

City of Urbandale

Safe Sports Act –
Social Media & Electronic Communication Policy



PURPOSE:

The City of Urbandale is committed to promoting a safe environment for everyone that engages with the City's services, programs, and activities. In addition, Urbandale recognizes the prevalence of electronic communication and social media in today's world. Many of the services, programs and activities use social media as a method of communication. While the City acknowledges the value of these methods of communication, the City also realizes that there are associated risks that must be considered when adults use these methods to communicate with minors. To mitigate those risks this policy was developed in line with the "Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sports Authorization Act of 2017" ("Safe Sports Act"), which was passed by Congress and became Federal law in 2018. The Safe Sports Act focused on amateur sports organizations and has become a model for protecting youth.

Employees who are found to be in violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

DEFINITIONS:

Covered Individual - is an employee, volunteer, elected official or vendor providing services for the city or is part of a city festival, program or activity.

Minor - is a Participant who is under the age of 18.

Participant - is a user of the City of Urbandale's services, programs or activities.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION:

All e-mails, texts, and posts must be transparent, professional, and related solely to City services, programs, activities, or events. Covered Individuals may not have out-of-program contact with a Minor on social media. For example:

- general communication regarding a program activity or event via Urbandale's social media account(s) is acceptable.
- private communication via a Covered Individual's personal social media account is NOT acceptable.

Covered Individuals must distribute electronic and mobile communications to Minors openly and publicly; for example, with a copy to the parent(s)/guardian(s) and/or to the entire team/group transmitted simultaneously. All communications between a Covered Individual and a Minor must be professional in nature and for communicating information about City services, programs, and activities. For example, electronic communication should not contain or relate to any of the following:

- drugs or alcohol use
- sexually oriented conversation, sexually explicit language, or sexual activity
- the Covered Individual's personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues, or personal problems
- inappropriate or sexually explicit pictures

The Covered Individual should ask: *“Is this communication something that someone else would find appropriate or acceptable in a face-to-face meeting?”* or *“Is this something you would be comfortable saying out loud to the intended recipient of your communication in front of the intended recipient’s parents or other participants?”*

With respect to electronic communications, a simple test that can be used in most cases is whether electronic communication with minors is Transparent, Accessible and Professional.

Transparent: All electronic communication between adults and minors should be transparent. Your communication should not only be clear and direct, but also free of hidden meanings, innuendo, and expectations.

Accessible: All electronic communication between the Covered Individual and Minor(s) should be considered a matter of record and part of the City’s records.

Professional: All electronic communication between a Covered Individual and a Minor should be conducted professionally as a representative of the city. This includes word choices, tone, grammar, and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of a member providing city services, programs, and activities.

Texting shall only be used for communicating information directly related to City services, programs, and activities.

In addition, email shall only be used for communicating information directly related to City services, programs, and activities. When communicating with a Minor through email, a parent, or another Covered Individual must also be copied.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND SIMILAR SITES

Covered Individuals may have personal social media sites (such as Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, or Instagram), but they are not permitted to have any Minor of a City service, program or activity join their personal page. In addition, a Covered Individual should not accept any request from a Minor and should remind the Minor that this is not permitted.

Regardless of the social media site, Covered Individuals and Minors are not permitted to instant message, chat, follow each other, or interact personally on the social media site. For example, Covered Individuals and Minors are not permitted to “private message” to each other through Facebook and are not permitted to “instant message” to each other through Facebook chat or other IM methods. In addition, Covered Individuals are encouraged to set their pages to “private” to prevent Minors from accessing their personal information.

Parents and guardians have the right to request that their child not be contacted in any form of electronic communications or social media.

Social Media & Electronic Communication Policy Acknowledgement

I hereby acknowledge that I have received a copy of the City of Urbandale Social Media & Electronic Communication Policy. I understand that failure to comply with this policy may lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination. Furthermore, I acknowledge that this acknowledgement will be placed in my personnel file.

Name of Employee (printed)

Employee Signature

Date