Electronic Records Management: Strategies for Managing Retention of Inappropriate Social Media Comments

Purpose: Provide guidance to state and local agencies on how to manage inappropriate social media comments.

Agencies sometimes receive comments on social media posts that are considered “inappropriate”. Inappropriate social media comments may contain:

- Bad language
- Bullying
- Factually incorrect information regarding an agency
- Threatening language
- Offensive images

Agencies should not delete comments on a social media post, as they could relate to agency business.

Here is one strategy for retaining inappropriate social media comments:

1. Write and make available an agency social media policy that defines “inappropriate comments” and states that they may be removed from view.
2. Hide inappropriate comments if they are disrespectful in nature, or contain factually incorrect information or threatening language regarding a situation or agency.
3. Retain inappropriate comments for the appropriate retention period, based on their content and function.

An agency may also decide to disable comments on a social media post or platform. However, there are some issues with this approach:

1. Comments could relate to agency business.
2. Comments may be needed or desired as input and feedback.

Additional advice regarding the management of public records is available from Washington State Archives:

www.sos.wa.gov/archives
recordsmanagement@sos.wa.gov