



**State of Florida  
Department of Children and Families**

**Rick Scott**  
*Governor*

**David E. Wilkins**  
*Secretary*

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 22, 2012

TO: Debra Ervin, Interim Director of Family and Community Services  
Mary Cagle, Director of Children's Legal Services

FROM: Drew Parker, General Counsel *dp*  
Melanie M. Burnette, Assistant General Counsel *mb*

SUBJECT: Online Social Networking Policy

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This memorandum is to clarify the department's policy regarding the use of online social networking sites in relation to children in foster care. The principles that were considered when examining this issue include: 1) the foster child's right to privacy, and 2) the foster child's right to live a normal life.

Use of online social networking sites to communicate with family and friends is a normal, everyday practice for most people in our modern society. Foster families and foster children are no exception. The department does not prohibit a foster family from posting images of their foster child on a social networking site, provided the child's status as a foster child is not disclosed. If a child chooses to disclose his or her foster status, such disclosure is a matter of free speech which the department has no ability, desire, or right to control. The department strongly encourages any person posting a foster child's image to an online social networking site to use privacy settings in a manner which will protect the best interests of the child.

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Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency