

Social Media Screening Guidelines

Why should we screen our Candidates' social media presence?

- Potential negligence if not reviewing what is already “knowable” public information
- Becoming industry standard for due diligence in organizations that serve youth
- Opportunity to identify red flags that this person may be higher risk to behave inappropriately with children, youth, or vulnerable persons
- Another source of information about the individual to compare to what you have already gathered
- May provide insight into this person’s maturity and readiness for religious life

What are we looking for?

- Information that suggests inappropriate boundaries with children, youth, or vulnerable persons
- Information inconsistent with what is known about the individual
- Behavior that is inconsistent with the values of the Institute
- Illegal conduct, online harassment, poor judgment

How do we do this?

- Ensure all Candidates are subject to a social media review and the review is completed consistently in both the method of the search used and the use of the information acquired.
- Consult with legal counsel prior to utilizing a third-party source, as more stringent federal and local laws may apply to professional service providers.
- Refrain from asking for social media passwords; this practice is illegal in many states.
- Document which sites you review using a social media checklist (see sample provided).
- If possible, include other decision makers as you review the information. It may be helpful to get perspective from different people.
- Inform the Candidate that your Institute has policies for how its members use electronic communication.

What if we find something questionable?

- Discuss any questionable findings with the vocation committee.
- Consider the behavior’s frequency, duration, intensity, and context.
- Consult legal counsel about any adverse action you may take because of a finding.
- Consider discussing the findings with the Candidate.

Praesidium, Inc. provides sample policies to assist in the prevention of organizational abuse. However, it must be noted that no system can guarantee prevention of abuse. When all policies are implemented and maintained, a risk for abuse continues to exist, as the problem of abuse is pervasive and no system to date can assure complete safety.

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