How to Navigate Social Media Effectively:
A Best Practices Primer From Your Union
Background

Social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram make casual conversations very easy.

From having quick messenger chats on Facebook to following health-care news on Twitter, social media has become a part of everyday life for millions, including health-care professionals.

Social media is an online forum for building relationships and engaging with others. It’s a place to exchange ideas and information, to find out late-breaking news and updates, to watch how-to videos and so much more. It’s an easy way to be in-the-know about the topics that interest you.

As a health-care professional, you are evaluated at a higher standard regarding your “communications.” You should feel free to follow and participate in conversations on social media while ensuring you are meeting your professional standard expectations.

Although these are online tools, you have the same responsibilities there as you do anywhere else. Here are a few ways to make sure you’re meeting them. ▷
The Yays

- Use social media to research and discover current trends, ideas and best practices on a host of topics including labour, health care and politics.

- Follow topics and organizations that interest you. Most companies maintain social media sites. Be sure to follow ONA at @ontarionurses to keep up with news, events, political action and much more.

- Make sure you use appropriate privacy settings on your social media accounts. Privacy policies on social media sites are usually located on its home page. Be sure to check the privacy settings of a social site often as they tend to change frequently.

- Be respectful and tactful with your posts. Remember, you are representing yourself and your profession. Anything you post, share or tweet could be seen by your employer, a co-worker or patients and their families.

- If you post on social media, please make sure you use your own personal device. Using your workplace’s computer or employer-sponsored mobile device is a no-no and you could be disciplined.

The Nays

- Social media is instant. Remember anything you post could be seen by anyone. Deleting a post will not ensure it is permanently gone from the world wide web. Use caution when posting information on social media.

- It’s not wise to post information that is inflammatory, insensitive, off-topic or that contains foul language. You can post comments of an opposing viewpoint, but do so in a constructive and respectful manner. If you see inflammatory comments in an online discussion, do not respond. This will only continue the rhetoric.

- Do not post any information – including photos – about your patients, clients, residents, their families, coworkers or your workplaces. This breaches your professional boundaries and privacy laws. ONA members have been disciplined for their inappropriate social media use so please take heed.

- Likewise, do not provide medical advice through social media. It is not appropriate and it breaches your professional standards.

- Protect yourself online. “Phishing” is an online social media scam where people try to convince you to give them key pieces of information – for instance credit card numbers or login information to your social media accounts. The “phishing” information usually includes a link for you to click on which will take you to what looks like a login page. But by filling in your login info, your account will be the next one spreading the phishing message. It will spam your friends with messages about get-rich-quick schemes and more!
Facebook: How to Create and Manage a Facebook Group Page

Several ONA Locals have created their own Facebook Group Pages to help communicate with their Local members. This is an excellent way for members to be in-the-know and engaged with ONA happenings.

How to Create a Facebook Group Page

Login to your own Facebook page and click at the top right arrow. Click on “Create Group.”

On the Create Group screen, fill out the fields. One suggestion to name the group is, “ONA Local <your number here>”. Do not put a zero in front of your Local number.
There are three different types of groups on Facebook.

Each has its own privacy settings.

1. **Public**: Anyone can join or be added or invited by a member of the group. This is the most open and accessible type of group.

2. **Closed**: Anyone can ask to join the group or be added by a member. The group can be found by Facebook’s search function. The majority of ONA Local Facebook groups are “closed.”

3. **Secret**: Anyone can join the group, but she/he needs to be added by a member. The group is not searchable through the Facebook search function.

Once you’ve set up your ONA Group, you can now begin to build your follower base. You can use the field, “Add Some People” to begin creating your followers.

In addition, you can send invites to those that you know who are part of your Local/Bargaining Unit. Use the “Invite Friends” link on the right-hand side.

Who should administer and moderate a Local Facebook group page?

There are two main roles in a Facebook group:

**An admin** (the highest role) is a person who can manage all information within the group including creating admins and moderators, manage group settings (such as naming the group, adjusting group privacy settings, etc.), approve group members and approve and delete posts and comments.

**A moderator** can approve or deny membership requests, approve or delete posts and comments and remove or block people from the group.

With a group Facebook page, it’s best to have at least two admins who have complete access to the page. Ideally, the Facebook group admins should be members of the Bargaining Unit. ONA staff should not be a group Facebook page administrator.

