

2012-11-28 12.01 Friending Your Clients on Facebook: How Social Media Influences Child Welfare Practice

Presenters: Brittany Smith, Director of Community Management at the Children's Mental Health Network; Dr. Dale Fitch, Assistant Professor at the University of Missouri

Operator: [00:00:00] Welcome, and thank you for standing by. All participants will be in a listen-only mode for today's conference. After the presentation we will conduct a question and answer session. To ask a question, please press Star 1, unmute your line and record your name. I would now like to call over to Ms. Elizabeth Mertinko. Ma'am, you may begin.

Elizabeth Mertinko, Facilitator: [00:00:20] Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the seventh of twelve monthly webinars celebrating the Children's Bureau's Centennial Year. Today's webinar -- Friending Your Clients on Facebook: How Social Media Influences Child Welfare Practice -- is the sixth of eight topical webinars offered between April 2012 and April 2013.

Today's discussion will explore the role of social media in the child welfare practice including ethical issues related to the use of social media to gather information about and communicate with clients in child welfare, and the importance of developing and implementing strong social media policies in child welfare agencies.

Before we begin, just a few housekeeping items. First, please note that we have muted all telephone lines to minimize background noise. We will open the lines at the conclusion of the presentation to allow questions and comments from our audience.

Also, your feedback on these webinars is very important to us. We will be asking for your comments at the conclusion of today's presentation, and ask that you take a few minutes to share them with us.

Finally, the slides and a recording to today's presentation will be available at the Children's Bureau Centennial Website at <http://cb100.acf.hhs.gov/>. We will share this information with you again at the conclusion of today's webinar.

With today's webinar we are introducing an addition forum for discussion of this topic. We have started a LinkedIn Group called "CB Centennial Webinars," with the discussion thread devoted to today's topic. Those of you who registered early already have received invitations to join this group. For those of you who did not receive an invitation, instructions on joining the group will appear at the conclusion of the webinar. We invite all of you to continue the discussion on LinkedIn Today after today's presentation.

At this time I'd like to introduce today's speakers. Our first speaker today is Brittany Smith. Ms. Smith is the Director of Community Management at the Children's Mental Health Network. Our second speaker will be Dr. Dale Fitch. Dr. Fitch is an Assistant Professor at the University of Missouri. At this point I would like to turn things over to Ms. Smith to start today's discussion.

Brittany Smith: [00:02:17] Thank you so much, Elizabeth. It will just take a second here to get my slides loaded up, and while we're waiting, I'll just tell you guys a little bit about myself and

the Children's Mental Health Network so you have some context and can kind of understand why I'm speaking to you today about social media.

So again, as Elizabeth said, my name is Brittany Smith, and I'm the Director of Community Management at the Children's Mental Health Network. The Children's Mental Health Network is a national advocacy organization, and we really focus on making sure that improvements are being made in children's mental health with the System of Care approach.

I really encourage you guys to visit our website: cmhnetwork.org -- we've got a lot of great resources and news items, and we have a weekly blog... it's just a great way to stay up to date about everything that's going on in children's mental health and what issues we need to pay attention to, to make sure that children continue to get the services that they deserve.

My role at the Children's Mental Network is the Director of Community Management. So essentially what that means is, we have a strong focus on building communities at the Children's Mental Health Network, and I just kind of help make sure that we're successfully building community, and a lot of how we do that is through social media. And I, myself, I love social media, I'm on it all the time, but of course I'm using it strategically and intentionally; and I'm 26 years old myself and do a lot of advocacy work in my free time in the child welfare system in my state of Oregon.

I'm a Court Appointed Special Advocate and do a lot of work with youth in foster care, and have been to several trainings on how youth should feel comfortable using social media, and what the risks and benefits are for them as using social media, and I've worked with several human service agencies on developing social media policies for their organizations and just how to kind of get on the social media bandwagon in a way that's safe, and intentional, and strategic.

So what I'm going to talk to you guys today about is a little bit of an overview of "what is social media." Kind of a buzzword, a lot of people are talking about it, a lot of people are excited about it, but what is it, really. What are some of the risks and benefits of social media; why do people use social media; specifically, why do youth use social media; and how you can start to learn about social media yourself, and just kind of stay up to date on what's going on in social media and tackle some of those ethical dilemmas that really come up as a caseworker -- whether or not to friend your clients, and that sort of a thing.

So I'll start off by just giving my favorite definition of social media. Heidi Cohen defined social media as an online platform or channel for publishing and disseminating user-generated content. So what's really unique about social media as opposed to other forms of traditional media is that there's that intense focus on user-generated content.

So what that means is that rather than CNN or some really big, intelligent person or a large company being able to produce content, we now as individuals, as citizens, as consumers, as employees, are in a position to develop our own content and put it on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter and have it disseminated to a very large audience.

Now of course there are pros and cons to this, and I like to really focus on a lot of the positive benefits. So some of the positive benefits are that social media really allows us to engage with

and empower our community. Not only as individuals in our community, but also as representatives of our community.

Social media really gives us the opportunity to have connection and access to information in ways that we didn't have before. For example, just on the Internet in general, one of the top searched-for topics is health information. So that can be really valuable for youth and foster care or anyone out there. You can find a lot of really valuable health information and start to understand your body and understand your health and be empowered. And go to the hospital or to the doctor and know what questions to ask, rather than just having to trust the professional blindly. So there are a lot of exciting things about social media.

This picture on the right-hand side of the slide is meant to overwhelm you. So if you look at it and your heart rate increases, that's what I want to happen. (laughs) Social media is a vastly changing world; there are all sorts of new platforms that are introduced, weekly, monthly, yearly. Some of them stay, some of them go. And each platform meets different needs for different audiences.

So the social media platforms that all of us know and probably are familiar with are Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Flickr is another example of a social media platform that's really popular, it's just for sharing pictures. Instagram is another social media platform; Pinterest now is a very popular platform.

For the population that we're talking about today, however, the two most popular platforms are MyYearbook and Habbo Hotel in Facebook. I'll give some statistics and Dr. Fitch will give some statistics during his presentation as well, that kind of talk about some of the prevalence of these platforms. But just know that social media is this vast world, and there's a lot going on, and it's also really exciting in that way.

So, great. Social media is this place, user-generated content, blah-blah-blah -- what does it all mean, right? What does it mean for child welfare practice; what does it mean for foster youth -- more than anything, my advice to you is to really start taking social media seriously. If there's one thing you can take away from my presentation today, it's really that social media is worth your time and energy. Granted, it's a place where people go and waste a lot of time and don't get their work done, but not always.

More than anything, social media is a place where people go to connect. And on the next slide I'll give some statistics about why people use social media. But what's important for you to know is that however you personally feel about social media, the bottom line is that it's here to stay, and it's really affecting the lives of young people in America. And so it behooves us to learn about social media and take it very seriously.

[00:08:54] So social media is widespread. In the United States, social networks and blogs reach nearly 80 percent of Internet users and represents the majority of Americans' time online. So if you're trying to reach foster youth, you can bet your bottom dollar that they're on social media, so it makes sense for you to have a presence there.

Also, half of all American adults are using social networking sites. To me, that's a really significant statistic, because it's only very recently become true. Previously, social media was really a place for youth.

So for example, I was in college when Facebook first came out. And I went to a little podunk school in the middle of a cornfield in Indiana, and all the Ivy League colleges had Facebook and we were waiting for it to come down to us regular college students who weren't in an Ivy League school.

So for me in college, Facebook was simply a way to find out who my roommate had made out with, right? I could look on Facebook and see his picture, and it was really a way for me to connect to people in my college community.

