



SOCIAL MEDIA AWARENESS PROGRAM

OCPS PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Parents and Guardians

OCPS is committed to the success of nearly 200,000 students. We will use any means that are legal and appropriate to keep our children safe in a society that has many dangers. Because social media can be the source of bullying, school threats or masked cries for help, we believe it is appropriate to monitor public sites, sites that anyone can view. For security purposes, we will not disclose all of the details related to monitoring social media.

OCPS has adopted a social media awareness program in order to ensure the continued safety and security of the OCPS community. The district will use software to identify online communications that suggest harm, self-harm, violence, bullying and mischief to property owned or operated by OCPS.

If your child witnesses any online posts implying bullying, harassment or violence on social media, we encourage you to report those posts immediately. We support the “See Something, Say Something concept” – which means if your student sees or finds something on the Internet or in their school that does not seem right, it should be reported.

The ability to prevent an incident before it occurs is one of the district’s best approaches to ensuring the safety of your children. Please take a brief moment to read the Frequently Asked Questions below to help you understand more about the program.

What is the OCPS social media awareness program and how does it work?

- The program works as an active appraisal tool of social media channels, watching for relevant safety and security information. Using social media analysis software, conscientious public, private and non-governmental organizations can search, compile and view publicly viewable posts on various social media platforms to assist in the timely identification of pertinent information. OCPS will use social media analysis software to identify active or potential safety concerns to students, employees and OCPS facilities.

Why does OCPS review social media?

- OCPS Emergency Management, Safety and Security personnel work every day to keep students and staff safe from harm. The use of social media analysis software allows the department to proactively conduct assessments of publicly viewable social media that is often the fastest source of relevant safety and security information. Early identification of hazards will allow OCPS the opportunity to intervene, the ultimate goal being the prevention of harm to students, staff and OCPS facilities. Furthermore, following safety related trends on social media will allow OCPS to be aware of hazards in real time.



Safety & Security Services

Orange County Public Schools

What is OCPS searching for?

- The social media analysis software is strictly being used as a tool to intervene with or prevent safety hazards and security concerns involving the district, its students and its employees. Scans of social media will include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Identification of emerging incidents and other emergency situations.
 - Statements of self-harm or harm to others.
 - References to violence and weapons within the school environment.
 - Criminal activity potentially affecting schools; and
 - Bullying or other harassing behaviors.

Will OCPS discipline students for their electronic speech?

- Everyone has the right to free speech as protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and the district does not intend to investigate the social lives of its students. However, if online or electronic speech interferes with the ability to provide a safe learning and working environment or if the speech violates the OCPS Code of Student Conduct, the district may take investigatory or disciplinary action. Please refer to the Code of Student Conduct, or download a copy from the OCPS website under the “Parent” link.

Will the district access the private accounts of students?

- No, OCPS will be using the software to review publicly available posts and related accounts.

Is the district analyzing only the postings made from school computers?

- No, OCPS can review any posts made on a public social media site.

Is the district requiring passwords and account information?

- No, OCPS will not be accessing individual user personal accounts. Only publicly available posts will be available for review.

What will OCPS do if they find something of concern?

- OCPS takes all safety concerns seriously. District-related safety concerns will be investigated and if necessary, referred to the appropriate authorities.

If a parent becomes aware of activities on social media that may be of concern, what steps should be taken?

- If you become aware of social media posts that raise concerns for the safety and security of students or employees, please contact your child’s school and provide them with as much information regarding the post as possible.



**Safety & Security
Services**
Orange County Public Schools

Will OCPS use or sell the information collected for marketing purposes?

- No. OCPS follows the requirements in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) relative to student information. The service provider is restricted by law and by contract to the specific purposes of the program as identified by OCPS.

Can I opt my child out of the social media awareness program?

- There is no opting in or out of the social media awareness program. The privacy of the social media posts are at the discretion of the user. The district encourages everyone to be aware of internet safety and develop healthy online practices.

As a parent, what can I do to work with my child about responsible use of social media?

- Parents should consider setting rules for responsible use of social media with their children. There are a variety of resources on the internet available to assist with talking to your child.
- Educate your child that what they put online may be permanent and is rarely private. It is important that students use good judgment when posting text, pictures and videos online.
- Take time to remind your child that communicating verbally is very different from communicating online. Children must be thoughtful with their words as they are very hard to take back once they are in the social media channels.
- Teach children to avoid online interactions and connections with people they do not know in person.
- Make sure your child knows to come to you with a problem when it occurs, so you can seek an immediate solution to the situation.