

TWITTER
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101

*Twitter 101 for
Child Welfare Professionals:*
**AN INTRODUCTION TO
USING TWITTER**

.....
to Reach Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship Families



Adopt US Kids

Together we hold their future

What is social media?

Social media encompasses a wide range of online networks that connect people. There are many well-established social networks (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) and other new ones being developed and gaining in popularity (e.g. Pinterest, Tumblr, etc.). Although there are some similarities across social media networks, most have distinct functions and styles. For example:

- Facebook is commonly used for more informal, social interaction
- Twitter uses short blurbs of information and brief conversations
- LinkedIn is for professional networking
- Flickr is for sharing photos and blogging
- YouTube is for sharing videos

Many more social media networks exist and tend to ebb and flow in terms of popularity and usage.

How does Twitter differ from other networks?

Twitter offers many features and has functionality that differentiates it from other social media networks. Understanding these differences can help child welfare agencies assess whether Twitter is an appropriate tool to use as part of your agency's work. Here are just a few characteristics of Twitter:

- Your postings on Twitter (i.e., "Tweets") have a limit of 140 characters, including punctuation and spaces, to communicate each message
- It is a great platform for sharing brief bits of information or links to resources
- Your content is very easily shared by others, through "retweets"
- It is acceptable to share the same information multiple times, although not **too** often

How could my agency use Twitter?

There are many possibilities for how child welfare agencies can use Twitter to support outreach, recruitment, retention, and efforts to communicate with prospective and current foster, adoptive, and kinship families. For example, agencies could use Twitter to:

- Share information about upcoming foster and adoptive parent recruitment events, orientation sessions, and other events for prospective foster and adoptive parents. *Note: Using Twitter should not replace other ways of sharing this information, but should instead supplement your agency's other outreach efforts.*
- Share information about upcoming adoption awareness-raising events or celebrations, supplementing your agency's other outreach and communication methods
- Share child welfare facts and data that would be interesting to families and to the general public
- Feature profiles of children who are waiting to be adopted to help prospective parents learn more about children in foster care who are available for adoption from your agency. *Note: You should only do this with the child caseworker's approval and on a case-by-case basis with appropriate preparation of the child. You can find more information on this strategy in our **Twitter 201** guide.¹*

¹ "Twitter 201 for Child Welfare Professionals: Strategies and Best Practices for Using Twitter to Reach Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship Families" – available on the AdoptUSKids website at http://adoptuskids.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/twitter-201-for-child-welfare-professionals.pdf

Seek Your Agency's Guidance Before Implementing These Ideas

The guidelines in this document apply equally to both public child welfare staff and the staff of private agencies that provide services on behalf of the public agency.

Child welfare systems across the country are in varied stages of exploring and using social media. The ideas included in this document are general suggestions for ways to use social media in child welfare work and are intended for agency leaders and managers as they decide if and how social media can support their communication, outreach, and engagement efforts. As with all new approaches, you should consider how these suggestions might work within the context of your jurisdiction and your State's public child welfare agency's policies, guidelines, and best practices. The ideas and tips included here should not be used if they conflict with any policies of your State's public child welfare agency, regardless of whether your relationship with the agency is that of employee-employer or contractual, and should only be implemented with the support of the public agency's leadership.

- Make it easier for families to find out about the resources your agency has to offer by sharing links to information and resources for foster, adoptive, and kinship families about parenting children with special needs, participating in parent support groups, accessing services and support from the agency, and other information that will be helpful to families
- Post links to news stories about your agency and other stories about foster care and adoption—highlighting these stories can help your agency be seen as a resource for both current and prospective foster, adoptive, and kinship families
- Post links to success stories about foster, adoptive, and kinship families, and youth who were formerly in foster care, which can help in your recruitment and retention efforts. *Note: You should only do this with permission from the families and youth involved, following best practices for protecting individuals' privacy.*

How to Request Training and Technical Assistance in Social Media

We offer free training and technical assistance (T/TA) to public child welfare agencies to help you build your agency's capacity to use social media as part of your recruitment and retention efforts. You can access our T/TA services in any of the following ways:

- Connect with us online at adoptuskids.org/nrc-recruitment
- Contact your Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Regional Office staff to initiate a request for T/TA
- Contact us to discuss your needs by calling 303-726-0198



Toll-Free
888-200-4005

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INFO@ADOPTUSKIDS.ORG

WWW.ADOPTUSKIDS.ORG

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