But nowadays, that's no longer true. Facebook is for everyone. And literally half of all American adults are now using social networking sites. Granted, my mom is on Facebook, but she's there to stalk me, right? Let's be real. Not everyone is using Facebook in the way that I use Facebook. But regardless, half of all American adults are now using social networking sites such as Facebook.

The real kicker is that 95 percent of all teens ages 12 to 17 are online, and 80 percent of those teens use social media, Facebook being one of the most popular. And I'm sure I'm preaching to the choir here. You guys probably already know this. But foster youth -- they are on Facebook. And so it really makes sense for us to start learning about Facebook, and for us to really start taking it seriously.

So now that I've really driven that point home, I want to talk a little bit about why foster youth use Facebook. Why adults. Why are half of all American adults now on Facebook. Why is it such a popular platform; why is social media in general so popular.

[00:11:04] You might think that social media is a way to meet random new people or just a form of distraction. But actually, the Pew Internet and American Life Project has found that connections with family and friends is the primary reason that people join social networking sites such as Facebook. Two-thirds of the people using social network sites such as Facebook say that staying in touch is a major reason they use these sites. So a lot of people -- two-thirds of them -- are not, in fact, using platforms such as Facebook to meet random strangers, or have connections with acquaintances that they don't know very well... it's really to stay in touch with the people that they care about offline.

One of the common misconceptions out there is that what happens on Facebook is different than what happens in our offline lives. And the research is really showing that that's not the case. Facebook is thus -- and I'm using Facebook as an example, but this includes other social networking sites such as LinkedIn and Twitter -- these social networking sites really give us the opportunity to stay in touch with the people that we care about.

A small percentage of individuals are using social networking sites to meet new people and make new connections; but truly, the primary reason people are using it is to stay in touch with the people that they really care about in their offline lives.

Additionally, most online adults describe their experiences using social media in very positive terms. So that this word cloud on the right here, what the Pew Internet and American Life Project did, is they had a survey where they asked people who are using social networking sites to describe their experience using social media. They then took the responses and put them into this word cloud using a platform called Wordle. And the larger the word is in this word cloud, the more times people use that word. So "good" was the primary word that people use in describing their experiences online using social media.

You can see from this word cloud that people are really having a lot of fun, they find it very convenient, they find it interesting, it's excellent, it's awesome, it helps them stay connected; but you can see "too confusing" is about the same size as "connected," but people are really describing their experiences using social media in very positive terms.

[00:13:23] I want to spend a little bit of time along those same lines really talking about the positive benefits of social media, in particular for youth. There's a lot of negative crap and negative media out there about social media. People talking about cyberbullying and those sorts of things; but what's not really reported on, is a lot of those positive benefits for youth. And these statistics just astound me, and they make me very happy.

I'm a proponent of social media, I love it, it helps me stay connected; and I think with the right education, youth should be encouraged to use it. Though I just want to share this data with you.

The average user has more close ties and is half as likely to be socially isolated. And that's the average Facebook user. So this is specific to Facebook.

A lot of people are out there kind of ranting about the fact that Facebook means that we're not connected, and it keeps us isolated because we're staring at a computer screen rather than connecting with people; but actually what the research shows, is that Facebook allows us to be more connected. We're not spending less time talking to people face to face or on the phone; actually what Facebook allows us to do is enhance those offline relationships. So again, the average user has more close ties and is half as likely to be socially isolated.

Think about what that means for someone in foster care. Right? That's a particularly isolated group of individuals. To encourage them to use Facebook with the proper education and the proper support can really make a difference in their lives.

Also, 65 percent of teens have had an experience that made them feel good about themselves on social media. Fifty-eight percent have felt closer to another person. So once again, just think about what that might mean for youth in foster care who may be separate from their bio family; maybe they're in a placement where they got separated from their siblings; social media can really be an outlet for them to start feeling good about themselves and to feel closer to people.

Young adults who spend more time on Facebook are better at showing virtual empathy. So one of the things that I love about Facebook, is that it allows us to kind of imagine ourselves in new ways. And we all want to see ourselves in the best light possible, and so the way that we behave on Facebook allows us to be better people, to be more positive people, and to show more support.

So what the research again is showing, that the young adults who spend time on Facebook show virtual empathy; and that actually, the same research article shows that the young adults that show virtual empathy on Facebook actually show increased empathy offline. So there's something to be said for how we project ourselves, how we behave on social media, and what it means for ourselves and our lives offline.

Also, youth who use blogs, websites, and email to discuss politics and current events become more socially engaged over time. We can see this in the Presidential Election that just took place. There was a lot of discussion about politics and current events; and for youth who are using social media and email to discuss these things, the research shows that they become more socially engaged over time. So once again, the behavior that we demonstrate, that we engage in on social media often has an impact on our offline lives in a positive way.

[00:16:50] And let me focus on this really fast. So with those positive benefits in mind, let's think a little bit about why youth in care use social media, and what it offers them specifically. So these are just some of the things that I've mapped out from my personal experience.

Connection is this huge reason why youth in care use social media. Similar to what the data at the National level showed. A lot of youth are using Facebook to connect with their siblings. At least in the state of Oregon, we're spending a lot of time focusing on sibling connection, but we're not where we want to be. A lot of youth still get separated from their siblings -- as I'm sure all of you know, it's really difficult to find foster parents who are willing to take in three or four children of different ages, even though there are lots of positive benefits for keeping siblings together. So Facebook can be a really significant way that siblings can stay connected with each other.

And I've heard story after story -- again, just in my anecdotal experience in Portland, Oregon -- of youth in foster care who haven't been able to speak to their siblings. Maybe they lost them ten years ago, and through Facebook they're literally able to find them and develop a new relationship with them that really makes a difference in their lives.

Connection with bio-parents is another reason that a lot of foster youth use Facebook and other social networking sites. Youth in foster care are often restricted in how they get to interface with their bio-parents, and so being able to connect with them on Facebook can really make a difference.

Staying in touch with foster siblings is another powerful reason that youth in foster care choose to use social media. Youth often have a lot of placements, and so they develop connections with foster siblings, and then when they move to a new placement they lose that connection. But through Facebook and other social networking sites they are able to maintain that connection with their foster siblings, and the same goes for friends through previous placements. If they have to change schools, if they have to move to a new placement, Facebook can often be a very powerful way, once again, for them to stay in touch.

The other opportunities that social networking sites offer for foster youth is the ability to tell their story. Now this is a bit of a double-edged sword, right? On the one hand we want youth in care to feel empowered, and to feel empowered to tell their story; on the other hand there are a

lot of liability issues with that, there are a lot of privacy issues with that, and that can just be a little nerve-wracking thinking about youth in foster care, in particular those that are a little bit younger, being on social media and sharing their story. So I'll give a few solutions later on in the presentation about how to kind of take this aspect of their use of social media and make it very positive, and avoid some of those liability issues, and really use it as a way to focus on empowerment.

Support from peers is another very significant reason that youth in care utilize social media. As we saw earlier in some of the data that I shared, though half of all American adults are now using social networking sites, predominantly it is still youth. And even though adults are utilizing social media, it's youth who are logging in every day, and really being active on social media on a daily basis, maybe even an hourly basis. So their peers are on social media, and so they get support from their peers through social media.

Additionally, access to health information is a really significant aspect of why youth use social media. A lot of youth in foster care don't particularly feel connected to an adult in their lives. So they can have questions about their sexuality, just questions about their bodies, questions about health in general that can be answered in a supportive fashion online.

Once again, this is one of those aspects of social media that's a bit of a double-edged sword -- it has some positive benefits and some areas that we need to be concerned about. So I'll touch on those in just a little bit.

