Parents Of Murdered Children
Social Media Guidelines

The National Organization of Parents Of Murdered Children, Inc. (POMC)® maintains a website on behalf of POMC. POMC's local chapters and their individual members may also create and maintain Blogs, social networks and websites through Wikipedia, Facebook, Flickr, Second Life and YouTube, etc.

Because social media channels are fairly new to many POMC Chapters and their members, we've assembled "best practice" guidelines from respected online and industry sources to help you use these forums effectively, protect your personal and professional reputation, and follow POMC policies. These guidelines will apply whether you are writing on behalf of your Chapter or as an individual.

Don't make endorsements. Do not use POMC's name to promote or endorse any product, cause or political issue, party or candidate.

Use of POMC Name and Logo. For private blogs, websites, or other social media sites, do not use the POMC name or logo except to notify your readers of POMC events. For Chapter websites, you may use the POMC name and logo, but make it clear you are writing only on behalf of your Chapter and not on behalf of the National Organization of POMC or any other Chapter.

Maintain confidentiality. Do not post confidential or proprietary information about POMC, its Chapters, their members, or its staff. Use good ethical judgment. If you discuss a situation involving individuals on a social media site, be sure that they cannot be identified. As a guideline, don't post anything that you would not present at a conference.

Be transparent. If you participate in or maintain a social media site on behalf of a POMC Chapter, clearly state your role and goals. Only National POMC employees are authorized, with the approval of the Executive Director, to participate in social media sites on behalf of National POMC.

Be authentic. Be honest about your identity. In personal posts, you may identify yourself as a POMC Chapter member. However, please be clear that you are sharing your views as a survivor, not as a formal representative of POMC.
A common practice among individuals who write blogs is to include a disclaimer on their site, usually on their "About Me" page. If you discuss survivor issues on your own social media site, we suggest you include a sentence similar to this:

"The views expressed on this [blog, Web site] are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of POMC."

This is particularly important if you are Chapter Leader or officer.

Be accurate. Make sure that you have all the facts before you post. It's better to verify information with a source first than to have to post a correction or retraction later. Cite and link to your sources whenever possible. Make sure you have permission to post any copyrighted or confidential information (e.g., images) to your blog or website, and be careful about posting or linking to items that may contain viruses. If you make an error, correct it quickly and visibly.

Be thoughtful. If you have any questions about whether it is appropriate to write about certain kinds of material, ask the Executive Director of National POMC before you post.

Be respectful. You are more likely to achieve your goals or sway others to your beliefs if you are constructive and respectful while discussing a bad experience or disagreeing with a concept or person.

Think before you post. There's no such thing as a "private" social media site. Search engines can turn up posts years after the publication date. Comments can be forwarded or copied. Archival systems save information even if you delete a post. If you feel angry or passionate about a subject, it's wise to delay posting until you are calm and clear-headed.

Don't be a mole. Never pretend to be someone else and post about POMC. Tracking tools enable supposedly anonymous posts to be traced back to their authors.

Be aware of liability. You are legally liable for what you post on your own site and on the sites of others. Individual bloggers have been held liable for commentary deemed to be proprietary, copyrighted, defamatory, libelous or obscene (as defined by the courts). Employers are increasingly conducting Web searches on job candidates before extending offers. Be sure that what you post today will not come back to haunt you.

Protect your identity. While you want to be honest about yourself, don't provide personal information that scam artists or identity thieves could use against you. Don't list your home address or telephone number or your work telephone or e-mail address. It is a good idea to create a separate e-mail address that is used only with your social media site.

Follow a code of ethics. There are numerous codes of ethics for bloggers and other active participants in social media, all of which will help you participate responsibly in online communities. If you have your own social media site, you may wish to post your own code of ethics.

Monitor comments. Most people who maintain social media sites welcome comments—it builds credibility and community. However, you can set your site so that you can review and approve comments before they appear. This allows you to respond in a timely way to comments. It also allows you to delete spam comments and to block any individuals who repeatedly post offensive or frivolous comments.