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Social Media Guidebook & Content Bank for CASA Programs

Texas CASA Mission

The mission of Texas CASA is to support local CASA volunteer advocacy programs and to advocate for effective public policy for children and families in the child protection system.

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**STRENGTHENING THE VOICES
OF CASA STATEWIDE**

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Introduction

Social media has integrated itself into the lives of almost everyone. It's a valuable communication channel for marketers, recruiters, and fundraisers looking to send the right message to the right person via their preferred medium.

We don't have a choice on whether we do social media, the question is how well we do it."

- Erik Qualman, Socialnomics

There are numerous channels from which people receive mass-marketing messages, such as television news, print news, radio, podcasts, billboards, and email marketing. What makes social media different is how it gives the audience the ability to respond. It offers an instantaneous, conversational response with a high likelihood of others joining in on the discussion. Social media exists because it engages the audience, allowing them to ask questions, share differences of opinion, add details to the story, and more. That's why communicating via social media channels is vital to nonprofits, especially CASA programs, looking to grow and engage with their networks of volunteers and supporters.

This guidebook will share tips and tricks for CASA programs of all sizes and at all levels of social media proficiency. To make your life easier, this guidebook comes complete with:

- A link to the Texas CASA Content Bank of ready-to-post options you can use to fill in gaps and refer to for inspiration throughout the year (page 21)
- A link to a Content Calendar template in Google Sheets that you can copy, make your own, and share with your team so everyone can be part of planning social media content (page 19)
- Recommendations for free and low-cost social media tools to help you design, schedule, and more (page 27)

Whether you have a dedicated communications team member or you're teaming up with various staff members to make social media happen, everyone will be able to find value in this guide!

Defining Social Media for this Guidebook

This guidebook focuses on organic social media channels and the content strategy that goes along with them. These are the channels where you can create a profile and post content as a business or organization, typically without paying anything: Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, and Twitter. This guidebook does not cover paid social*, where you pay to promote your social media messages or place advertisements on social media channels.

There are numerous other channels available right now, and tomorrow there will be even more. Because of the ever-evolving nature of social media, this guidebook will not focus on channel-specific recommendations—after all, they may be completely different within a few months. This guidebook will instead cover high-level opportunities, best practices, pitfalls to avoid, content strategy, and how to make the best decisions for your organization no matter what social media platforms you use.

The [CASA Messaging Book: Speaking in One Voice](#) will be an essential additional resource to refer to when developing your social media content strategy.

**Paid social is a low-cost way to dip your toe into advertising and may be worth testing if you have a small advertising budget to play with.*

Key Goals for Social Media

Social media rarely offers a clear return on investment. It's challenging to track precisely which post convinced someone to volunteer with your organization for the first time. Yet, there are a handful of crucial goals that can be achieved with the support of your social media channels.

Defining Your Brand & Voice

As you probably know, your brand as an organization goes far beyond your logo and the colors/fonts you choose for your marketing materials. Creating a brand is about developing your whole persona and voice as an organization and crafting how people feel when they think about you.

Social media gives you a fantastic (free!) opportunity to publish messages that help define that brand and voice. You get to choose what kind of messages you send and what tone your organization takes. Those choices should match up to the larger brand and feelings you're trying to evoke.

- Do you ask thought-provoking questions that stir up healthy debate?
- Do you share informative news stories to educate your audience?
- Do you try to bring levity and hope to the sometimes bleak world of child welfare?
- Do you share moving stories to help people understand the issues facing children and families?

Of course, how you communicate on social media should be consistent with the rest of your communications and the brand you're aiming to craft. You don't want to confuse supporters with a website covered in photos of wide-eyed children while your Instagram channel shares nothing but funny memes about social work. Yet, if you're looking to evolve your brand to something new, social media gives you the chance to start testing those new messages and seeing how people react to your evolving persona.



Building Your Community

When we talk about building your community, the goal is not to get as many followers as possible. Instead, you want to develop a close-knit and supportive online community, no matter how big or small.

Your goal is to endear your organization to your online community while building it in a sustainable, meaningful way. Whenever possible, your content strategy should encourage discussion and engagement to help your audience feel like they're an integral part of your nonprofit. If people already feel like they're part of your conversation, it will be easier to secure that RSVP to a volunteer info session or that first online donation.

“Quit counting fans, followers, and blog subscribers like bottle caps. Think, instead, about what you’re hoping to achieve with and through the community that actually cares about what you’re doing.”

- Amber Naslund, Principal Content Consultant, LinkedIn

Boosting Your Reputation

Social media is not only a place to share your brand and voice but also your values and the excellent work you do as an organization. It's a channel for you to define your organization, highlight all of your best qualities, and even have open, honest conversations about the challenges your organization is striving to address. It's a place to share success stories and advance the mission. Being present and transparent, posting consistently, and responding quickly to feedback on social media will build trust with your audiences and boost your reputation in numerous ways.

Engaging Directly with Your Audience

As mentioned in our introduction, social media allows direct conversation back-and-forth with your community. Suppose someone has a question about volunteering with CASA. In that case, they can jump right onto one of your social media channels to comment or privately message your organization's profile, and you can immediately respond to them. They get the information they need, and you show up as an organization that values their involvement. You're making people feel heard and connected, all good things for your organization's brand and community building.

Important: Part of engaging is committing to respond. Do not leave audience questions unanswered in comments or private messages. It's a good idea to respond to social media comments within 24 hours.

Self-Publishing

As a nonprofit, producing content is a regular part of your marketing strategy, whether you're writing blog posts, developing an annual report, or drafting an op-ed. Whenever you write something new, you need it to be distributed to an audience to have value. Just publishing to your website or pitching to the media doesn't guarantee traffic or visibility.

Social media serves as a self-publishing platform that allows you to deliver your work to a broader audience. These are considered "owned media" channels, where you control what's published and distributed (similar to your email marketing lists/tools). You can even slowly portion out a single piece of content in various formats (e.g., a link, an infographic, and an inspirational quote image all sourcing back to the same blog post) across your social media channels. Just make sure you adjust the format to work best for each channel.

Having active social media channels ensures that anything you devote time to writing and publishing will have more eyes on it and therefore more long-term value to your organization.

Crisis Management & Response

We've talked about the goals of building community, boosting your reputation, and engaging directly with your audience. Working towards these goals will be crucial if/when you find yourself in a public crisis. At that moment, you'll want to have already a strong, supportive community that trusts and believes in you. You'll want to have built a reputation of transparency and responsiveness. You may need a platform to directly share appropriate information with the people most engaged with your organization. Strong, active social media channels will help you survive a crisis through both the work you've done in advance and the way you communicate about a crisis while it's happening. For more on crisis management and response, see the guidebook [Crisis Communications and Risk Management for CASA Programs](#).

CASA-Specific Goals

Social media can help meet some unique, CASA-specific goals around volunteer recruitment and fundraising.

Social Media as “The Sign”

Most CASA volunteers don’t take on this commitment after hearing one radio ad (and if they do, they may not stick around as long as you’d like). Frequently, we hear that people have “heard about CASA for years” and always thought about volunteering, but just recently saw “a sign” that helped them know it was time to start. In other words, they got a crucial reminder about the CASA movement’s existence at the right time in their lives to have the capacity for volunteering.

Social media gives you a way to stay connected to potential volunteers and give them those occasional “signs” via a success story or a news feature showing the crucial need for help in foster care. Being able to stay in touch with and regularly remind potential volunteers of your existence means you’ll provide them that sign at the right time (so they don’t end up volunteering somewhere else).



Educating the Community

The child welfare system that CASA programs work within is incredibly nuanced and filled with grey areas, yet people can see it as black and white. Outsiders can view child welfare and foster care in one of two dramatically different ways:

- A system “stealing children away from families and breaking up homes.”
- A system “saving children from evil, abusive, unredeemable parents.”

Social media allows CASA programs to highlight the grey areas and balance out the conversation. This helps your audience move towards a middle ground where nuances can be considered and a better understanding of every family’s unique, individual circumstances can be gained. The stories and articles your organization chooses to share can be part of a vital community education project.

Yet, social media can also reinforce stereotypes. News typically covers only the most shocking stories of abuse and neglect. While sharing those stories may encourage someone to donate to your organization, they will also reinforce negative stereotypes of families in crisis. Make deliberate choices about what you share and how you balance out your content.

Engage with Volunteers on a Break

Volunteering with a CASA program can be grueling, and sometimes volunteers need breaks between cases. Your social media channels offer you a way to continue communicating with and inspiring those volunteers so that they’ll come back when refreshed and ready. You can even contemplate a way to positively feature the good work of volunteers on a break so they know how much your organization values their efforts and are reminded of the good work they can do when they come back.

Social Media Best Practices to Follow

Do

- Determine a general framework of what kind of content you plan to post and gain agreement with your organizational leadership in advance
 - Defining and agreeing upon a set of Expert Topics & Content Objectives (learn more on page 12) is a great way to establish a content framework with your leadership
- Incorporate diverse voices and stories into your content strategy
- Use inclusive, respectful, accurate, and modern messaging in all social media content
 - For more info, see the [CASA Messaging Book: Speaking in One Voice](#)
- Post content in a consistent manner
 - The number of posts will depend on the channel and testing out the frequency of what's successful for your organization
- Post relevant content that connects with CASA's mission
- Pay attention to what's going on in the world and be ready to change content plans as needed
 - Know when it's important to say something
 - Know when it's time to go quiet (in a time of tragedy or when your planned content may come off as insensitive based on what's happening in the world)
 - Be aware of scheduled posts and any major news story that may come up
- Balance cheese and broccoli (practice the 80/20 rule) with what you post
 - People usually want more delicious cheese than broccoli, so give them the cheesy, entertaining, inspiring goodness they want (80% of the time) and then occasionally douse them with broccoli, or the thing you actually need them to do (donate, sign up, attend an info session, purchase a ticket) 20% of the time
- Respond to all appropriate comments/questions as quickly as possible, even if just to acknowledge with a "like"
- Post in a way that's true to the brand and voice you're trying to cultivate
 - Your social media should be consistent with your email marketing and the way you present your organization in the media and at events
- Have a second person proof content before you post or schedule it, if possible
 - Typos and grammatical errors will diminish your credibility
- Use well-researched hashtags on the channels they're appropriate for
 - A hashtag is a word or phrase after a hash sign (#) categorizing a post around a specific topic (you mostly see hashtags on Instagram and Twitter – some nonprofit-related examples include #advocacy #philanthropy #nonprofit #dogood #empoweringyouth #changemakers #volunteer #charity)
- Look at your data and insights by channel to see what types of posts work best and at what times, and use that to inform your future content strategy
- Join the Creative Content for CASA Programs group on Facebook to share and learn about content ideas from programs across the country: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/casacontent>



Don't

- Post anything you wouldn't want printed on the front page of the newspaper or post something that you may want to delete after an hour, a day, or a year
 - Social media is forever, so make sure you're not posting anything you'll regret saying later
 - Deleting a post doesn't mean it goes away
- Buy followers
 - Some social media tools try to offer you a large number of followers for money, but these are often fake and should all be avoided
 - Keep in mind that more followers do not always mean more engagement
- Try to jump onto a trending topic that has nothing to do with your mission
- Post the same thing to every channel using one scheduling tool
 - Even if posting the same content, you'll want to customize the format to look appropriate for each channel
- Tag people or pages that have nothing to do with your content
- Post way too often
 - Posting 3+ times a day every day on Facebook is not going to help your cause
 - Appropriate posting frequency is different for every channel
- Ask for likes or followers
- Accidentally post personal stuff on your organization profile
 - Always check which profile you're on before posting!
 - If you want a good laugh, look up when a social media editor accidentally posted about his child Ramona's love of cats on NPR's official Facebook page



Cultivating Your Social Media Voice & Personality

Who your CASA program is as an organization and brand can be readily shared over social media. Still, you will want to make deliberate choices about how you're representing your program and what personality, voice, and tone you want to convey. Are you somber/serious, inspiring, witty, earnest, casual...? Having a sense of your brand personality will help you decide what content you're sharing on social media and give your channels needed consistency, even when posting is spread out among multiple people.

The following questions can apply to a much larger branding exercise but will undoubtedly help you decide on the personality you plan to cultivate via your social media channels. When considering these questions, you will want to solicit feedback from various people involved in the organization: leadership, direct service/programmatic team members, diverse race/ethnicity/age/gender demographics, and anyone who regularly interacts with the public. You may want to pull in volunteers and/or board members for input.

- If our CASA organization were a person, what adjectives would you use to describe them?
- When people interact with us, how do we want them to feel?
- What celebrity would our CASA program be? Why?
- What type of animal is our organization? Why?
- Are there any brands that have a similar personality to ours?
 - Are there any brands we aspire to be like someday?
 - What brands do we not want to be like? What are their personalities?

After surveying diverse team members for their responses to these questions, look for patterns that emerge and develop a set of voice and tone guidelines that define your organization's personality. For example, suppose numerous team members brought up a dog as an example for the animal question. In that case, you might expand upon that to describe your brand's personality as loyal, loving, and fierce when needed. You would then use those concepts to guide how to speak on your social media channels.

Voice vs. Messaging

How you speak as an organization (the voice/tone/personality you convey) is not the same as what you say or your messaging. When considering the words you use and how you write and speak about your organization, make sure you reference the [CASA Messaging Book: Speaking in One Voice](#).

In your messaging on social media (both in original content and in the curated content you select), we encourage you to emphasize these three central tenets at every opportunity:

- CASA volunteers support children and families involved in the child welfare system,
- CASA volunteers increase the well-being of the children in foster care, and
- CASA programs are of, and for, the communities we serve.