[00:20:55] So this is my favorite slide. All right. So if I'm listing all these positive benefits of social media and all these great things about it, so why is it that we're all so panicked, right? Why are we running around like: Oh my gosh! Social media, what- Ah! Youth on social media, it's the end of the world!

"Moral panic is a common reaction to new forms of communication." This is a quote from a research article just talking about social media and the emergence of social media. And really, social media is a very new form of communication, it only emerged about four or five years ago; and the Internet itself is something that we're still getting used to, much less the way the Internet is continuing to evolve.

So part of why we experience such panic, is just because it's new! And so we can all kind of take a deep breath and know that we freaked out when radio came out. We freaked out when television came out, and social media is just the new form of that. And so in the same way that we still continue to discuss television and radio and its impact on our lives, we need to continue to engage in dialogue about that with social media as well. And just continue to think about it critically, and strategically, and find ways to use it so that we get the positive benefits of this new form of communication, rather than just being stuck with some of the negative aspects of it.

So based on the panic, and based on some of those negative aspects of social media, what are the big barriers to kind of prevent us in child welfare from thinking about social media and how to use it more strategically, and how to empower youth to use it.

So I just wanted to map out some of the things that I see for people in child welfare that get in their way when they think about social media.

Liability is one of the huge issues, right? Privacy and liability. Those are some of the biggest barriers, and so I'm going to talk about both of those in just a little bit here.

Lack of knowledge and skills is another huge barrier, right? So you know youth are using social media sites; you know that it can be an effective way to reach them, but how are *you* supposed to start utilizing social media to reach them, or is that even possible. Is that a good thing to do. It's that lack of knowledge and skills, because you're not like me, you know? You weren't in college when Facebook came out, and you weren't waiting to see who your roommate had made out with through his profile on Facebook. So that lack of knowledge and skills can be a huge barrier.

One of the other big barriers is state social media policies and regulation. A lot of states and human service agencies out there basically either don't have social media anywhere in a policy, or they simply say, "You can't use it. You can't use it, and youth can't use it -- it's banned." And that sort of an approach doesn't help anyone.

So one of the things that I encourage all of you to do -- and again, I'll talk about this in just a few slides -- is to go back and start rethinking your state's or your organization's or your agency's social media policy so that it doesn't simply say, "You can't use it." Because this would be like when email first came out having a policy saying you can't use email. Or when a television came out having a policy saying you can't have a television ad. This new technology is here to stay, and you need to start thinking about how we should approach using it. So a policy that says you can't use it at all just isn't going to be a good way for you to start learning about social media and start understanding the effect that it has on the lives of the youth that we're here to serve.

The other large barrier is lack of time and staff support. And this goes hand in hand with the policy. If you've got a policy that basically says "you can't use social media," how are you supposed to have the time and the staff support to really start using it.

[00:24:42] So one of the things I really advocate for -- in particular related to... I'll go back a slide... the liability issue, and the state social media policies and regulations -- is to develop guidelines and policies for your state, for your organization, or for your agency. And there's two components to that policy that I recommend you develop, or actually three.

One is User Guidelines and Policies for Youth -- and Dr. Fitch will talk a little bit more about that in his presentation -- some ways to start approaching how to discuss that; I always recommend from a sort of youth empowerment perspective that these guidelines and policies be developed in partnership with youth, and that there's that real focus on empowerment.

So again. A policy that simply says, "You can't use Facebook," isn't going to get anyone anywhere. Because realistically, youth are using Facebook. They're using Habbo Hotel, they're using MyYearbook. So instead of simply saying you can't use it, let's start thinking about ways that they can use it that's positive.

The other really important thing to do is develop an internal social media policy for staff. So this is an inward-facing policy that gives staff very clear guidelines on how they can use social media, just very specific rules. And each organization kind of can take a different approach to this. If you're wanting to develop an internal social media policy, then my favorite resource is the

one listed below Idealware -- the Non-profit Social Media Policy Workbook. If you just do a Google search for that it'll pop up, and I'll also post the URL to it on the LinkedIn Group.

Some people have a social media policy that's very specific with: you can do this; you can't do this; you should do this... and other people just have something that's a little bit more general with more of a focus on empowerment. And it just depends on what's going to work for you guys in your situation, and of course, you need to have a lawyer with you when you're doing this. Just like any policy that you have as a part of your organization, a lawyer needs to sit down and look everything over, and you need to get their legal advice about it.

The same is true for a crisis one. The one thing that I think from this Idealware Policy Workbook, is that it's not specifically for children's mental health or child welfare. And so you need to be thinking about how you're going to respond if a youth posts something about drug use; if a youth posts a self-harm post; if there's a crisis and it needs to be responded to, you need to have that built into your plan as well.

And if you guys have questions about this specifically, I'm always available to answer. This is just kind of a general overview. So we're not going to get into a lot of detail about it.

[00:27:26] The other way to really deal with some of those other barriers we talked about, such as lack of knowledge and skills, is social media training. Now. The great thing about social media is that it's fun. So I'm not saying you go off and do a social media training that bores everyone to death, right? I'm talking about a fun social media training. Where you really get people engaged, and you get them to feel energized about this.

One of the best things that you can do is train staff on why you use social media and how they're using it. Basically, very similarly to what I talked about at the beginning of the presentation. What percentage of youth are using social media sites; what social media sites are they using; how are they using them; why are they using them. Get rid of some of those misconceptions. Really start changing people's beliefs around the use of social media, and really focus on those positive benefits.

In addition to training staff, I highly recommend that you train youth on the risks and benefits of social media. And more than anything, this is where making it fun is important. If you give a boring social media training where you talk about Facebook's data use policy, youth are not going to want to attend and they're not going to feel good about it. Pull youth into the process, ask them what they want to learn about social media. Because a lot of youth out there, they know that Facebook is using their data sometimes in inappropriate ways, but they don't know where to go to get their questions answered.

So if you can set your organization up as a resource, or your foster parents up as a resource, or your caseworkers as a resource, then youth will know that this is the place to come to get their questions answered. And really talk about: Remember kids, whatever you post on Facebook can be used against you in a court of law. Or just letting them know what your organization's social media policy is. If you've developed user guidelines for youth, have a training on those guidelines.

But I'm really an advocate for and a fan of really doing a lot of education for youth around social media, the positive benefits of it, but also what some of the significant risks are for them.

So as an ending thought before we get into Dr. Fitch's presentation, again, what I kind of started off with in terms of saying to take social media seriously -- that's where I want to end. The best thing that you can do is learn about social media by using it yourself. I'm sure a lot of you guys have a Facebook profile, and that's great. Maybe you have mixed feelings about that profile, you're not really sure about it -- the best thing that you can do is go onto that profile and really start learning about it yourself. Kind of enter it with the mindset of a youth. Just start using Facebook as a way to connect with people. Start paying attention to your feelings, your reactions, as you're using Facebook.

When you connect with your daughter, or you connect with your old friend from college, or you're connecting even with your parents on Facebook, what does that do for you? Do you have negative responses, do you have positive responses... just really start paying attention to what Facebook means for you in your life. That way you can really understand when a youth is using Facebook or Habbo Hotel or MyYearbook, what is it doing for them. And based on that, how you need to start thinking about the direction that your organization should go in terms of whether or not to use Facebook to reach youth, or how to train youth to use Facebook safely, or just in general.

And again, remember that the point of social media is to connect. It's not to meet random strangers; for most people, really, the point is to connect.