ONA staff can help with the set up, but it is ultimately up to the Local Facebook group admins to determine page membership and content.
What to post

It’s best to know who your Facebook audience is – in this case ONA members. Your goal is to communicate what’s happening at your Bargaining Unit, at ONA Local and ONA provincially and in the greater labour and health-care community.

SOME SUGGESTIONS:

• Your Local and Bargaining Unit Union meetings, events and updates from employers. It is very easy to create a Facebook event for your members. Simply click on the “Event” tab on the left-hand side menu and follow the steps. Or email webmaster@ona.org for assistance.

• Any information from ONA Provincial Office including news, events, education opportunities, campaign updates, calls to action, and more.

Information from other labour organizations such as the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) and the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC).

How to enhance your Facebook page

• Post a cover photo. This is an excellent opportunity to make your Local stand out and show your members what you’re all about. The cover photo sits directly at the top of your Facebook Group page.

• Post a profile picture. Again, it adds recognition for your audience and becomes familiar with your members. This is the picture that shows up in newsfeeds and searches so it should be clear and crisp.

• Post your Facebook Group link on your Local website, tell ONA Provincial Office that your Local has a Facebook page, and produce a flyer to post on your ONA bulletin board to spread the word and to get more members to follow your group page.

• Given that your page is representing ONA, you need to adhere to ONA’s branding and logo usage. Please contact ONA at webmaster@ona.org for further information.
The Benefits of Twitter

Twitter is a fast way to communicate to a group of people simultaneously.

A tweet – which is a 140-character message including spaces – provides quick facts and information about topics. It’s easy to set up a Twitter account: go to www.twitter.com, enter your email address and your user name (use the same naming convention as your Facebook page, for example ONALocalXX) and you can begin. Be sure to follow @ontarionurses and retweet our tweets. Check out www.ona.org/social to find out which ONA leaders have Twitter accounts and follow them as well.

Twitter tips:

• **Follow organizations and individuals that may be of interest.** For instance you may want to follow labour organizations, local media outlets, health-care workplaces and others. Always start slowly – it’s easy to be overwhelmed with information overload on Twitter.

• **If you want to mention a person or organization in your tweet use the @ symbol and the name.** This way, they are advised that they are mentioned in the tweet. For example: “Check out @ontarionurses new campaign!” @ontarionurses will be aware that it was mentioned in a tweet. If you mention someone at the beginning of your tweet, put a period (.) at the beginning. For example, .@ontarionurses just launched a new campaign. Check it out here!

• **Use a hashtag (#) in your tweets.** Hashtags are used to categorize things on Twitter. Some hashtags that ONA uses often include:

#onpoli
#NursesKnow
#onlabour
Trusted Sources

In the era of “fake news,” it is best to follow sources that have like-values to your own.

The Ontario Nurses’ Association relies on organizations that use facts to determine a stance on an issue. ONA regularly follows these organizations:

- **Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (@CFNU)** – a national voice for 200,000 nurses and nursing students, the CFNU advocates for a stronger health-care system and better workplace for all nurses.

- **Global Nurses United (@GlobalNursesU)** – more than 200,000 health-care professionals representing 14 nations across the world, GNU fights against austerity, privatization and cuts in health-care services.

- **Ontario Health Coalition (@ohc)** – a strong network of community organizations from across Ontario, the OHC engages stakeholders to help protect and improve Ontario’s public health care system.

- **Canadian Labour Congress (@canadianlabour)** – the national voice for Canadian labour representing more than 3.3 million workers.

- **Ontario Federation of Labour (@OFLabour)** – the OFL represents more than 50 unions and more than one million workers who stand up for workers’ rights and is a powerful voice in Ontario’s labour movement.

The Bottom Line

The more you know about social media and how it works, the better off and more empowered you will be to use it. Make sure you also know your employer’s rules about social media and follow them.

And, while there has been disciplinary action against ONA members’ use of social media in the past, our hope is that additional resources and information will help curb these complaints.

Be Professional! Get Loud!

ONA is here to help you with your social media questions and concerns. Please contact the Communications and Government Relations Team at cgrintake@ona.org or speak with your Labour Relations Officer.