Finding Time & Capacity to Manage Social Media

To achieve success as a modern nonprofit organization, you should have a functioning website and an active presence on at least one or two social media channels. This online presence gives people validation that you're real and open for business!

Yet, we all know that finding the capacity to do social media is an issue, especially when many organizations do not have a dedicated communications team member or a person focused on marketing. So, we have to make smart choices around social media and find capacity in unexpected places!

You Don't Have to Be on Every Channel

It's better to run one social media channel well than do a poor job of being on every platform. If needed, pick the channel (or two) most relevant to your target audience and location and focus on managing those. As a basic rule, we know that CASA volunteers need to be 21+, so focusing attention on a channel most popular with teenagers, like Snapchat, probably won't be in your organization's best interest. TikTok, however, is crossing all age boundaries. Take a look at what your local businesses are using as well. If everyone's on Instagram and no one is using Twitter in your area, it makes the most sense to be active on the same channel since most of your community is already there! For most programs, at this time, the big choices will be Facebook and Instagram, and possibly LinkedIn and Twitter.



Share the Work of Producing Content

Most likely, the person doing your social media isn't the same person working with volunteers on cases. You don't want to limit the perspective of your social media to only one person. Instead, you want to share the work and get everyone involved in telling success stories, finding pertinent articles, sharing inspirational quotes, etc., with whoever is managing or pressing "Post" on your social media channels.

Ask coworkers for stories, great quotes, pictures from community events, etc. They're the ones who will likely hear the impactful story or know about something cool happening in the world you work in. They have the best insider info, and that's what you'll want to turn into your inspirational content on social media.

You will need to ask and ask and ask again. Be sure to thank anyone who shares content with you, and share those thanks in staff communications, to reinforce the need for and value of these stories.

If you know someone on the social work side of your office who also happens to be a great writer, recruit them to help you write content. You get to share the content work, and they get to practice a side passion of theirs!

Do "Team Takeovers" of Your Social Media Accounts

A "takeover" on social media is typically when an outside guest is permitted to take control of a brand's social media account for a certain period to show different perspectives or experiences. Consider the takeover an option for your team by rotating who has control of Facebook or Instagram each week, sharing the labor!

You will want to start this pattern off by ensuring all team members in the takeover rotation are fully versed in your social media strategy (including your dos and don'ts and all confidentiality rules) and well trained in how to monitor and engage with commenters.

Focus on Consistency, Not Quantity

You don't have to post all the time, so determine what you can consistently do with your team and stick to that. Posting once a week on Facebook is better than posting 20 times one month and going radio silent the next.

Plan & Post in Advance

Planning will be your best friend. Use a low-cost social media scheduling tool (you'll find recommendations for social media management tools on page 27), and at the end of each month, plan and schedule 2-3 posts for each week of the coming month. Base these posts on organizational happenings, success stories/numbers, events, monthly themes, etc. You will still be able to improvise and add a new post if something unexpected happens that's worth sharing, but you'll have the basis for a consistent content plan already done based on 1-2 hours of work once a month.

If you schedule ahead, be prepared to adjust if something occurs in the world that would make whatever you're planning to post come off as insensitive (such as an upbeat request for Superhero Run donations on the same day a hurricane or other natural disaster devastates some part of our country).

How to Decide on Your Social Media Channels

As we just mentioned, you have to find the proper social media channels for your organization in a quantity that you can manage with quality content output and responsiveness (hopefully, you can make at least two channels happen). Yet new channels seem to pop up all the time, and it's easy to feel like you must be on the latest platform!

So how do you decide which channels to be on, and how do you determine when it's worth testing out a new channel?

Target Audience

Which channels match your target audience? Do a quick search of social media demographics online, and you'll find the latest trends of who's using which channels and how active they are on those. You can also poll your existing network of volunteers/supporters to find out which channels they personally use. Keep in mind age, gender, race/ethnicity, and your location. Especially in rural communities, one particular social media channel may have taken off simply based on close-knit networks or local businesses, all using a similar set of channels.



Important: You may want to consider both your current key demographics alongside any demographics you're aspiring to bring into your organization. For example, if you know that you have a lot of success recruiting volunteers aged 41–50, many of them are likely on Facebook. You will want to stay active and keep your current audience engaged on Facebook while at the same time thinking through how to reach young professionals aged 21–30 on Instagram!

Where Does Your Mission Make Sense?

- Do the channel and its typical content make sense with the work you do? Does it conflict in any significant ways?
- Will your organization have anything engaging to share with this channel, or will you be out of place?
- Does the channel match your brand, values, and expert topics?
 - Does the channel have any known political/ideological affiliations that your organization may want to avoid?
- Will this channel help you meet your content objectives?

Competitors

- Do your competitors and collaborators (such as Big Brothers Big Sisters or fellow child welfare organizations in your community) have a presence on the channel?
- What kind of content are they posting there?
- Do they have engagement and followers?

Once you've decided a channel may be suitable for your organization, it's time to test it out. Have patience with this, as it takes time to build followers and engagement. **You will want to give each platform at least 6 months before making any decisions** unless you can immediately tell that your mission/expert topics/content objectives don't fit the environment.

Building Followers on New Channels

Your number of followers is not the best indicator of social media success, but without followers, your content will be useless. You want to build an engaged, interested list of followers who care about the work you do, and building this list will take time.

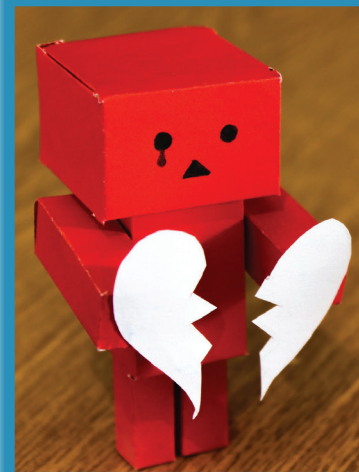
To help you build your follower list, make sure you:

- Post strategically using all the content lessons of this guidebook and following what your data tells you is working
- Ask your staff, board, and volunteers to follow you on the channel and share your posts
- Add the channel icon and link to your website and email marketing headers/footers
- Announce the new channel in your email marketing and on existing social media channels ("Come follow us on TikTok!")
- Engage consistently with the channel by following relevant accounts and actively commenting on appropriate posts within the feed
- Check out who follows fellow child welfare organizations and follow/engage with anyone active on their feeds
- If applicable, follow and use relevant hashtags to share your content with people who have similar interests
- If you have the budget, consider a few paid/boosted posts to targeted audiences over time to help you build your follower list
- **Buying followers is not the way to accomplish this!**

When to Say Goodbye

We do not need to stay on every social media channel forever. Some you may test and ultimately pass on. Others may just overstay their welcome at some point. When evaluating older channels, here are questions to consider:

- Has your follower list plateaued or started to diminish?
- Do you still get meaningful engagement from the channel?
- Do your expert topics and content objectives still make sense here?
- Do people visit your website from this platform (check your Google Analytics)?
- Is it draining to try and determine relevant content to post?