The other thing to do -- Facebook just came out with a new data use policy. Use this as an opportunity -- you all got an email, find that email, read their data use policy carefully. You can't really know what the risks and benefits are of using a social media site until you read their data use policy.

In addition to that, I recommend that you all go on to your Facebook profile today. Or, we want you to join the LinkedIn groups, then go to your LinkedIn profile. Look at your LinkedIn profiles. Think about the information that you have there. If you guys have your birthday posted on your LinkedIn profile, take it off. Right? That's not good. That's really important information that someone could use for identity theft.

So do a privacy audit on all of your social media profiles at least once a month. If that's a little bit overwhelming, maybe do it every six months, whatever works for you, but the privacy settings on these social media platforms are frequently changing, their data use policies are frequently changing, and it really behooves you to be paying attention to those. Not only for yourself personally, but also to make sure that you can do your best to protect the youth out there that have a Facebook profile or have a Twitter account or on MyYearbook. Really pay attention to privacy and their data use policies.

And when in doubt, ask for help. The Children's Bureau is a great resource, Dr. Fitch is a great resource, I'm a great resource, and just Google search it. The only way I learn about social media is by Google searches. So when in doubt, really ask for help. If you're not sure what the

Facebook data use policy is or what it means, do a Google search and find out what it might mean.

If you're not sure about what the risks of social media are, go out and find someone who knows. But once again, what this really comes down to, is taking social media seriously. It's here to stay, let's start learning about it, learning about its risks learning about its benefits, and really setting ourselves up as a resource for the youth that we're here to serve.

All right, Elizabeth, I think I've turned things back over to you.

Elizabeth: [00:33:25] You have. Great. Thank you so much, Brittany. And at this point I am going to turn things over to Dr. Fitch, who is our second presenter today. Dr. Fitch, are you still with us?

Dr. Dale Fitch: [00:33:47] I'm still here.

Elizabeth: [00:33:48] Okay! Fantastic.

Dr. Dale Fitch: [00:33:51] All right. Thank you, Elizabeth. Thank you, Brittany. A wonderful, timely topic; much to cover, much to talk about, much to do. I have a lot of slides... I'm going to go over them fairly quickly on the first part, because I want to focus on the second part, and that is sharing a framework with you that can be used by a workgroup, including an agency, in developing these privacy guidelines.

The framework I'll use is Critical Systems Heuristics. And I do so because of my prior practice and also my prior research. I was a social worker for many years in residential treatment, the youth in care; then I also did hospital-base on a child protection team, and did that for fifteen years before I started academia; and since then have focused on the use of information technology in the human services.

So when I started in academia Facebook wasn't even around, and it's been a phenomenon that has grown; and as I've observed it as a phenomenon, I've just noticed how it has so many natural affinities that could be used as a tool for working with youth in care, and Brittany did a wonderful job discussing all those possible uses.

As she indicated, youth are using social media, so it's not really a question of "if" but "when" we need to be involved. In my background research on the topic I wasn't able to find a state that had a specific use policy promoting the use of social media. As Brittany indicated, most of the time the policy is "don't do it," or it's an issue that's turned over to individual foster parents to address in their individual homes.

The conundrum, though, I believe for our youth, and the youth I've spoken with, is that almost all the information that's known about them is what's in the case record. And for the most part, they don't have control over that. Everybody else has control over what their official life is about. So it's natural that they would turn to Facebook and other social media sites simply as a way to start telling their own stories. I've posted things on Facebook, on hindsight maybe I shouldn't have and I get embarrassed, but it's one of those fundamental rights we have as individuals. So it always bids the question: should our youth in care also share in that right.

And whether or not we think they should, they're going to anyway. Because it's a way for them to regain their voice; it's a way for them to reconnect with society on their own terms instead of outside of the official case record; but in doing so, they might also place themselves at risk.

One of the fundamental issues involved in this whole discussion is the notion of privacy. And privacy, technically the definition of privacy is how we control our information. It's not about hiddenness or concealment, and we oftentimes talk about it that way, but it's really not about that. It's about sharing what we want to share with whom and how. That's what privacy is fundamentally about, and we need to remember that as we think about this topic.

So as I said, most of what is known about youth is controlled by others; they want to tell their own story, they want to have privacy in that they want to control their own story, and they want to express their own identity. That is the true expression of privacy. But for our use, it's very complex in doing so. There's a lot of issues involved, and in order to deal with those issues you also need a framework that is almost inherently as complex.

And the framework I think that helps in doing that is Critical Systems Heuristics. As I've used this framework with other people, the feedback I've gotten is that: Dale, what you've actually given us is a tool to figure out how we want to talk about what we need to talk about. And that's exactly what Critical Systems Heuristics does. So if we think about it as a tool of how do we want to talk about developing policies and procedures, that's what this tool does.

Ulrich based it on Habermas' Theory of Emancipatory Discourse, which fundamentally is built upon the premise that if people are affected by something, they need to be involved in the process by which it was created. So it's been used in a wide variety of settings in all different kinds of sectors, but specifically it's been used with youth in care runaway youth; it's been used for senior citizens in developing chair options; disaster preparedness operations, so it's been used in many different settings.

A word about the title. So critical assumes that there's no single right or correct way to view a situation or issue; and that all issues are fundamentally based upon values and perspectives. So as much as a researcher as I like data, I always know that data is based upon values, and how we talk about those things affects the issues. These issues then get defined by who's involved, knowing that there's always other people who are not involved in the process, but nonetheless they're affected by what the people who are involved decide to do. So what a critical perspective allows is for those who are affected to become involved in discussing what the issues and values are to be considered.

[00:40:28] As Brittany outlined in talking about social media, it's almost like it's a either/or type of situation. We have those involved and those affected. And she did a wonderful job framing that.

So systems acknowledges that there are multiple participants or stakeholders in the situation. And by definition, youth in care is a perfect example of that, because there are multiple formal systems involved with youth in care. And in thinking about those different stakeholders, the inclusion or exclusion of any particular group essentially sets the boundary for how the issues be discussed. So while we may want to think about getting together our program managers,

supervisors, and coming up with a policy, and planning out several weeks and a few months to do that, simply by limiting the policy-making group to those people, we've already set the boundary of the issue of what's to be discussed. And there might be a problem with that. Because we might need to be considering other opinions as we go about developing that policy.

And then heuristics are simply the procedures by which you go through these questions. So while it's a good idea to sit down and talk about this stuff, it's like where do you begin. And that's what the heuristics do, is they come up with a set of twelve questions, which I'm getting ready to review with you.

I can quickly go over this because Brittany did a wonderful job discussing the risks and benefits of social media; some other risks: a perpetrator can locate a youth; predators can find new victims; we all know about cyberbullying; and there's other features that aren't so obvious.

So in 2010 Facebook rolled out the Places feature, and if the youth in care unwittingly participated in that, they automatically made their location known. And if a family was living in fear of not only child abuse but domestic violence, then the perpetrator of that violence automatically knew where that youth lived. That may not be a problem if you live in a major metropolitan area, but as we all know, most of our youth don't live in major metropolitan areas, and by making their location known they have automatically increased their risk.

But there's also those benefits. What if a youth in care was to find out that: gosh, there's somebody else who's gone through similar circumstances that I have, then I'm not alone in this world. And as Brittany talked about, this ability to connect in all these different ways. That's why the social development aspect and just the psychological wellbeing that could be rendered to use because of social media are potentials that we need to be thinking about. Because we can't do all their programming within our agencies and departments. There's natural mechanisms for youth to connect, and we need to be thinking about that.

