



# POLICE DEPARTMENT PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA & ELECTRONIC DEVICES

## CONDUCT & RESPONSIBILITY #105

Responsible Executive:  
Chief of Police  
Responsible Office:  
Vice President for Public Safety  
Approved by:  
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## Policy Statement

The Johns Hopkins Police Department (JHPD) recognizes its members’ rights to use social media personally, and the significant role that social media and the use of smartphones and other portable electronics have in members’ personal lives. This Directive does not prohibit a JHPD member from engaging in personal social media activity. Instead, it addresses only such social media activity that bears on a member’s official duties or suggests that the JHPD authorizes a posting, or that the member is posting on behalf of any part of Johns Hopkins or the JHPD.

## Who Is Governed by This Policy

All personnel, including sworn, nonsworn, and contractual or voluntary persons in service with the JHPD, are governed by this Directive.

## Purpose

The purpose of this Directive is to provide all members of the JHPD, when acting within the scope of their lawful authority as a JHPD member, with guidance on the personal use of cell phones and other personal electronics during work periods, including the personal use of social media while on- or off-duty, and only to the extent that personal use of social media sites or

platforms may bear on a member’s official duties. Members have a duty to adhere at all times to the higher standards of ethics and codes of professional conduct of Johns Hopkins and the JHPD.

## Definitions

<b>Member:</b>	All members of the JHPD, including employees, officers, and volunteers, unless the term is otherwise qualified (e.g., member of the public, member of the Baltimore Police Department, etc.).
<b>Officer:</b>	All sworn police officers, at any rank, as defined by MD Code, Public Safety, § 3-201, in service with the JHPD.
<b>Personal Communication Device:</b>	Portable electronic media or communication devices including but not limited to cell phones, smartphones, tablets, notepads, laptop computers, pagers, text pagers, and other wireless devices not issued to members by the JHPD.
<b>Post:</b>	Content a person shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site. For purposes of this Directive, the term “post” may include either (1) the action of submitting information to the internet or a social media site or (2) a collective name for all or part of any information already displayed on the internet or a social media site.
<b>Profile:</b>	Information that a user provides about themselves on a social networking site.
<b>Social Media:</b>	A collective term referring to various online platforms, applications, or technologies enabling the “sharing” of electronic, user-generated text, audio, photographic, video, or multimedia files that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes but is not limited to social networking sites, microblogging sites, photo and video sharing sites, wikis, blogs, and news sites. Examples include Facebook, TikTok, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Reddit, and Tumblr.
<b>Social Networks:</b>	Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.
<b>Speech:</b>	Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, writing, expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.
<b>Spokesperson:</b>	Any member of the JHPD who has been authorized by the Vice President for Public Safety, their designee, or the Johns Hopkins Office of Communications to communicate with and/or deliver information to the general public and social/news media on behalf of Johns Hopkins.

## Policy

All members of the JHPD are free to express themselves as private members of the public on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair the working relationships of the JHPD, disclose confidential information, impede the performance of duties, impair discipline, interfere with harmony among coworkers, or negatively affect the public trust and perception of the JHPD.

## Procedures

### I. General

The JHPD recognizes that emerging and evolving trends of technology have changed how people communicate and convey information on a daily basis. This evolution has led to the use of social media platforms as a significant communication method for the vast majority of the public, including members of the JHPD. This Directive is not meant to address one particular form of social media; rather, it addresses social media in general, as advances in technology will occur and new tools will emerge. While concerns of member speech and behavior are addressed in the Code of Conduct, the possibility that the content of a social media post may be publicly available or go “viral” creates specific concerns that the JHPD addresses in this Directive.

#### A. Members of the JHPD **shall not** do the following:

- Post or share any pictures, video, audio, comments, discussion, or other digital media of any incident, inquiry, investigation, or any other information relating to the official business of Johns Hopkins. Doing so is prohibited without authorization of the Vice President for Public Safety, their designee, or the Johns Hopkins Director of Media Communications.
- Post or share privileged or confidential information they have obtained from their employment or affiliation with Johns Hopkins, to include but not limited to any pictures, video, audio, comments, discussion, or other digital technology media of any incident, inquiry, investigation, investigative reports, or any other information relating to the JHPD’s or Johns Hopkins’s activities, investigations, and/or university and health system operations.
- Unless authorized, make representations on behalf of the JHPD or Johns Hopkins, or give the impression of making a representation on behalf of the JHPD or Johns Hopkins, on any social media platform.
- Make, share, or comment in support of any post that includes criminal conduct or threats of violence or otherwise violates any law.
- Make, share, or comment in support of any post disparaging of any race, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, or any other protected class of persons.
- Post any information or rumors known to be false about coworkers, Johns Hopkins, or the JHPD, including but not limited to its organizations, affiliates, patients, students, etc.
- Post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information, videos, or images, in any format, that violate rules, laws, or procedures regarding member confidentiality obligations.