Google Analytics is a free tool that you can use to monitor your website by adding code to track activity. If you work with a web designer, they can help you add this code and set up Google Analytics. If you use a website builder like Squarespace or Wix, your site settings should allow you to add in Analytics code or an account number to start tracking. It's highly recommended that all websites use Google Analytics or a similar tracking system to measure traffic to your website. Once Analytics is set up, you can go to the Acquisition and Channels section to look at the Social channel and see who visits your website from Facebook, YouTube, and more. Visit <https://analytics.google.com/analytics/academy/> for free lessons on using and learning from Google Analytics and what it can tell you about your website.

Content Strategy

Social media is entirely about content. Whether sharing an inspirational quote, a joke, a blog post, a news story, or a survey, you are deliberately posting a chosen piece of content that shares something about who you are as an organization and a brand. Having a solid content strategy and content calendar (learn more on pages 11 & 19) will keep you consistent, make your social media management more organized, and further develop the cohesive brand and persona you're looking to cultivate on social media.

Keeping Confidentiality

No matter how compelling the potential content, above all else, CASA programs must keep the confidentiality of youth and families in mind. When it comes to sharing stories of CASA's actual work, it's always advised only to share something that has been de-identified and will not have any potential repercussions for youth, whether on a current open case or not.

When sharing stories, remove or change any identifying information that's not pertinent to the outcome you're sharing. This can include changing/removing names, ages, race/ethnicity, gender, location, number of siblings, specific circumstances, etc.

Always keep this in the back of your mind: If a youth or family read this, could they identify themselves and, if so, how would they feel about what you've shared?

There may be some incredible stories you decide not to share after considering that question or that you store away for sharing in the future in a more intentional way.



Incorporating Inclusive, Respectful, Accurate & Modern Language in Your Content

In recent years, we have worked to unify and modernize our messaging across the state to ensure that we speak in ways that are:

- Respectful of the youth and families with whom we work
- Inclusive of all backgrounds and experiences
- Accurate regarding what we do as an organization and what we can and cannot claim as our outcomes
- Modern and up to date

We encourage you to keep these points from the [CASA Messaging Book: Speaking in One Voice](#) in mind as you're deciding on stories/quotes/articles and more to share on your social media channels.

Developing Your Expert Topics & Content Objectives

One of the easiest ways to ensure a strong content strategy is to clearly define your expert topics and content objectives. These will help you and other team members make consistent decisions on what to post by setting clear boundaries. It doesn't get posted if something doesn't fall within an expert topic or meet a content objective!

Expert Topics

Expert topics help you expand beyond simply calling for volunteers or donations by giving you guideposts for what does and does not fall within your realm of knowledge. These are the topics that you as an organization can speak about with some authority and that have relevance to the work you do.

You will want to build out a list of expert topics, securing input and approval from leadership and program team members to ensure you're not missing anything or overstepping anywhere. To build this list, start with your mission/vision/values, your innovative practices, unique community programs you're involved with, and any specific issues you consistently advocate about in court.



Here's a non-exhaustive list of CASA-specific topics to get you started (keep in mind that if something's not relevant to your specific organization, there is no need to claim it). This list is organized alphabetically and not by order of importance to CASA:

- Adoption
- Advocacy
- Child abuse/neglect/prevention
- Childhood developmental stages
- Child safety
- Child welfare system
- Commercial sexual exploitation/trafficking
- Cultural preservation
- Disproportionality
- Diversity, equity, inclusion
- Domestic violence
- Educational advocacy
- Family engagement/CFE
- Family finding
- Family reunification/preservation
- Infancy
- LGBTQ+ youth
- Mental health
- Substance abuse
- Teenagers
- Trauma-informed care/Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Volunteerism

All of these are highly relevant to many CASA programs' specific missions, but you may have additional expert topics that are pertinent yet slightly outside of the formal mission statement.

- Are you running an excellent nonprofit with solid management and innovative practices? Is nonprofit management and/or innovation an expert topic?
- Do you host a CASA Superhero Run? If so, superheroes might become an expert topic of yours.
- If you're highly engaged in your community, you might consider community events/news to be one of your expert topics.

Once you have your list, use this to brainstorm content ideas/themes and vet potential curated content that you plan to share from other sources.

Keep in mind that this list may grow and change over time. It should not be static!

Content Objectives

Once you have your expert topics identified, you will also want to clarify your content objectives. This means that each piece of content you share should aim towards one or more goals to support the organization. Potential CASA-specific content objectives might be:

- Recruit volunteers
- Educate the community
- Inspire action
- Entertain/delight
- Fundraise
- Advertise an event
- Retain volunteers/supporters
- Recruit employees
- Stimulate dialogue

It may not be worth sharing if a planned piece of content doesn't serve any of the objectives above (or any other objectives you identify for your organization). Ideally, all content will be a crossover of one or more expert topics with one or more content objectives.

Prioritize your objectives based on the current needs of the organization. If you're flush with volunteers one year but running low on funds, you may want to prioritize content that inspires giving or promotes fundraising events. Keep in mind that any nonprofit social media channel entirely focused on asking for money will not be successful. You have to share the success stories and detail the needs before asking, and keep the cheese vs. broccoli and 80/20 rule in mind from our Social Media Best Practices section on page 5.

Tips for Curating Content (Collecting & Vetting)

Once you've identified and gotten approval on your expert topics and content objectives, it's time to start putting those to work, and guess what? Not every piece of content must be something original that your organization creates!

Content curation should play a significant role in your content strategy. Curation means selecting content created by others (that works with your expert topics and content objectives) to share with your audience.