[00:43:59] So, here are the critical system heuristics components. On the left, the reference system simply is what's the issue that we're talking about. For the purpose of this discussion, it would be: how do we go about developing policy guidelines for youth in care. So by definition, you're forced to identify the people who are going to be involved, and the people who are not involved that are nonetheless affected by whatever policies and procedures you develop.

So for those involved you identify their motivation, their power and their knowledge; despite them being involved and controlling what's going on, it's the people who are affected who actually control the ultimate source of legitimization for what's happening. So for those involved, they identify the consumer or the client, the target of their policy, the purpose of the policy and how they measure whether or not this policy is being effective; the decision maker, who's going to be enacting and controlling or delegating the authority for this policy, whatever resources they bring to task -- but even with that, all policy people know that there's a lot of things they don't control, and that's the decision environment. So despite my best efforts, there's still things in the environment that we don't control.

But typically the people who are involved in this, with the sources of power they bring in consultants and experts to provide guidance, and supposedly these experts and professionals provide a guarantee for what needs to be considered.

While all that's going on, people who aren't involved that are affected are still the witnesses to everything that these people are doing. So they're watching what's going on; they are always leery of the fact that despite the best intentions of this policy there's always unintended consequences and they're concerned about that; and fundamentally they may have a world view that's not shared by the same people involved in the policy development process.

So if we were to develop a social media policy for youth in care, what might this look like. Again, focusing on older youth in care, so 13 to 21; and the way to go through the twelve questions is through two different modes. As Ulrich describes it, the "is" mode and the "ought" mode. And the "is" mode, if we can just use it for today's discussion as a point of reference, would simply be a child welfare agency with the social media policy for youth that primarily serves the agency's needs. And then the "ought" could be a perspective that shifts the focus on the use of social media by youth in foster care where the issues of information control in self expression are centered.

So Brittany, for example, is fully in the "ought" mode, in terms of what she thinks we ought to be doing. The "is" mode might be reflective of a more conservative policy stance that makes sure the agency is not exposed to any undue liability.

So if we were to go through each of the twelve questions: Who is the client or the beneficiary? In the "is" mode, that type of policy stance primarily serves case workers and foster parents, because it removes the issue from discussion, and it technically reduces any liability that the agency may be afraid of exposing themselves to. However, the "ought" mode is one in which a policy guideline is developed in which social media is seen as a form of self expression in identity formation. So the beneficiary fundamentally differs from the "is" mode, in which the client was a policy that benefited the workers and foster parents, as opposed to a policy that might benefit youth.

So following that train of thought on through, what's the purpose of the policy. So in the "is" mode, the prohibitive stance on using social media we could say is to protect confidentiality, the safety of youth, family members, and we can make a case for this. However, the "ought" mode, the purpose of developing such a policy might be to provide a voice for youths to tell and control their own stories. So we automatically already see that the discourse around these two issues is very different, depending upon how we see the purpose of the policy and the procedure.

Again, following this on through, what's the measure of success. In the "is" mode, if we have a prohibitive stance and we minimize invasion of privacy, we don't have to worry about cyberbullying, anything else. In the "ought" mode, the measure of success is the degree to which using care can explore and use social media the same way that other youths use social media, with its incumbent benefits and risks. So not only minimizing risk, as what this would do, but also exploring the benefits.

Who is the decision maker? In a more conservative perspective it would be solely the child welfare administrative personnel who exercise exclusive authority to formulate the policy; in the "ought" mode, as Brittany described, and ideally it would be ones done in a collaborative manner involving the youth themselves, but also the child welfare worker, the foster parent, perhaps guardian ad litem, but essentially a collaborative process in which youth in foster care play a key role.

So if we follow this through, then what are the resources? In the "is" mode, the resource is permission to access to social media websites. And that is youth in care told that they can't use it. So that's the resource that is controlled. In the "ought" mode, it's also permissioned access, but it's different in that there's also a policy creation process that can be used as a resource to help control that access.

In the "is" mode in terms of the decision environment, if we use a very conservative approach that's prohibitive, that's controlled by the child welfare agency, we have to passively [ph] acknowledge, that even without permission, youth in foster care are still going to use social media websites because we can't control that. So in the "ought" mode, if we have youth involved in the process, we take them out of the environment and we bring them into the process, who's in the environment? Well, we still have other youths; we still have the former perpetrator, or potential perpetrators; and so there's still a big environment out there that we don't control. We don't control how other people outside of the life of our youth in care are going to be using social media.

But it does fundamentally shift the discussion. Because in the former, if we don't include youth, we have no way of knowing what's going on in the environment. So the discussion on the environment now shifts to a very real discussion of the threats that these youths face.

[00:51:59] So who's an expert? You can lock down your Internet or intranet and take away the computer from your youth in care; but in the "ought" mode, what we need to be thinking about is: should we have a youth development or a social development person involved in our policy development process. What would it look like if we had these people involved in the process, and just not technology professionals who might say we need just to figure out ways to limit the youth.

And then what gets counted as relevant knowledge? And this is very important, as you're setting the boundaries for the discussion, and we've all been in those meetings where you look around the table and the expert or the consultant that is brought in is somebody that is essentially just going to say in a sense what we want to hear. And so in the "is" mode it would be those experts that come in and all they talk about are the dangers of cyber crime and cyberbullying; but in "ought" mode, they would also be those experts who talk about how studies show that social media sites can be healthy, and a helpful way for youth in foster care to connect.

So how do we know these guarantees will be achieved? In the "is" mode, we're primarily putting this burden I guess upon foster parents. And in individual situations either providing opportunities or consequences and limiting access. In the "ought" mode, foster parents are still very much involved, because they're there 24/7. The focus shifts to a more collaborative relationship between all the stakeholders. In the "is" mode it's something that mainly the foster

parents and the youth have to deal with; in the "ought" mode, we bring in other players, like the caseworker; the guardian ad litem; other experts or other people in a community who may have things to offer regarding the use of social media.

So now we get into the legitimization, the witnesses to what's going on. In the "is" mode by definition, if we don't involve youth, we've made youth on the outside. We've placed them as a witness to what's going on. And as we know, they can argue their case directly or indirectly through their actions. That is by continuing to use social media. In the "ought" mode, if we have youth involved in the process, we still have other people that are witnesses. In this regard it would be the extended family members of the youth in care, and other people affected by how youth may use social media.

Interestingly, to the extent a child welfare agency chooses not to become involved in working with youth as a collaborator, they've made themselves an outsider to the process. And I think Brittany made a wonderful case for indicating why perhaps we don't want agencies to remain as an outsider. So one secures the legitimacy; now we have other people in the "is" mode, when there's court hearings or other events, the guardian ad litem can speak up, the child's attorney can speak up, perhaps a judge may speak up for what's best for the youth; but in the "ought" mode, who provides the legitimacy is now by definition all those people but perhaps other people. The youth's extended family. Youth in foster care do perhaps live in a different jurisdiction, and who may not benefit from having a more collaborative support environment in which to navigate the risks and benefits of social media.

In sum, identifying all the possible affected groups in a cyber environment is much more difficult. But just because it's difficult, doesn't mean it can't be done and doesn't mean it shouldn't be done.

So finally, what world views need to be considered? In the "is" mode the child welfare agency holds sway, and the general public sentiment, the social media in general places youth in foster care at risk is the operant world view. In the "ought" mode the world view of social media is viewed as a tool that holds more promise than peril. And it's just a discourse from viewing youth as always being at risk, toward youth who might gain skills in order to be risk resilient. And we see the notion of risk resilience oftentimes in our discussion of CFF Sar [ph] and Program Improvement Plans, how can we foster more resilience in our kids in care, and this could be one way of doing that.

