

Black Hills Rapids Soccer Club Social Media and Electronic Communications Policy

OVERVIEW

Online, social media and other electronic communication tools such as text messaging have become a prevalent and effective means of personal and professional communication, and have fundamentally changed the way many people and organizations interact. This policy sets forth our expectations with respect to the use of online and social media, as well as other forms of electronic communications, including email, by all Black Hills Rapids Soccer Club (“BHRSC”, coaches, players, parents, staff, volunteers and administrators).

The term “social media” as used in this policy encompasses a wide array of online media and communications and their scope is constantly evolving. For purposes of this policy, the terms “online media” and “social media” are to refer to internal and external websites, blogs, online social networks (*e.g.*, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn), wikis, video and photo sharing sites (*e.g.*, YouTube, SKYPE and Flickr), and other forms of similar personal online publishing and discourse that may or may not have been created yet. Policies regarding text messaging, email, and individual telephonic communications are also covered by these policies.

Social media forums are typically public. Even when using social media for purely personal purposes, a person’s public expressions might affect their professional identity and the organizational interests of BHRSC and our members. Accordingly, anyone participating in social media must ensure that their participation is consistent with BHRSC policies. That said; BHRSC fully respects the interest our employees, contractors, and coaches may have in participating in online and social media on a personal basis. What our employees, contractors, and coaches do outside of work on their own time is normally their own business. However, activities of BHRSC employees, contractors, and coaches outside of work that affect the organization's reputation, the employee’s, contractor’s or coach’s job performance, the safety of our players, or other BHRSC personnel are within the scope of this policy.

Both on and off the field, safety and youth protection should be a key focus. BHRSC is committed to be an advocate for youth and to keep children and their privacy safe, both online and off, and safety is always at the forefront of any considerations where social media usage is concerned.

With these objectives in mind, all BHRSC staff, contractors, volunteers, administrators, and coaches must be familiar with and adhere to this policy, regardless of whether they personally use social media, and must share this policy with parents and players.

INTERNET AND COMMUNICATION POLICIES FOR COACHES

- All social media communications must be public, and all communications on or through them must be public. Being “public” means no private channels. For example, private Facebook groups, direct messaging or private invitations to personal Facebook pages, invite-only YouTube channels, or Twitter direct messaging to individual players, and the like shall not be permitted between coaches and players. This enables administrators to monitor all communication and help ensure there is no inappropriate communication between coaches (including assistants and volunteer coaches) and players. This also serves to protect coaches.

- Abide by a “two-deep” policy for all communications and activities. This means at least two BHRSC-affiliated adults, or one BHRSC-affiliated adult and a parent, must be included or at least “copied” on all messages to players.
 - There should be no private messages and no one-on-one direct contact through email, Facebook messages, Twitter, direct messaging, Skype, chats, text messaging, instant messaging (including but not limited to Google Messenger, AIM, and the like) or other similar messaging features provided through social media sites. This two-deep policy also applies to all activities, outings, excursions, or other meetings between an adult and a player.
 - A coach may respond to a direct inquiry from a player regarding logistics of practice times, cancellations, schedules, etc. but our coaches should strive to include another adult on messages whenever possible.
Coaches and team representatives should only use text messages on issues that are soccer related and all communications should include a parent or guardian copied on the message.
 - Coaches and team representatives should avoid cell phone conversations with players to the greatest extent possible, and cell phone communications should only be used when absolutely necessary, and should only be soccer related.
- Staff members, contractors, volunteer coaches, etc. may not be "friends" on Facebook with a player.
- If you post content on any social media site (e.g., Facebook, blog, discussion board or comment) and it has something to do with work for BHRSC or subjects associated with the organization or any of its members, you should include a disclaimer in substantially the following form: *"The postings on this site are my own, personal views and do not represent the views or positions of the BHRSC, its customers, or personnel."*
- When providing your contact information for personal business in social media, you should use your personal contact information (such as a personal email address), not your BHRSC contact information.
- You should never provide your personal contact information (e.g., personal email, phone number, home or work address, etc.) directly to a player unless the player’s parent or guardian gives permission and the two-deep policy is applied to all communications between you and that player.
- Respect privacy and confidentiality obligations when posting photos or videos. Before you post online video or photos that include images of players, it is your responsibility to obtain consent from their parent or guardian. If you fail to do so and they subsequently object, it is your responsibility to promptly take down or otherwise edit the posting in order to protect their privacy. BHRSC will fully support those who wish to maintain their privacy in this regard.