Collecting Content

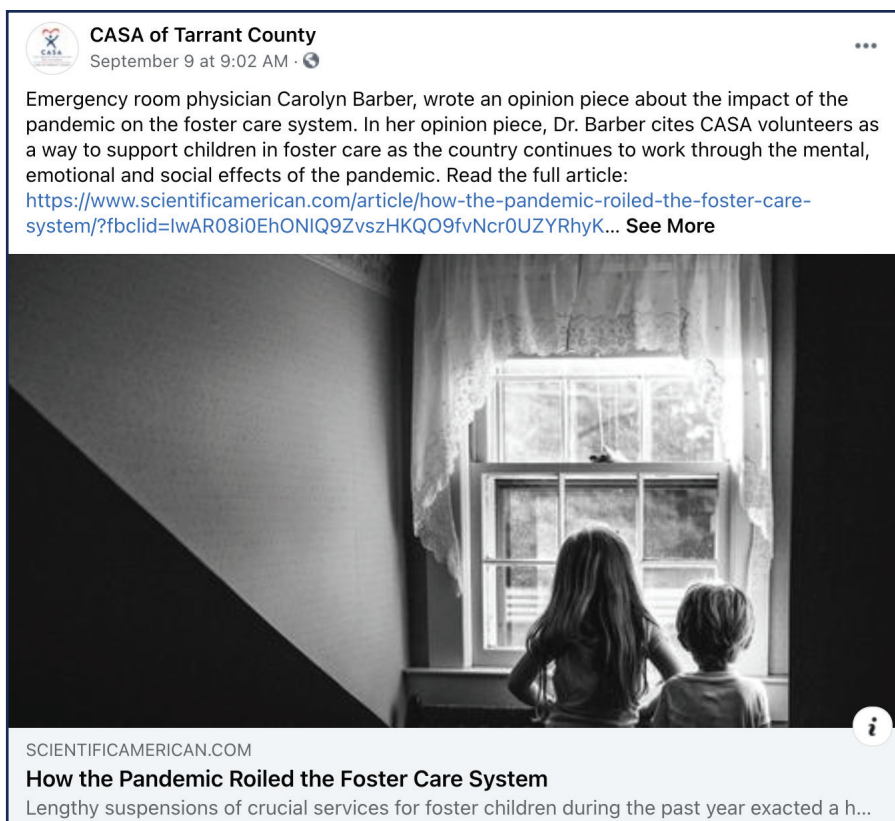
There are various ways to collect content that meets your expert topic/content objective needs.

- Read the news! Use a news aggregation app or website that allows you to follow specific topics from a variety of different news sources
- Set up Google Alerts for your expert topics
- Follow relevant hashtags on social media channels that are organized by topics
- Follow relevant profiles on social media channels that are likely to publish/share content that your audience will find of interest
 - Who are the thought leaders and influencers in the different fields your expert topics cover? Follow them!
- Ask your staff to share anything they read about (and follow their social media channels since they may post or share something relevant and not remember to send to you)
- Crowdfsource! Ask your current social media followers to share their favorite stories/articles/content every week
- Use Texas CASA for already-vetted content and share their posts

Posting Curated Content

When posting a link to content published by someone other than your organization, consider pulling out the most relevant/interesting quote or some key statistics from the content to share as the introductory text to the link. That way, you're giving your audience some context even if they never click to read beyond the headline. Also, be sure to tag any publications or organizations that are part of the story to help with your engagement. Here are examples of CASA programs posting curated content:





Vetting & Verifying Content

Just because something looks like “news” on a website these days doesn’t mean it’s factual or accurate. The ease of publishing means that many sensational, misleading, and/or blatantly false stories get coverage online. Make sure you do not take part in spreading inaccuracies through your content curation.

At the same time, some content may be factual and meet your expert topic/content objectives but will still be inappropriate to share because of its political nature, bad timing, or the negative stereotypes it reinforces. There are numerous questions to consider when vetting content for your social media.

- First, will this content break confidentiality in any way?
- What do you know about the subject, and does the material match what your organization considers factual?
- Look at the source website.
 - Is it nuanced or one-sided in its content and how it covers news stories?
 - Is it well-known for being credible, or is it covered in clickbait?
 - Clickbait means highly sensationalized headlines intended to pull you into viewing low-quality, likely deceptive content. Think of clickbait as the modern-day tabloids of the internet: “Half-alligator, half-human found in Florida swamp!”
- Search the author’s name. What else do they write about? What’s their background?
 - This is especially important with random inspirational quotes you find and want to share. Make sure the author isn’t someone who contradicts your mission and values!
- Is the content making a legitimate argument that matches your mission and values?
- Can you find similar stories on multiple websites, or is it only being reported by one source?
- Use Google’s Fact Check Tools or Snopes to confirm the validity of a story.

- Is the content highly political? If so, is it a conversation you need to engage in as a nonprofit organization that should maintain neutrality? See more on this topic in the next section.
- Does this content accidentally reinforce any stereotypes you're actively working against in your content strategy?
- Does this content approach children and families from a strengths-based lens?
- Consider your own biases and how they might affect your view of the content.
- Get a second opinion from your leadership!

Vetting & Posting Political Content

There may be instances where a topic is highly relevant and political (perhaps something happening in the legislature that could affect the Texas child welfare system). As nonprofits that also receive federal and state funding, CASA programs must remain politically neutral as often as possible. Still, there may be times when sharing a politically inclined story is valuable.

We recommend that all political topics/articles be vetted with your organizational leadership before sharing to ensure that all context is considered (your Executive Director may know something the staff member responsible for social media doesn't). You also may want to reach out to Texas CASA for additional information they may have on the topic.

If you decide to share political content, consider posting the link without any additional intro text recommended in the "Posting Curated Content" section above this. Just post the link by itself and avoid "liking" or even responding to any comments. This will help ensure you are unintentionally implying in any way that CASA endorses or takes sides in political issues. You're simply sharing information as a neutral messenger, not trying to sway opinions!

Important: Under no circumstances should a nonprofit post content specifically supporting a political candidate or announcing a candidate's running for office.

Give Credit Where It's Due

Always appropriately credit content created by others when curating. Tag the person, publication, or website whenever possible on your social media post when you're linking to their page or sharing their content (images, quotes, etc.). This is not only good etiquette but may also help your post's engagement. **Never try to pass off unoriginal content as created by your team.**

Proofing Content

Having a second set of eyes on everything you post can be helpful when it comes to:

- Avoiding typos
- Confirming you're giving proper credit (and not plagiarizing)
- Double-checking against any accidental connotations you don't want to be associated with
 - Example: The "Michael Jackson eating popcorn" GIF is widely used online to express anticipation/impending excitement, but it would not be wise for an organization that fights against child abuse to post in advance of an upcoming event or announcement.



At the same time, it's not feasible to always get every post reviewed. As an alternative to the second set of eyes, consider the following options:

- Use free Grammarly tools to double-check your spelling and grammar when you draft a post
- Write your content, then step away for 5-10 minutes so that you'll have fresh eyes to review it one more time before you post
- Read your content out loud to help you thoroughly review it before posting
- Think about where this content came from, and consider if the original creator would have their feelings hurt or feel ignored by the way you're posting this currently
- Consider the subject matter: Is there any connection to something that would be concerning for a CASA program to post?

Important: If the content covers any sensitive subject, definitely have a second person (preferably leadership) review before you post!

Storing Evergreen Content

Some content requires immediate sharing to remain relevant in the conversation. You will also find more evergreen content that you want to store away for a rainy day when you have nothing else interesting to share! Evergreen means content that never goes out of date.

As you're building out a content calendar for planning and scheduling your different channels (learn more on page 19), make sure there's an extra tab/page/list where you can paste links to evergreen content that will be useful to share at any point in time.

Developing Thematic Content for Quick & Easy Posting

Not every single day requires brand-new, highly original content on your social media channels. That's way too much to ask, especially without a staff team dedicated to digital marketing and social media.

Feel free to use a few fun or meaningful themes to help guide weekly and/or monthly content planning, but make sure your calendar isn't too rigidly defined by these themes alone. You don't want every day to be a cutesy theme, and if something happens in your community or the world that means you need to skip a #ThrowbackThursday, don't hesitate to do so.