In closing, simply coming up with a prohibitive policy doesn't do anything except perhaps cause the youths to turn elsewhere. Youth need guidance and support in how to use these sites. In my perspective, prohibiting the use avoids dealing with underlying issues. Why is it a youth turns to these tools when other forms of social expression might be available. I think that tells us a lot. If anything, the online postings of our youth may be revealing problems or shortcomings in our existing systems of care that deserve our attention. They may be pointing out things that we don't want to deal with, but nonetheless do exist.

Brittany gave really good examples and resources in terms of safety strategies. Staying on top of those privacy settings is daunting. Because at one time Facebook had 170 different settings, and not all social network sites use the same default settings. So if you, like me, are on Facebook,

you received that email the Wednesday before Thanksgiving about Facebook changing some of its privacy settings, and if you looked at the fine print, you noticed their affiliation with Instagram. And Instagram has a very different default privacy setting than Facebook. And that is, everything is essentially public and you have to make it private. Whereas Facebook tries to make things private, and then you need to make things public. So there's two different conflicting default privacy settings, and if we're not aware of these things, then we are potentially using something in an unsafe way.

[00:59:15] There's also other things that I strongly encourage people to do when it comes to developing a profile. The Facebook stated policy is a person can only have one profile, and I don't agree with that for our youth in care. I think our youth in care need to have multiple profiles. I think they need to have a profile that is perhaps safer; one that's more benign; one that could be used in a more public setting but essentially doesn't really share information about the youth that may place them at risk; and then they may have another profile that's only known to people in a very small select group. So I'm very much a proponent of multiple profiles for our youth in care and even for our workers.

If you're an employee, you may have your personal Facebook profile, but then you may have your work Facebook profile as the case manager. Again, having very different content and privacy settings, because it allows you that mechanism to perhaps communicate with the youth in care.

There's a lot of online resources for learning how to navigate safely. One that I've found very helpful is the Connect Safely website, and it, too, has a lot of links to other websites in terms of finding out specific procedures that youth in care and the people who work with them may want to consider in developing a policy related to privacy.

If our youth in care need assistance, who are we asking that they turn to. Are we going to leave them on their own, knowing that they'll most likely place themselves at risk; are we just going to have them talk to their peers who may know six or seven different ways on how to get on Facebook but have very little understanding about the issues that a youth in care may need to keep private and control that information; or do we want to join youth and work with them in balancing this need for privacy with their opportunity for self determination so that they can control their story.

Our youth are creating an online persona that may not align with their offline world. What does that discrepancy tell us about the service goals that we've identified for our youth; in turn, what does that tell us about ourselves. Why are we not in the same place that the youth might be. Needless to say, more research needs to be done in this area. It's a quickly emerging evolving area, but one that in one form or another will continue, and we want to make sure that we don't place our youth in harm's way.

So thank you very much, and I'll turn this back over to Elizabeth.

Elizabeth: [01:02:21] Wonderful. Thank you, Brittany and Dr. Fitch. At this time I'd like to open up the line for questions from our audience, and while we are getting organized around that, operator, if you could go ahead and give the group instructions on how to queue up for questions.

Operator: [01:02:37] Thank you. If you would like to ask a question please press Star 1, unmute your line and record your name. To withdraw your question, press Star 2. Once again, to ask a question please press Star 1, unmute your line and record your name. One moment while we wait for our first question.

Elizabeth: [01:02:57] While we're waiting for that question to come in, we did have a couple that came in via the Chat Box. The first one we I know spent a lot of time talking about youth, and their use of Facebook and workers using Facebook to connect with young people. Could either of you or both of you speak a little bit to some of the positives and negatives and perhaps ethical issues around workers friending, for example, foster parents. And particularly if you come from the perspective of thinking of your foster parents not as being clients, but as being vendors.

And then similarly, also friending clients who say, for example, maybe are birth family members, or parents that are in family preservation programs. Could either of you speak to that a little bit while we're waiting for some other questions to come in.

Brittany: [01:03:46] Yeah, I'll take a stab at it; and then Dale, if you want to jump in feel free. But I think my answer isn't going to unfortunately be simple, and nor can any answer to a question like that or a situation like that. More than anything, I think that every agency needs to think carefully about its unique situation, and then develop a policy with a crisis plan to deal with those situations. And a part of why I can't, nor would Dale be able to give a simple answer is because it all depends upon your unique situation. And of course, as always, you have to pull in a lawyer to help you with things like this because there is some liability involved.

But I think developing a policy paired with user guidelines, and then doing a lot of education around those user guidelines and the policy, so that, for example, if you have a policy that says, "Yes, a caseworker can friend a foster parent on Facebook," the caseworker knows exactly what the quote/unquote "consequences" are of that Facebook relationship, and that the foster parent also knows what the consequences are.

And essentially what you have to do is a kind of risk benefit analysis, right? What are the benefits of having a caseworker friend a foster parent, and then what are the risks. And if the risks outweigh the benefits, then you need to have a policy that clearly states that because of these risks we cannot allow foster parents to friend caseworkers, or vice versa.

But really, it's all about just being very explicit, and then making sure everyone understands what the policy states and why the policy states that. But again, if you've got someone making the policy who doesn't understand Facebook, and that doesn't understand some of the benefits of Facebook, you're not going to be able to develop an effective policy.

So that's why for me, it's really all about understanding the benefits of Facebook as well as the risks, and you can't do that unless you individually start to use Facebook and see what some of the benefits and risks are.

Dr. Fitch: [01:06:00] Elizabeth? For me, it boils down to what we mean by the word "friend." I don't feel constrained by how Facebook uses that word, so again, if I'm thinking about having multiple profiles, if I have a profile that's a personal profile that truly is something that's shared

with my family and friends... yes, that makes perfect sense. But if I have a work profile, I perhaps wouldn't use the word "friend" in a conventional sense. I would mean it in a different sense.

So again, I go back too far now, and every day as I get older it gets further and further away, but I just remember working with youth in care. And it would be sometimes at a maximum once a week in which they had contact with family, back when we had to rely on telephones that were hooked to a wall. I just can't imagine the benefit of having the ability to connect with one's family via other mechanisms. And it's not a replacement, it would be an adjunct to what we would do face to face. So in between a weekly or a monthly visit, if somebody in our circle had an event and they uploaded photos -- whether it's a group of foster parents, a group of youth in care -- I mean, that would mean so much to those youth.

And so I think we need to, in the work setting, I think we need to redefine what it means to be a friend, or how Facebook or other websites use whatever terminology they use, and make those terms work for us, and not be constrained by how a website or a social media website says what it needs to be.

Brittany: [01:07:53] And like Dr. Fitch said, I myself have two profiles. Even though it's in violation of Facebook's terms, I have a professional profile and I have my personal profile. And it's because of that, that I feel very comfortable friending -- to use Facebook's word -- the youth that I advocate for in my cause of work. But again, I very closely regulate both profiles. And I do a privacy audit, and I understand what it means when I post something to one profile versus the other.

So I agree, I love the idea of everyone just having kind of two profiles; or, because Facebook's privacy settings are so robust, having one profile, but making sure that everyone understands how to post something so that one group of people can see it but the other can't. But to avoid confusion and not have to do as much training, having two profiles is a wonderful solution, and it's what I personally do.

Elizabeth: [01:08:48] And I don't want to keep people on the phone waiting too long, but we do have a related question that came in online basically saying regarding the suggestion to have a work profile, and then use that work profile to be able to friend clients, how do you then answer the question of whether that's a violation of confidentiality because then all of the other friends that are your friends on your work profile can see who your other clients are. So is that something that you address by saying to your clients: if you friend me on Facebook, you need to understand that other people will see this, or how do you answer that question.