- B. Members shall not engage in social media activities for personal use while on-duty unless such activities are related to work and authorized by their manager or supervisor.
- C. Members must maintain high standards of professional and personal conduct while on- and off-duty.
- D. Members utilizing, posting to, commenting on, or creating a social networking site, blog, and/or comment-oriented website must conduct themselves at all times in a manner to not bring embarrassment, disgrace, or doubt as to their individual credibility or impartiality, or that of the JHPD.
- E. Members shall also refrain from posting or commenting on any material that may be used to impeach them as witnesses in court proceedings (*Giglio v. United States*, 405 U.S. 150 (1972)).
- F. Members are personally responsible for any content they “like,” publish, forward, or post to the internet and/or a social media site.
- G. Members shall not knowingly engage in any type of social media contact with suspects, witnesses, or victims (“friending,” “following,” “liking,” etc.) that would hamper, interfere with, or otherwise prejudice an open or ongoing investigation, case, or court action until the case is either resolved or closed.
- H. Members are cautioned that they should not assume any expectation of privacy when posting information to the internet or engaging in social media activity, regardless of their user privacy settings or other access controls.
- I. Members are advised that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public online forum or private group or during social media activity may be accessed by the JHPD or others without prior notice and may be used or subpoenaed for use in criminal, administrative, or civil proceedings.

## II. JHPD Affiliation

- A. The JHPD strongly recommends that members do not disclose or allude to their status as members of the JHPD on social media.
- B. The JHPD strongly recommends that all members use a disclaimer on all their social media accounts and activity that states, “**All content, posts, likes, forwards, etc. are my personal opinions,**” or uses other words to that effect.
- C. If a member reveals their affiliation with the JHPD or Johns Hopkins or that affiliation is revealed in any way when engaging in any social media

activity or posting personal content or opinions on the internet, members shall use a disclaimer that states, “All content, posts, likes, forwards, etc. are my personal opinions and not those of the JHPD or Johns Hopkins, and I am not, and do not represent myself as, a spokesperson for the JHPD or Johns Hopkins in any way whatsoever.”

- D. Members should refrain from revealing, in any manner or for any reason, that any other JHPD member (a supervisor, partner, coworker, etc.) is a JHPD member without the express written consent of that other member, to include the posting of photos.
- E. Members shall not create or maintain a JHPD or Johns Hopkins social media site, unless directly authorized to do so by the Vice President for Public Safety.
- F. Members shall not use a Johns Hopkins email address to register with or join a social media site.

### **III. Portable Electronics & Communication Devices**

While on-duty and in the workplace, JHPD members are expected to limit their use of personal social media, as it can interfere with attentiveness to public safety and security concerns, patient care, and member productivity and be distracting to others.

- A. Personal usage during work time should be limited to personal emergencies. Flexibility under such circumstances may be provided with the approval and authorization of the member’s immediate supervisor in circumstances demanding immediate attention. Nothing shall prohibit such use during nonworking time and authorized breaks.
  - Personal communication devices shall not be used while members are on a call for service or during an investigation.
- B. Members are prohibited from using personal communication devices while operating motor vehicles or other motorized equipment. In addition, all laws and regulations concerning the use of personal communication devices while operating a motor vehicle must be observed.
- C. If members do not have a JHPD-issued electronic or communication device that will allow them to access Johns Hopkins resources such as Prodensity, LiveSafe, email, websites, etc., members may use their personal electronic and communication devices, if necessary.
- D. Members are prohibited from using personal mobile and electronic devices to access secured networks and databases containing criminal history record information, such as records management systems (ARMS); local, state, and federal Criminal Justice Information Systems; or other secured networks or websites.

**E.** Members shall not use personal electronic and communication devices to store sensitive personnel information related to work such as Social Security Numbers, salary and benefits, disciplinary actions, account passwords, or any information that, if compromised, could cause significant harm to another person or the JHPD. The storage of criminal history data, including but not limited to report numbers, identification numbers, names and nicknames of suspects, and personal identifying information of victims and witnesses on a personal electronic device, is prohibited.

- Members must immediately notify their immediate supervisor if any mobile device with the potential to expose criminal justice and/or personnel record information is lost.

**F. Camera Phones & Video Recorders:** The use of JHPD-owned cameras and video recorders is strongly preferred during the collection of digital evidence. However, the JHPD recognizes that personally owned cameras, video recorders, and/or smartphones may in some circumstances be the only equipment available to public safety personnel at the time evidence is discovered. The following procedures must be adhered to under such circumstances:

- All pictures and audio, video, or other digital evidence recorded, collected, captured, or stored by a JHPD member in relation to any official business of the JHPD specifically while the member is on-duty is considered evidence and is the property of the JHPD even when captured on a personal device.
- Personnel capturing such pictures and audio, video, or other digital evidence on a personal or work device shall ensure that it is treated, collected, stored, and documented in conformance with JHPD Directive #467, Evidence Collection & Preservation. Any such pictures or audio, video, or other digital evidence that was collected on a personal device shall be downloaded onto a JHPD server and then such evidence shall be erased from the personal device where it was originally stored and/or collected.

## Policy Enforcement

<b>Enforcement</b>	JHPD managers and supervisors are responsible for enforcing this Directive.
<b>Reporting Violations</b>	Suspected violations of this Directive should be reported to the Public Safety Accountability Unit.

## Related Resources

<b>University Policies and Documents</b>
Administrative Procedure #202, Written Directive System Operational Procedure #467, Evidence Collection & Preservation
<b>External Documentation</b>
<b>Police Department Forms and Systems</b>
<a href="https://powerdms.com/ui/login">https://powerdms.com/ui/login</a>

## Contacts

<b>Subject Matter</b>	<b>Office Name</b>	<b>Telephone Number</b>	<b>Email/Web Address</b>
Policy Clarification and Interpretation	Policy Management	(667)306-8618	<a href="mailto:jhpdpolicyinquiry@jh.edu">jhpdpolicyinquiry@jh.edu</a>