You can decide to tell your supporters you're using themes or not. You may just decide on a set of internal themes to help drive content ideas that you never actually reference in an actual post!

Here are some pre-existing, CASA-relevant themes/hashtags you could use weekly:

- #MotivationMonday – Share an inspirational quote from a volunteer
- #TriviaTuesday – Share FAQs and fun facts about your organization's work
- #WellnessWednesday – Talk about the health benefits of volunteering or how your organization is improving the health of your community
- #ThankfulThursday – Thank a volunteer, donor, supporter
- #FeelGoodFriday – Share a feel-good organizational success story

In addition, here are child-welfare-relevant awareness months recognized on a national scale:

- January – Slavery & Human Trafficking Prevention Month
- March – Social Work Month
- April – Child Abuse Prevention & Volunteer Appreciation Month
- May – Foster Care Month & Mental Health Month
- June – Reunification Month
- September – Kinship Month
- October – Domestic Violence Awareness Month
- November – Adoption Month

You can create your own themed months around New Year's resolutions in January, back-to-school in August, home for the holidays in December, events you host or that happen in your community, and more.



Important: It's a great idea to include content around Black History Month (February), Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month (May), Pride Month (June), Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15-October 15), Native American Heritage Month (November), or any other demographic-specific themed month. At the same time, it's essential to integrate content representing these demographics throughout the entire year. Each of these demographic groups experiences unique challenges and potential overrepresentation in the child welfare system and should be consistently included in your content planning. For example, no one wants to become an organization known for "rainbow-washing" in June but not showing concern for the LGBTQ+ community throughout the rest of the year.

Building a Content Calendar

A good content strategy requires planning and a calendar, ideally coordinating social media with email marketing and other communications strategies.






Your calendar can be built in a variety of ways:

- Outlook/Google calendar
- Spreadsheet (Excel or Google Sheets, see sample below that you can copy and use)
- Project management tool
- Social media scheduling/publishing online tool (see recommendations on page 27)

Texas CASA has an easy-to-use [Google Sheet Content Calendar](#) template you can copy and customize.

Go to File: Make a Copy (you must be signed in to a Google account to do so) and then customize the calendar to meet your organization's needs and channels. You'll see additional instructions on the spreadsheet itself to help you best use the template.

January 2022 Social Media Content Calendar (Themes: New Year's Resolutions, Slavery & Human Trafficking Prevention Month)						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
						1 New Year's Day
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	Announce 2021 final numbers (kids helped, volunteers, etc)	2021 wrap-up email, summarizing blog post (linking to it) and highlighting key accomplishments/numbers	Texas Tribune article on Judge Jeneé Jack and Texas Foster Care challenges			Sign up for the CASA Superhero Run happening February 28th!
	Infographic of 2021 numbers		Start your new year off right with most professional volunteer opportunity out there! Join our Jan 19 Info Session!			CASA Superhero Run photo from previous event with link shared in bio
	Happy New Year w/ detailed accomplishments and numbers from 2021					
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
		Have you resolved to volunteer more in 2022? Learn about CASA at our online info Session, Jan 19 at 6 pm!				Superhero Run is 3 weeks away, register before prices go up
16	17 MLK Day	18	19 Online Info Session-6 pm	20	21	22
23	24	25 First Training Class Starts	26	27	28	29
30						

Key
 Facebook
 Instagram
 LinkedIn
 Blog
 Email

Make sure your calendar:

- Is shareable.
 - Other key team members should be able to view what's planned and hopefully comment!
- Has room for details.
 - If planning to share a link, you'll want to be able to add that link in a comment or directly into the calendar, so you don't have to store it somewhere else.
 - You may also want to add notes about what or how you plan to share.
- Allows you to plug in holidays, events, themed months.
 - You may want to use these for content ideas.
 - You might also plan to go quiet or only post considerate content on sensitive dates (e.g., September 11).

- Keep in mind that if you create content around Christmas and Christian holidays, you should also include other major religious holidays such as Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist dates in your calendar.
 - Understanding this, you may be better off avoiding religious holidays and sticking to secular messages like “Happy Holidays” come December!

Ideally, your social media calendar will also function as your full communications/editorial calendar, holding all outreach and awareness plans in one place for easy viewing and coordination so that messaging across all channels supports and reinforces itself.

Be Ready to Ditch the Calendar

Just because you have a calendar doesn’t mean you will always follow it to the letter. Social media has to be responsive to the environment, whether you’re taking advantage of an opportunity (e.g., major news story drops about the child welfare system) or adjusting appropriately to current events (e.g., your organization is in crisis or national/worldwide tragedy occurs).

How Often to Post

There’s no secret sauce for posting frequency. Every channel is different, and every organization will experience its own success based on the type of content they offer and what their audience wants to see.

Of course, you won’t want to post on Facebook nearly as often as you could post on Twitter’s rapidly evolving feed of quick content, but deciding how often to post on Facebook needs to be something that you test, watch your competitors, and then use your organization’s own data and insights to evaluate. Do you get more engagement when posting 4 times a week versus every day? Try that for a while and then test again in the future to see if anything has changed. Learn more about how to evaluate your social media data in our Looking at the Data section on page 26.

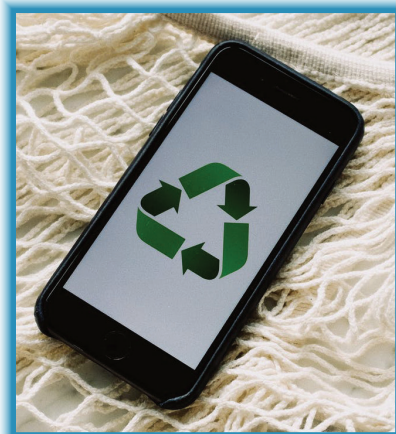
It will also depend upon your capacity. If posting every day on Facebook or Instagram means you’re sharing poorly-thought-out, meaningless content that gets zero engagement, then post less often, with more intention!

Repurposing & Reusing Content

All content, especially content that you’ve spent time creating from scratch, has the potential to be repurposed and reused over various channels and spread out over time. You want to give content multiple opportunities to have eyes on it, and therefore more chances to support your organization.

One way to think about this is by dripping out pieces of content over time in different formats. For example, check out the following distribution plan for a blog post profiling a CASA volunteer:

- Publish the full-length blog post on your website
- Share the link to the article on your Facebook, Twitter, and/or LinkedIn profiles with a quote from the volunteer in the text
- Share a photo of the volunteer on Instagram, with a “link in bio” note to see the full blog post



- Capture some video of the volunteer answering key questions during the interview, and share those in the rest of the week on video-focused social media like Instagram, TikTok, and any channel that uses Stories/Reels or other video features
- Turn the best quote from the interview into an inspirational quote graphic to share next week on Instagram, calling back to the blog link
- Share the profile in your next e-newsletter
- Reach out to any groups or networks the volunteer is active in outside of CASA and ask them to share the blog post via their own channels
- *Tag the volunteer on any channels where they're active, and you're able to link to them!*

Here's an example of a volunteer profile blog post reused as both Facebook and Instagram content with appropriate visual formats for each.