Dr. Fitch: [01:09:25] For me, it depends on where you post, and what it is you're going to post. So, yes, if I post something in that status, everybody sees it. If I send a message, then only the person I send it to sees the message. So then somebody says: well, why not just use email. And that gets back to why people use Facebook to begin with. People in general don't like to log in to a lot of different services. They like to have them interconnected, and to minimize the logins.

So if the user, already using a tool that allows you to have messages versus status updates, versus other forms of communication, like Brittany said, it becomes a training issue; and this says how to maintain confidentiality all the while, while using the same tool.

Brittany: [01:10:19] And to specifically touch on the confidentiality issue of people being able to see who your friends are, that isn't a legal or liability issue in terms of confidentiality because when someone is using Facebook, they're opting in. So it's not that you are without their permission sharing information about them, because other people can see that you've friended them. They have chosen to friend you. And as a result of that, they know -- or again, this is where chaining [ph] comes in -- should know that that means that other individuals can see that you are friends.

And also, just because you've friended someone on Facebook and you're a caseworker, it doesn't have to mean that they are one of your clients. Not everyone is going to come in and make that assumption. But specifically from a legal perspective, that individual is opting in, and therefore the sort of confidentiality issues either become gray, or technically a non-issue. But this is one of those things where you've got to pull in a lawyer to really help you understand the legal side of it.

Elizabeth: [01:11:29] And be very transparent with your clients about what it means for them to choose.

Brittany: Absolutely.

Elizabeth: Wonderful. Thank you. Operator, do we have any questions on the line?

Operator: Yes. Our first question comes from Deanna [sp?]. Please state which state you're calling from, and then you may proceed with your question.

Deanna: [01:11:45] Thanks. I'm calling from Chicago, Illinois, and I had a question. We have a lot of kids in group homes in residential care, and I'm just wondering if there's any differences where there's actually not a foster parent, but where kids are actually living in our home. I guess I'm thinking in terms of like as a parent, setting up things in public areas. Are there any things that would be particular when it's a residential setting.

Brittany: [01:12:22] I'm not sure I totally understand the question. So what would make it different or unique because it's a residential setting.

Deanna: [01:12:32] I guess because it's a residential setting, so there's not a foster parent near or involved. So it's often only the caseworkers or the social workers, or psychologists, or people who have the interaction. And I guess coming to the call I had been thinking it was about how our employees would interact, we were saying to interact with the youth that are in our care. Now I'm realizing it's more about them interacting with each other. I think that often the access to the technology is actually on site in our locations as well.

Brittany: [01:13:08] Yes. I'll just take a quick stab at it, and then Dr. Fitch, I'm sure you'll have something to add. But once again, for me -- I sound like a broken record, but -- it kind of comes back to guidelines and training. I visit a lot of residential settings, and when I say "trainings" I

don't mean like a mandatory training where everybody feels really bored and like: oh, my gosh, why am I here; but a training where you really talk about: like, listen, you have this computer; Facebook is a way that you can do X, Y, and Z, and it's a lot of things that Dr. Fitch listed. Like your sibling has their birthday party, but the youth in care is in a residential setting, they can't leave, but they get to see the pictures on Facebook. So giving some of those benefits and why they might want to use Facebook. And also we're seeing some of the consequences, and making sure that they understand those consequences.

And then again, just to kind of cover things legally, making sure that you have a stated policy that's very transparent that a lawyer has looked at, and then having some guidelines for youths. I think one of the big differences in a residential setting versus an actual group home like you were talking about is the role of the foster parent. In the residential setting you miss that. So making sure that for youth in residential settings, there are adults or online resources or just resources that they can turn to, to understand safe ways for them to utilize social media to get the positive benefits that social media has to offer.

Dr. Fitch: [01:14:57] Yeah, I would just reiterate that. And then also, try not to make the differences or the distinction such a difference. Now whether it's a group home or a residential setting, I mean, when I worked on the unit, the kids would say, "Instead of two parents, I have twelve parents." And that's how they would talk about staff. And even though it was a unit, there would be things that even on a small unit they wouldn't know about each other. That perhaps it would be something that they would be more comfortable sharing through a Facebook posting. Especially musical interests, links to other topics that may be of interest to them; and whether it's a computer or a smart phone or some other device, I think try not to see that distinction as being a huge difference would be helpful. And both with the staff and for the youths.

Deanna: [01:16:06] Do I have the ability to ask one quick follow-up question based on what you just said, is that okay?

Elizabeth: Sure.

Deanna: [01:16:12] Okay. And it's only a question because when you say music, we actually just put a recording studio into one of our homes so the kids are making videos, which of course would go up on YouTube. I guess that would be the same thing if we were venturing into YouTube, just to look at all the implications and privacy settings, etc.? Is there anything that we'd want to be more careful about if we were going [unclear] as some of their big music videos that they're making through YouTube?

Brittany: [01:16:36] The only other thing about YouTube is that that video will then be there forever. The point of YouTube is to make things as public as possible. So just kind of making sure that youth understands-- and first of all, let me say that I love that idea. I don't want to sound like a nate [ph] there, that sounds amazing. But just kind of making sure that they understand, like: okay, we're putting out this music video of yours, and as a result of where its coming from, a lot of the people that watch it, or your friends and your family will know that it was produced in this residential setting environment. And there might be some stigma around that.

So just making sure that they kind of have the proper support and resources for dealing with some of that stigma.

So for example for myself, I have an anxiety disorder. So I'm a young person with an anxiety disorder, and when I do trainings and things like that, I tell people that. And I'm comfortable with that being on social media. But I am 26 years old now, gainfully employed, and in an environment where me having an anxiety disorder doesn't work against me. But for other youth that may not be the case, depending on their unique situation. So just kind of making sure, like you said, to really think through the implications.

Deanna: That's right; thanks so much.

Dr. Fitch: [01:17:58] Another two cents to add along with that. It's helpful for me to not think of YouTube as YouTube; in the situation you were describing, it's more of a digital storytelling type of tool; and for those of you involved in the human services and child welfare, if you don't know about digital storytelling as a tool, it holds tremendous, tremendous promise for our youth in care, because it allows them to communicate issues, values, feelings, thoughts, in such a way that it won't happen otherwise. Because I've been in those therapy sessions where nobody's talking and it gets uncomfortable. Then you turn around and they start singing a song. And it's like: well, why didn't you do that-- of course they're not going to do it during group.

But, yeah. In all the enders [ph] there's also literature on digital storytelling for vulnerable populations and survivors, it was pretty straight for a guideline; like when you're shooting a scene of course you don't include other people to disclose their identities, and other things to protect where you're coming from. But it still allows you to use imagery and music in such a way to, again, control your story.

So I'm glad you all are doing that and I wish you well, but make sure you're working with some good consultants regarding digital storytelling and protecting those identity issues.

Deanna: Great, thank you.

Operator: Once again if you would like to ask a question, please press Star 1, unmute your line and record your name.

Elizabeth: Do we have anyone in the queue currently?

Operator: We have no questions at this time.

Elizabeth: [01:19:55] We have some that, again, have come in online. Some very specific situational types of questions that have come up that people are just sort of asking for your take on them. One of them being, in some agencies foster parents are specifically prohibited from posting photos of foster children on their Facebook pages, again, out of concern for the privacy and confidentiality of those foster youth. What is your take on that type of rule, and sort of balancing that with foster families' desire to really make these children feel like they're a part of the family, and not have to have them step out of some of the pictures. So if you could just sort of respond to that type of specific scenario, that would be great.

