



## **SDA Guideline on Social Media Use by Registered Dietitians Adapted from the College of Dietitians of Alberta**

Dietitians using social networking, for personal or professional reasons, must be aware that they are always professionals, even when they aren't at work. Therefore, the professional and ethical obligations laid out in the SDA Code of Ethics and SDA Professional Standards are relevant at all times, even in relation to what might be considered to be a personal and private communication. Due to the nature of social media, most platforms cannot be expected to protect your privacy. To protect you as a professional, it is important to remember that information, opinions and conversations posted on these forums must be considered public information.

To minimize the inherent risks involved when the professional uses social media for personal or professional communication the following practices are recommended:

### **Trust in the profession and professionalism**

- Always be mindful and self-aware when using social or any electronic media. Any conduct that harms the integrity of the profession is defined by *The Dietitians Act* as professional misconduct.
- Do not use professional titles and initials or make references to being a member of the profession when representing personal views.
- Do not post disparaging, demeaning or embarrassing information about anyone.
- Be aware and take responsibility for your online persona. To the best of your ability, remove or edit content that may be viewed by clients, professionals or the public as unprofessional.
- Follow your employer's policy relating to the use of social or electronic media.

### **Confidentiality and Professional Boundaries**

- Respect and protect an individual's right to privacy and respect the confidentiality of information obtained in providing professional services. Sharing this information may constitute professional misconduct.
- Do not engage in public online conversations about the client or their treatment.
- Do not reveal personally identifying information of a client; not using their name does not make inappropriate content acceptable. Even a few basic facts may be enough to identify a client to a family member or friend.
- Remember that privacy settings can change and are not a replacement for responsible, discreet, communication practices and although they can help you manage who sees what you write and to whom, the information may be available to others through a variety of means.
- Assume all content is public and accessible to anyone.
- Do not initiate or accept requests for online contact with clients, former clients or students. Always be mindful of the professional-client relationship and professional boundaries.

### **References:**

Saskatchewan Dietitians Association. Code of Ethics for Registered Dietitians.

Saskatchewan Dietitians Association. Professional Standards. 2018