Facebook



Instagram



Texas CASA Content Bank

To help make your life easier, one of the tools we're providing via this guidebook is a content bank of ideas and ready-to-post text you can use throughout the year to fill in the gaps in your content calendar.

Head to the [Content Bank](#) to download and read the instructions about how to filter through and use the content bank to help you build a solid and engaging online presence via your social media.

Best Practices for Monitoring & Engaging on Social Media

When you engage with social media channels, you commit to not only posting consistently but to monitoring and responding consistently, as well (this should be part of your consideration when deciding how many social media channels to activate).

Monitoring

Your primary staff member responsible for social media should expect that monitoring is a consistent part of their daily routine, even somewhat outside of work hours.

They should have their social media channels open or easily accessible on their internet browser during work hours, with sites set to notify them of comments, messages, and other engagement.

At all times, they should have social media management apps installed on their phone and set to notify them immediately of any comments or messages. When available, they should download the business versions of those apps (e.g., Facebook Business Suite/Pages Manager at the time of writing) so that they're getting the best version of those notifications and messages.

This does not mean that a Facebook "like" should ping their phone at 3 a.m. "Do Not Disturb" hours are a social media manager's best friend on their phone. But, when they wake up and get to work, it's handy to check any overnight social media notifications. Trolls (online antagonists) love a good 3 a.m. spam posting fest that covers a page in damaging comments when the staff member responsible for social media is likely to not respond for a few hours.

Backup Monitors

Social media websites and apps are fallible and do not always notify on every single post or comment. At the same time, people are fallible, too. They may miss a notification on their phone or browser or be unable to respond (having dinner with friends, driving, working out, on a plane, living their best life, etc.) immediately.

Because of this, it's highly recommended that at least 1–2 backup social media monitors are in place with apps on their phones as well. While they don't need to respond to positive and neutral comments, having a handful of people available to hopefully catch a harmful comment before it sits for hours causing damage will be helpful.

These monitors should be well-versed in your social media response policies and know when it's appropriate to delete a comment or ban someone if needed (more info on page 24 in Dealing with Online Harassment).

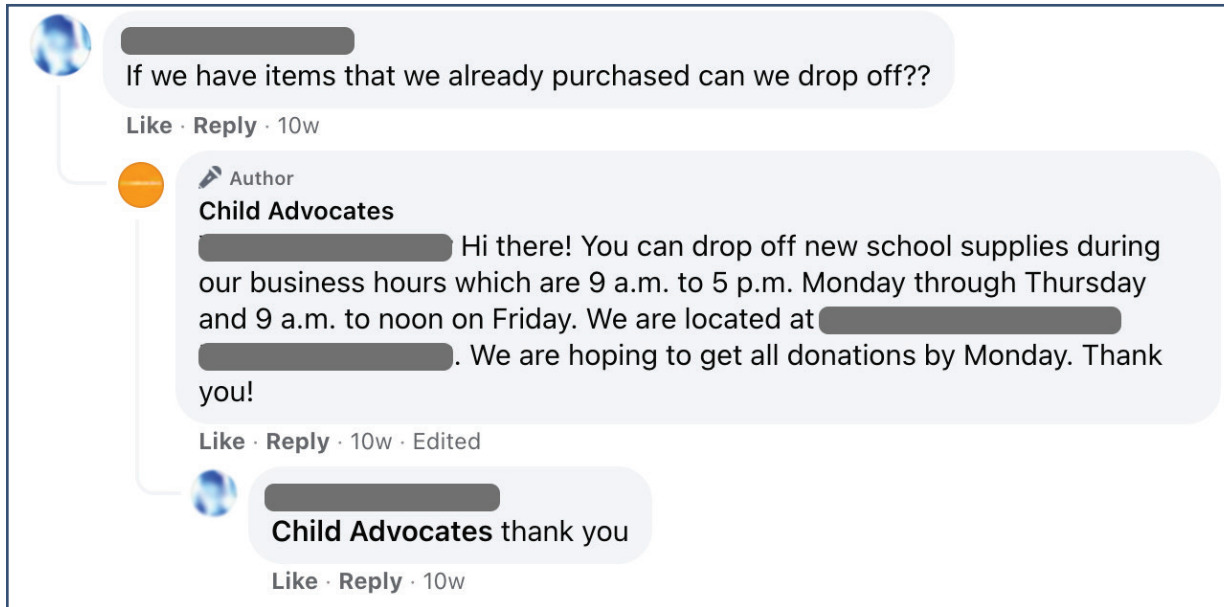
Engaging & Responding

You will want to "like" almost every comment or post made from a place of positivity. Adding a response comment is also valuable for upping engagement on your social media channels whenever possible or merited.

You should consider an actual response if the comment/post is:

- A question to be answered—respond to these, never leave a legitimate question hanging.
 - If a question has a negative tone, you might still respond. See “Dealing with Online Harassment” in the next section.
- Kind words or anything that deserves a thank you from your organization (e.g., “Just donated to CASA, love this group!”)
- From a commenter who you know is an active supporter/volunteer/donor/board member, and you can thank them specifically for their gifts of time/resources/etc.
- Or you just have a chance to further a positive conversation by commenting!

Responses can be brief or long, depending on what the comment or post deserves.



Messages

If a private message comes to your organization that is not inherently spammy or trying to sell you something, you should respond as quickly as possible to answer their question or refer them to an appropriate resource. Sometimes social media channels grade you publicly on your responsiveness, so you might even consider responding with “Not interested” to the spam/sales messages.

Back-Up Responders

If just one person is in charge of responding to all comments and messages, it can be overwhelming to manage, especially if communications/marketing is not their full-time job. You may want to consider having extra people who, beyond just backup monitoring, as we mentioned above, are also equipped to like and/or respond to positive comments/messages. Make sure they know enough about the organization to respond appropriately and with accurate information. Anyone involved in recruitment/outreach/training might be a good team member for this role.

Dealing with Online Harassment

Comments on the negative end of the spectrum can range from aggressively questioning an organization, breaking confidentiality, sharing misconceptions or conspiracy theories to threats and hate speech. The primary staff member responsible for social media for a channel will need to be always ready to deal with negative posts, including:

- Planning an appropriate response to the negative comment/post
- Deleting a comment or post after taking a screenshot for documentation
- Banning/blocking a user in extreme situations

The following scenarios have been categorized based on whether they should be responded to, deleted, or potentially banned.

