAB Medicine Marketing & Communications or UAB School of Medicine Communications to facilitate.
  – While general/common questions are okay to answer, you should never give specific medical advice via social channels.

Practices and Policies

Do

- Follow UAB Medicine and UAB School of Medicine on social media.
- Share content from established UAB Medicine and UAB School of Medicine handles.
- Upload the image(s) and a completed consent form if you wish to share your photos on UAB Medicine or UAB School of Medicine's social media channels. The form is available at oneuabmedicine.org/socialmedia.
- Report inappropriate posts or posts that could impact a patient's privacy by emailing getsocial@uabmc.edu.
- Respect copyright and fair use laws governing copyrighted material owned by others, including UAB Medicine's and UAB School of Medicine's own copyrights and brands.
- Read and respect UAB's Code of Conduct, which applies to all faculty, staff, employees, and other members of the UAB community.

Don't

- Share sensitive information or internal-only information on social media.
- Take, share, or post information or photos gained through a staff-patient relationship.
- Take photos or videos of patients on personal devices, including cell phones.
- Establish a department or division handle without approval and correct brand standards.
- Post or share information during an emergency that has not been vetted and approved through proper channels. Employees can share official communications, however.
- Share patient information on social media channels unless you have written consent from that patient.
- Follow or friend patients on social media platforms. Instead, encourage them to engage with established UAB Medicine or UAB School of Medicine channels. An exception can be made if the patient friendship existed before he/she became a patient.

Practices and Policies

UAB Medicine Digital Media and Communications Policy

These are a few relevant excerpts from the official policy governing digital media and communications for UAB Medicine:

3.1.12. Sensitive Information or Data: Any information that may be accessed only by authorized personnel. It includes protected health information, financial information, personnel data, trade secrets, and any information that may be personally identified with any individual, is deemed confidential by the author, or would otherwise negatively affect the UABHS if handled inappropriately.

3.1.13. Brand Standards: Brand helps convey a consistent message to the consumer about a product or service. This message may be conveyed through advertising, trademarks, logos, written language, actions, video, sounds, and images. Observance of brand standards contained within the UAB Medicine Brand Guidelines is required to maintain a consistent message.

5.1.1. Publishing the Following Information Shall Be Considered Unacceptable:
- **5.1.1.1.** Product advertisements, political lobbying, or religious promotions
- **5.1.1.2.** Disseminating confidential UAB Medicine information to unauthorized people

5.4. Enforcement: Alleged violations of this policy should be reported to UABHS Marketing & Communications for resolution or review.

Design
- **5.7.1.** All sites shall follow the UAB Medicine Brand Standards and design standards as put forth in the UAB Medicine Brand Guidelines (Link) linked above.
- **5.7.2.** Templates that comply with the UAB Medicine standards may be provided for official use. (link to brand site)

Site Manager
- **5.8.1.1.3.** The site manager is responsible for the proper execution of the
- UAB Medicine Digital Media & Communications Policy.
- **5.8.1.1.4.** The site manager is responsible for timely responding to comments and questions generated by patients and other customers.
- **5.8.1.1.5.** The site manager is responsible for ensuring all standards of this policy are met.

Content Owner
- **5.8.1.2.1.** The content owner is assigned by the site manager as a subject matter or content expert and is responsible for a particular section of a site or a site requested by a particular unit of UAB Medicine.
- **5.8.1.2.2.** The content owner may or may not be skilled in the publishing technologies for their Web pages but is the person responsible for the proper maintenance of content on their Web-based site, page, or application.
- **5.8.1.2.3.** The content owner is responsible for ensuring all content standards are met.

Practices and Policies

Copyright

- **5.11.1.** UABHS staff that use material originated by outside sources shall not infringe on the rights of the originator of the material as protected by copyright law and shall obtain permission to use or reproduce copyrighted works when such permission is required by law and/or pay royalties when such payment is required.
- **5.11.2.** All UABHS staff and others subject to this policy are required to obtain permission from the copyright owners unless the intended use is clearly permitted under the doctrine of "fair use."

To learn more about our commenting policy, go here.

For proper branding materials, specifications for images, and tips for accounts that are already active and approved, please email marketing@uabmc.edu or getsocial@uabmc.edu.

Forms and Resources

Consent Forms

One must be certain when posting and exchanging photos, videos, graphics, and text on social media that you are not engaging in copyright or other types of intellectual property infringement. If you are planning to use content that is not yours, you must have permission in writing from those appearing in the content and/or by the content owner. Please refer to our Consent to Photograph, Video, Interview, or Audio Record procedure here. (You must type "photograph" in the search bar.)

Forms and Links

- Consent Form – type in "photograph" to locate the form.
- Social Media Readiness Assessment
- Moderator Agreement form
- UAB Medicine Brand Standards
- How to Work with UAB Medicine Marketing & Communications
- UAB School of Medicine

Specific Employee Forms and Links

- Send images for UAB Medicine's main social media accounts (oneuabmedicine.org/socialmedia)
- Code of Conduct
- Policies & Procedures Library
- Corporate Compliance
- HIPAA
- Human Resources
- Commenting Policy