Brittany: [01:20:44] Well, I'll take a stab at it first, and for me, it comes back to kind of weighing the risks and benefits. So really make good friends with a lawyer and find out about what the potential risks are for that particular situation, and that's going to depend agency by agency and state by state. But for me personally and professionally, I would say that the benefits far outweigh the risks of that sort of a situation. I think that one of the things that foster youth and human beings, that we're all looking for, is that kind of connection and that sense of being a part of a family, or a community, or a place. And Facebook is a way, again, like Dr. Fitch said, not as a replacement but as an adjunct to feel that.

And so for me, I get great pleasure and a sense of connection out of tagging pictures of people that I care about and posting on Facebook pictures of myself with the people that I really care about. So I think there's a lot to be gained from allowing foster parents to post those pictures; and of course the reason why something like that is stated in a policy that foster parents can't do it, is because it seems to open this can of worms.

It can feel very complicated and very confusing, but as Dr. Fitch and I have been saying, this technology is here to stay and it has a lot of benefits, and it's not "if" but "when" we need to start understanding it and how to use it, and really take advantage of the benefits. So I think it's well worth an organization's time and money to really start looking into issues like that in more detail, so that their policies can be a little bit more liberal with a focus on empowerment and connection.

Elizabeth: [01:22:31] Dr. Fitch, did you have anything you wanted to add?

Dr. Fitch: [01:22:34] Just add on that... the policy can be prohibitive to the foster parents, but that doesn't mean that the youth themselves aren't already posting those pictures. So again, if you have a prohibitive policy and the case is closed for the discussion, you're not discussing those issues in which youth are probably going ahead and posting pictures anyway. And so I think we need to have those conversations in terms of: if you decide to post a picture, what do you need to be thinking about. So can you post a picture that shows you participating in an event without it disclosing someone's identity.

And I have taken lots of pictures myself, in which my definition: "I'm not in the picture because I'm holding the camera," that people get a sense of the event that I was sharing, and what was going on. And there's different ways to take a picture without disclosing those identities.

So I think what the foster parents are trying to get at is a sense of inclusiveness and belonging, which is what our youth are desperate for. So how can we share an image without revealing identities. And it's very, very possible. And I think our discussion needs to focus on that, as opposed to "don't do it."

Elizabeth: [01:23:57] I think it's interesting, too, to think about Facebook and other technologies as being sort of an extension now of the way we live our normal lives. So if you're going to say to foster parents, "No, you can't post pictures from the holidays with your foster children in them," how is that really different from foster families that take pictures and display them in their home, or have them in a photo album that visitors to their home then can see.

So it's an interesting question, and I'm not saying there aren't any differences between those, but I think it's interesting to think about. And I think maybe what makes people nervous is the potential reach of having things online. You're only going to have a set number of people who visit your home; but potentially online these pictures are visible to many, many more people.

So I think some of it is getting out what that's different from the way we've lived our lives in the past and included foster children in our lives in the past before technology really opened us up to a much broader audience.

Brittany: [01:24:52] And I think in addition to that is just sort of the vertiginous [ph] nature of our society right now. I think that human service agencies are deathly afraid of being sued, and I understand that fear and I think it's very legitimate. Why open that can of worms, you know? But we have to remember at the end of the day why we're here doing what we're doing, and it really is to foster that sense of connection and belonging, and social media offers that. So we just have to start having those conversations.

Elizabeth: Operator, do we have any questions in the line?

Operator: Yes. Luanna [sp?], please state your state and then you may ask your question.

Luanna: [01:25:31] I'm from North Dakota. Can you hear me?

Elizabeth: Yes.

Luanna: [01:25:35] Okay, great. I'm wondering: do the speakers that you featured in the call today, do they have any sample social media policies that could be put on a website somewhere, where we could go extract and kind of use as kind of a roadmap to help create our own agencies... social media agencies?

Brittany: [01:25:53] Yes. I did not create them myself, but I do. And that Idealware Nonprofit Policy Guide, the Workbook... they have the Workbook itself, which walks you through questions. So essentially the way the Workbook works is, you invite the relevant individuals in your agency to sit down and walk through these series of questions to develop a social media policy that's really customized for your organization.

Then they have a template that you can fill out with samples from other social media policies, and they have a couple of social media policies. And I have a couple myself that I can send to Elizabeth. But the only word of caution that I would offer is, it can be a little bit difficult to pull language from someone else's social media policy, just because just like any policy it needs to be so specific to your organization.

So my advice is really to use that workbook and the questions in the workbook as conversation starters, and it'll be kind of a process, just like any policy is a process, it's not like a "one day/you're done" sort of a thing; and of course, always consult a lawyer; and the only other thing that's not in that Idealware Workbook is a crisis plan. Which, if you're working with youth, in particular vulnerable youth, you need to have something in your policy stating what to do in case of a self-harm post or some other crisis. And I'll pass on those resources to Elizabeth. Well, thank you.

Luanna: Wonderful.

Elizabeth: [01:27:32] You're welcome to do that, but I would also encourage you to post them on our LinkedIn group.

Brittany: [01:27:36] I already posted the link to the Idealware Workbook on the LinkedIn group, so it's there.

Elizabeth: [01:27:42] Fantastic. Both of our speakers have graciously joined the LinkedIn group. So if they have additional resources to post, they can certainly make them available through that venue as well; and if you haven't already received an invitation to the LinkedIn group, instructions for joining the group are available on your screen right now, or you're certainly welcome to email me and I'll help you through the process.

Dr. Fitch, did you want to add anything to that last question.

Dr. Fitch: [01:28:08] In answer to her question, no, I don't have any specific, because of the very reasons that Brittany talked about. They need to be specific to the agency. The workbook from Idealware is a great tool, but in my experience is the discussion that happened prior to deciding to use that tool. And I think that's where we need to be extremely cognizant of what stakeholders need to be involved in the process.

So the presentation that has those twelve questions is uploaded to the Children's Bureau website so you're free to use those questions and work through each twelve of them. It's an arduous process, but one that's very fruitful and rewarding. So if you use those two in tandem, working through the process, talking about how we're going to talk about it; and then use these other tools that you can find online, you should be able to develop some pretty good policy guidelines.

Elizabeth: [01:29:09] Wonderful, thank you. Well, we are right at our time, and I know we've received some wonderful questions via the Chat Box and go to Webinar, and I don't know if we have other callers that had questions they wish that they had had time to ask.

So again, I just want to encourage everyone to please go to our LinkedIn Discussion Group. Social media is such an important topic, it's one that is so interesting to any number of people, and it's one that we just really can't fully cover in 90 minutes. So I definitely encourage you to join that group and talk with your colleagues about some of these issues; share best practices, share resources that you've developed. That's why we've made the group available for you all to continue this conversation.

So I just want to say thank you again to everyone for your participation in today's discussion. A special thanks to Brittany Smith and to Dale Fitch for sharing their time and their knowledge with us to advance discussion of this important topic.

Please visit the Children's Bureau Centennial Website at the address shown for more information on past and future webinars, as well as the slides from today's presentation and the recording of today's webinar.

Our next webinar will be on December 11th and is entitled "The Story of the Children's Bureau: Changing Times, Reshaping Priorities -- 1961 to 1986." Registration information for this webinar is available on the Centennial Website at the address shown above.

Finally, I'd like to remind you all to please complete the webinar evaluation that appears on your computers at the end of today's discussion. These evaluations provide an important source of information for us as we continue to plan events in celebration of CB's Centennial Year.

Again, please visit the CB Centennial Webinar's LinkedIn Group to continue today's discussion. Thank you all again for your participation.

[End webinar.]