INTERNET SAFETY FOR PLAYERS

- Do not give anyone online, not even your coach or other parent volunteers, your phone numbers at home or school, your parents' workplaces, or the name or location of your school or home address unless you have your parents' permission first. Never give your password to anyone but a parent or other adult in your family.
- Do not "friend" your coach on Facebook or other social media sites.
- Do not participate in "one on one" conversations via email, text message, telephone, Skype, Facebook or other social media sites with your coach.
- If your coach or any other adult sends or shows you email or any type of direct message/wall post or text message with images or words that make you feel uncomfortable, do not respond. Tell a parent or trusted adult about the message or what happened.
- Tell a parent or guardian about any calls or texts you receive from a coach that discuss more than just soccer related issues.
- If your coach or any other adult tells you to keep what's going on between the two of you secret, tell a parent or guardian immediately.
- Be careful whom you talk to on the Internet. If someone starts talking about subjects that make you feel uncomfortable, tell a parent or guardian. Keep in mind that a person you don't know who is trying to talk to you on the Internet could be an adult posing as a kid.
- Pay attention if someone tells you things that don't fit together. If one time an online "friend" says he or she is 12, and another time says he or she is 14. That is a warning that this person is lying and may be an adult posing as a kid.
- Unless you talk to a parent about it first, never talk to anybody by phone or text message if you know that person only online. If someone asks you to call—even if it's collect or a toll-free, 800 number — that's a warning. That person can get your phone number this way, either from a phone bill or from caller ID.
- Never agree to meet someone, including a coach or BHRSC staff or volunteer, at any place off-line in the real world, unless you have a parent's permission.

INTERNET SAFETY FOR PARENTS

- Discuss internet safety, and the "Internet Safety for Players," section above, with your children.
- Let your children know that their coach, and other adults, should not communicate with them without your explicit knowledge and approval.
- Review your child's online and electronic communications as appropriate to minimize risk.
- Report any suspicious online or electronic communications to the club executive director as soon as possible.
- If appropriate, report any suspicious online or electronic communications to the appropriate authorities as soon as possible.

REPORTING, INVESTIGATION AND RESOLUTION OF SUSPICIOUS INTERNET AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

- All suspicious internet and electronic communications should be reported to the Executive Director.
- The Executive Director will investigate all claims of inappropriate activity.
- Any reports of inappropriate activity will be reported to the Board of Directors, to contractual partners that require such information, and to South Dakota State Soccer Association.
- Reports of inappropriate activity may also be reported to law enforcement authorities and human services departments as appropriate.
- Pending the investigation of reported suspicious activity, the executive director may prohibit contact between a staff member, a coach, contractor or volunteer and all members of the club as deemed appropriate.

INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR BHRSC PERSONNEL

- Social media may be monitored. A qualified staff member or volunteer may have the responsibility of regularly monitoring social media channels, and backup administrators/monitors can be designated so there is no gap in the monitoring.
- Be prepared to respond to negative or inaccurate posts only if a response is warranted. Some negative comments do not require a response, while others should be taken seriously and addressed. Factors such as the number of followers and the severity of the conversations should temper if and how you respond.
- Inappropriate posts or comments should be documented and removed immediately.
- Direct media inquiries to the appropriate person. Media inquiries coming through social media should be referred to the Executive Director or a designee for an official response.
- Be respectful. When disagreeing with others' opinions, remain appropriate and polite. If you find yourself in a situation online that looks as if it's becoming antagonistic, do not get overly defensive and do not disengage from the conversation abruptly. Ask the appropriate personnel or the Executive Director for advice on how to disengage from the dialogue in a polite manner that reflects well on BHRSC.
- Safety and youth protection should be a key focus at all times. Any and all reports or allegations of inappropriate or potentially abusive behaviour must be promptly reported to the Executive Director.
- The Executive Director or appropriate designee must thoroughly investigate any and all reports or allegations of inappropriate or potentially abusive behavior.

All BHRSC personnel must comply with this policy. In the event BHRSC perceives any online communication activities by an employee, coach or volunteer as compromising the integrity or reputation of the organization or the safety of our members in any respect, BHRSC may request such communications to cease. Such communications may be reported to authorities if deemed appropriate by the Executive Director or other members of the BHRSC staff. Violations of this policy will result in corrective action including disciplinary action or dismissal when appropriate.

Email Communications

Upon accepting a position (employee, contractor, coach, director, or volunteer), a BHRSC email account may be issued. The BHRSC wants all Club business to be conducted through said account. The Club believes that this is part of branding and puts a professional touch on any transaction between a BHRSC employee, contractor, coach, director, or volunteer and the public at large. All of the pertinent and previously outlined rules of safety and etiquette apply. A situation wherein inappropriate or unprofessional conduct involving a BHRSC email account may warrant terminating the account. All BHR email accounts and content therein are property of BHRSC.