Respond Constructively

- Legitimate questions about your organization
- Misconceptions that can be cleared up
- A legitimate grievance*

**While you will probably want to remove the grievance post from your page, you should immediately reach out privately to respond to the person and their grievance, explain why you removed their post, and provide your program's grievance policies.*



Delete (after screenshot)

- Broken privacy laws or confidentiality of cases*
- Harmful misinformation such as conspiracy theories
- Insulting or aggressive responses to other commenters
- Statements that are racist, sexist, misogynistic, homophobic, or otherwise offensive to groups of people
- Inappropriate comments

**Youth or families occasionally post thank you messages or compliments on CASA social media. This is breaking their own confidentiality and should be removed. In this situation, screenshot the comment before removal and work with the volunteer or case supervisor to contact the youth/family, thank them for their kind words, and let them know that their comment was removed to protect their privacy.*

Delete & Potentially Block/Ban User (after screenshot)

Banning/blocking could create animosity or accusations of censorship, so use this judiciously. It's also helpful to document people whom you've banned and why.

- Repeat offenders
- Targeted spam campaigns with multiple comments/posts at once
- Violent or graphic images or videos
- Hate speech
- Inciting violence or threatening someone

Dealing with Grievances, Accusations, or Personal Requests for Help

Your social media channels will become an easy method of contact, which means that whoever is monitoring these channels may at times be privy to very personal messages. These could include:

- Grievances regarding your organization or another in the child welfare community
- Accusations of abuse or neglect against someone
 - This could be an unknown person, or it could be against someone who works or volunteers with CASA
- Personal requests for resources/support
- Threats of self-harm
- Personal stories of trauma, loss, or grief
- Over-sharing of personal information (especially from potential volunteers)

It's unlikely the person who manages social media is a trained counselor. Because of this, we recommend developing a set of stock responses and escalation plans for moments that messages like this come through. These responses can be shared with whoever manages your primary phone line and your general office email, since all three of these contact methods are likely to receive similar communications.

Stock response messages could include:

- Phone and link for reporting abuse or neglect to DFPS (if not accusing someone in your organization)
- Resource links (like 311, FindHelp.org, and legal aid) for securing help or personal support
- Phone numbers for other local child welfare organizations if a grievance needs to be redirected



For more severe messages, you will need the following, in coordination with your programmatic team members and any social workers on staff:

- Grievance and/or accusation documentation and escalation policies and process if it is about your organization
- Documentation of information about anyone mentioning wanting to become a volunteer, and referral of their info to recruitment staff
- In case of threatening to self-harm, pull in a senior team member who can both share appropriate resources (local suicide prevention hotline number) and try to secure additional contact information from this person to share with 911
- An experienced team member who can respond appropriately to any personal trauma stories and then direct the person to resources accordingly

You never know what kind of message will come through social media since it's a place people tend to share more openly through some sense of anonymity. Make sure your staff member responsible for social media knows when to escalate and has access to team members with social work backgrounds to help them do so.

Looking at the Data: How to Evaluate Social Media Success

Almost every social media channel will offer you insight into your organization's performance data if you are using a business profile page. Some offer historical, in-depth data, while others may only give you a week-long look-back that disappears come Monday morning! Some of the social media tools mentioned in our Tools section on page 27 offer analytics dashboards to provide more robust insights into your performance.

Whichever channels you decide to use, it's essential to research their analytic abilities and determine how you will download and track data to analyze success over time.

Data to consider include:

- What are your overall engagement rates looking like?
 - *Engagement rates typically include likes, comments, clicks, and other activity happening directly on your post*
- How does engagement change by:
 - Post format (link, text, image, video, etc.)
 - Post frequency per week
 - Day/time of post
 - Length of post
 - Topic of post
 - Objective of post
 - Holidays/seasonality
 - Use of hashtags
 - Use of tagging other people/pages
 - *If there are any clear patterns of positive engagement for a specific day or when posting more often, use those patterns to test over the coming few months and see if engagement goes up overall!*
- Is your follower list growing over time?
 - *This should be less significant than engagement since a larger follower list that doesn't engage with what you post is useless*
- Are your impressions/reach growing over time?
 - Impressions are how many times your posts show up
 - Reach is the number of unique viewers who could have seen your post
- How often is your organization getting mentions?
- How often do people visit your webpage from social media channels (use Google Analytics)?



If possible, set aside half a day towards the beginning of each month to pull social media analytics (or review dashboards if you're using a social media tool) to see what's working and what's not. That can help you adjust your content strategy for the coming months to see if you can grow engagement by perhaps changing when you post or what you're posting about. Use the data to pick out positive or negative patterns, test those patterns by changing your plans, and then compare again next month to see how things worked!

Tools for Social Media Management

It can be beneficial to subscribe to a few low-cost tools (some even offer nonprofit discounts!), most notably to help with social media scheduling and design. The following list is not comprehensive but features a handful of tools that meet some of these critical needs. Links, pricing, and features below are dated July 2021 and may change.

Canva – Design/Scheduling

<https://www.canva.com/>

Nonprofits can get the Pro plan for **free** by applying at <https://www.canva.com/canva-for-nonprofits/>

- Social media scheduling
- Design
- Standard branding kit (logo, fonts, colors)
- Image resizing by channel
- Free images, icons, fonts, stock photos, and videos
- Ready-to-use templates

Buffer – Scheduling/Engaging/Data

<https://buffer.com/>

Lowest cost plan: \$15/month (Free plan available with limited tools)

- Publish/Schedule
- Respond/Engage
- Analyze Data

Loomly – Scheduling/Engaging/Data

<https://www.loomly.com/>

Lowest cost plan: \$34/month

- Publish/Schedule
- Post Ideas
- Respond/Engage
- Analyze Data

HootSuite – Scheduling/Engaging/Listening/Data

<https://www.hootsuite.com/>

Lowest cost plan: \$49/month (Free plan available with limited tools)

- Publish/Schedule
- Respond/Engage
- Listen/Monitor
- Analyze Data

Planoly – Instagram & Pinterest Specific

<https://www.planoly.com/>

Lowest cost plan: \$9/month and free option

- Publish/Schedule
- Analyze Data

Adobe Spark – Design

<https://www.adobe.com/express>

Lowest cost plan: \$9.99/month (Free plan available with limited tools). May already be available if using other Adobe tools

- Standard branding kit (logo, fonts, colors)
- Image resizing by channel
- Free images, icons, fonts
- Ready-to-use templates

Boosted – Video

<https://boosted.lightricks.com/>

Lowest cost plan: \$14.90/month

- Templates
- Resizing
- Fonts/Graphics
- Music

Later.Com - Scheduling/Data

<https://later.com/>

Lowest cost plan: Free or \$15/month

- Publish/Schedule
- Analyze Data



Conclusion

Social media is now a vital part of connecting with potential volunteers and supporters (and staying engaged with current ones). It's a tool we cannot dismiss, and we need to commit to it in an appropriate way that works with the resources we have available in our organizations.

We hope this guidebook helps you better grasp how you can use social media well and in a way that doesn't overwhelm your staff members. If you ever have questions or need more support, contact communications@texascasa.org.



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