



WASHINGTON STATE SNAP-ED SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

We created these guidelines for social media management and promotion in the Washington state SNAP-Ed program. They were developed as a result of a review of the literature, review of guidelines and strategies from SNAP-Ed colleagues across the country, review of guidelines and practices from Washington state providers and input from Implementing Agencies.

These guidelines are intended to help SNAP-Ed providers use social media in their local program in ways that are consistent with SNAP-Ed guidance and the priorities and goals of the Washington state SNAP-Ed program. These guidelines are a resource for providers who are unsure what to post, how to target an audience, and/or need guidance on how to run social media in general.

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SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL MARKETING DEFINITIONS

- Social marketing is the use of commercial marketing principles and strategies to promote behavior change and to improve well-being. Social marketing may be done by means of physical media, social media, and promotional media.¹ Providers should not be engaged in a social marketing campaign at a local level. The state SNAP-Ed team is reviewing best practices for social marketing and coordinating at the state level.
- Social media is one means to achieve social marketing. Social media can be a tool within a social marketing campaign, but it can also be used independent of a campaign. WA SNAP-Ed providers use social media in their local communities.

PERSONAL VS. PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTS

- SNAP-Ed staff using social media should maintain a clear distinction between personal and professional uses.
- If sharing SNAP-Ed social content on personal social media accounts, clearly make known you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of the program.
- Remain factual and correct regarding SNAP-Ed information on personal accounts and when commenting on posts by professional pages.
- Always maintain professionalism when communicating online about SNAP-Ed.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR USING SOCIAL MEDIA

- All social media posts must align with SNAP-Ed goals:
 - [FY 2022 SNAP-Ed Plan Guidance FINAL 508.pdf](#): *To improve the likelihood that persons eligible for SNAP will make healthy food choices within a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles consistent with the current DGA and the USDA food guidance.*
 - [WA State Goals](#):
 1. Increase consumption of healthy foods and beverages and decrease consumption of unhealthy foods and beverages.
 2. Improve food resource management among SNAP-Ed participants.
 3. Increase physical activity and reduce sedentary behavior.
 4. Improve policy, systems, and environments to support healthy eating and active living.
- Each post must also have its own focus that stems from one of the above goals (e.g., increasing fruit and vegetable consumption, increasing aerobic activities, encouraging use of pantry staples for healthy meals).
- Use social media posts to reinforce work you have done in your community (e.g., direct ed classrooms or PSE strategies).

- Providers should avoid posting copyrighted materials, including videos with copyrighted music. Photos and videos with appropriate permissions include unlicensed media from sources such as [Creative Commons](#) or [Pixabay](#), those purchased through accounts such as [iStock](#), or those the provider creates (e.g., photos taken on a personal phone). Providers may also repost from SNAP-Ed related accounts as that gives credit to the post's original creator. Examples include:
 - USDA
 - FNS
 - DSHS
 - Other states' SNAP-Ed (e.g., OR: Food Hero, UT: Create Better Health, CA: Eat Fresh)
- Nutrition information shared in social media should be consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and come from reputable sources. Nutrition misinformation is common on social media platforms, so be cautious in selecting sources from which to share information. Do not share information on "fad" diets that are not consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. All nutrition information should be general and focus on prevention; do not offer any medical nutrition advice.
- Try to plan posts at least one week in advance. This gives others time to review the posts before they are published, and it ensures you will have consistent posting, which is important for engaging and maintaining an audience.
- Create content that is at a 4th to 5th grade reading level. Many SNAP-Ed participants are learning the English language. Writing to this grade level will help them better understand your content. Do not include slang or phrases that are not easily understood. You can follow [these instructions](#) determine using the Flesch-Kincaid test in Microsoft Word.
- Be sure to include the non-discrimination statement somewhere visible on your social media page. For example, on Facebook this can appear in the "About" section.
- You are not required to use the WA SNAP-Ed icon on your social media page. However, you are welcome to use it. Artwork for the icon is available [here](#).
- Do not use the names of SNAP-Ed participants (e.g. no tagging). Do not use images of SNAP-Ed participants without a signed consent form.
- Do not collect personal information from social media followers (e.g. no Social Security numbers, phone numbers or addresses).
- Under any circumstances, avoid posting content that:
 - Contains content that may be determined to be profane, obscene, vulgar or lewd.
 - Contains derogatory or discriminatory language (including comments about sex, age, race, sexual orientation or religious affiliation) or that is libelous or slanderous.
 - Is spam posted regarding the same content matter, links, video or any other media.
 - Uses specific names of SNAP-Ed participants.
 - Includes any advertisement for commercial products.
 - Constitutes, condones, or encourages illegal activity.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE SNAP-ED AUDIENCE

- Facebook is the most commonly used platform for low-income audiences.^{2,3,4,5} Other platforms, including Instagram, Twitter, and Pinterest, are also used, but not to the same extent as Facebook.
- Mobile devices are used more often than computers to access social media platforms.⁴ Be sure your posts are mobile-friendly. Most posts that are text, images, or videos are mobile-friendly, but links to web pages may not be. You can test these things on your own mobile device before publishing posts.
- Messages are most effective when they are consistent, relatable, and attractive. Be sure you post frequently (at least twice weekly), know and understand your audience's wants and needs, and design posts that are eye-catching and easy to read.⁶ Frequency may range depending on your goal, your audience, and your agency's capacity.

CONSIDER YOUR AUDIENCE

- The target audience for all social media posts is the same as all other SNAP-Ed activities—SNAP eligible individuals in the state of Washington.
- It is difficult to directly target this audience via social media, so the key is to be sure the messaging used on each post targets a SNAP-Ed audience.
- Engage with other agencies and organizations with which your target audience engages. If they repost your posts, others SNAP eligible individuals may see your post if they had not otherwise. Examples include other state or local government agencies, food-related non-profits, school districts, food banks, local CSO offices, etc. You can do this by reposting other organizations content through sharing or retweet features, tagging other organizations, or using appropriate hashtags.
- Use a translator to create posts that appeal to a wider audience. When possible, have this person be a native speaker.
- When posting photos and/or videos, consider the cultural diversity of your audience. Be sure your posts don't represent only one culture—your targeted audience is represented by many.

REPORTING

- Social media efforts should be reported in the PEARS indirect activities module.
- If you have reported social media use in the past, do not delete old entries.
- New social media activity that is COVID-19 related should be a new entry. Be sure to fill out the "COVID-19 Impact" field if this activity changed or was added due to the pandemic. See [these instructions](#) from the Evaluation Team.
- Contact your IA or the statewide Evaluation Team for best practice in reporting social media.

Resources for health promotion via social media:

- [Food Hero Social Media Toolkit \(OR SNAP-Ed\)](#)
- [Create Better Health \(UT SNAP-Ed\)](#)
- [Social Media to Promote Health \(Action for Healthy Kids\)](#)
- [Live Well \(wasnap-ed.org\)](#)

Important note: If you do not already have a social media page, check with your IA before creating one. If you are in a region with an already existing social media campaign, there is a chance you can do work to help support that existing campaign via social media.

Resources

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<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/chart/social-media-use-by-income/>
4. White, A., Hagues, E., Childers, A., Lee, J. S., Olubajo, B., Phua, J. (2016). Social media usage pattern among supplemental nutrition assistance program education (SNAP-Ed) eligible individuals in Georgia. *FASEB Journal*, 30:1(s).
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