Engaging Youth Through Social Media

Although choosing social media platforms and keeping current can feel overwhelming, you want to meet youth where they are. There are so many choices that it may be difficult to be active on more than just a handful. It is important to find the balance between what you can do in the time you have available, getting the word out about your events, making your CIL easy to find and connecting with youth on social media.

How can Social Media help CILs?

- Build relationships and connect with your target audiences, provide information and reminders, increase trust and credibility, advertise events, drive traffic to your website, and spread awareness of your services to more people. Check out tips for optimizing social media posting frequency.
- Engage youth through videos, photos, polls/surveys, stories, hashtags (#), GIFs, links, and questions.
- Build peer support with a youth Facebook page, youth blog, and listserv. Post youth videos, photos, stories, etc. on popular youth platforms.
- Drive youth to events and activities through posting them on different platforms.
- Regularly reach and connect with rural/distant populations when you can't be there.

Which Platforms are the Best to Interact with Youth?

- Identify platforms youth most often use (YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook and Twitter – in that order).
- Your followers will differ by platform, so be active on several if you can. Examples:
    - **The Ability Center of Greater Toledo**

    - **IndependenceFirst**

    - **Center for Independence of the Disable, NY (CIDNY)**

How can CILs use Social Media to Connect with Youth?

- Post at peak times and respond to comments/questions. Use apps to help post content on multiple platforms. Re-evaluate content for relevance.
- **YouTube**: Popular with youth. Post captioned videos that include engaging youth. Check out these tips for YouTube.
- **Instagram**: Visual app many youth like. Post photos, videos, stories, quotes, and events. Check out these tips for Instagram.
- **Snapchat**: Popular short-term photo and messaging app. Post stories, videos and snaps. Check out these tips for Snapchat.
- **Facebook**: Post videos; photos; stories; and information about events, resources and programs. Start and join discussions. Create polls. Form a youth group/page.

Pay to advertise/boost events. Monitor and respond to posts. Can like, follow, comment and share. More shares, more seen. [Check out these tips for Facebook](#).

- **Twitter**: Post services, events, links, trending topics (hashtags), surveys, news and GIFs. [Check out these tips for Twitter](#).
- **Blogs**: Great way to share interesting youth stories, info and photos – Blogger, WordPress, Constant Contact, Gator, Medium, Tumblr, Squarespace, etc. [Check out these tips for blogs](#).
- **Pinterest**: Virtual bulletin board. Post photos and videos of stories, data, resources, events. [Check out these tips for Pinterest](#).
- **Meetup**: Create youth groups around shared interests, support, dinners/coffee, events. [Check out these tips for meetups](#).
- **Website**: Make it accessible, self-explanatory, mobile device friendly with links to social media.

How do I Create the Best Content?

- Think about why youth are interested in your CIL: Meet and socialize with friends who have similar interests; learn IL, leadership, advocacy or other skills; find resources; express themselves; be entertained and have fun; get support, etc.
- Figure out how to help youth solve some of their wants, needs, challenges, fears, and goals.
- What do you want them to do? Attend an event, learn skills, take action, lead, or advocate?
- Write catchy headlines or captions. Use captioned and described photos and videos. Post regularly with a [call to action](#). This could include sharing content, signing up for a newsletter, filling in a contact form, watching a video, calling or visiting your CIL, attending an event, signing a petition, etc. [For more information, view this blog post on writing an effective call to action](#).
- Always link your social media content to a service or program that you or another community organization provides. That is how you drive people to your site, and make it possible for them to take action by clicking on the link to get more information or make contact.
- To make your content appealing, frame issues as personal, unique, and relevant. Make it friendly.
- Let youth tell their own stories. People listen to people. Invite youth to submit stories and photos about the activities they are doing to help drive your user-generated content.
- Connect them to the causes, people, and groups they care about. Provide useful resources.
- Engage them emotionally. Post photos and videos. Share achievements and success stories. Use humor – happy content is shared more. Hashtags make your content easier to find. Create a hashtag and ask users to post photos on Instagram.
- Share national stories on youth with disabilities making a difference, then link directly to your CIL's appropriate program that can help with this need.
- Take advantage of "[national days](#)" and celebrations. Use hashtags to put your post in front of the people who are talking about that topic. Relate these trends and content back to disability.
- A captioned and described video may be the most engaging content for Instagram and Facebook.

- Create the best unique content for different platforms. [Spread messages tailored to each platform](). Learn more by viewing resources from [Three Girls Media]() and [Social Media Today]().
- Although you can use the same or similar content for different platforms, make sure to use the right language (tweet, pin, like, etc.) and [tailor the text and format for the network and audience](). [Check out these tips on re-posting on social media]().
- Post your platform links on your website, newsletters, brochures, flyers, other marketing materials, etc.

How can CILs manage and track social media accounts without spending all day?

- Determine the staff member(s) who will have access and are responsible for posting. Creating a monthly calendar can help organize when content will be posted.
- Consider using a social media engagement tool that can help you track all your interactions and comments across different apps from one place. Some can also publish to multiple social networks at once. There are a variety to choose from, including Buffer, HootSuite, Social Lift, SumAll, Later, SocialOomph, eClincher, Followerwonk, Zoho Social and TweetDeck (Twitter only). Most are free or offer free versions with more limited features.
- Social media platforms can track your followers and interactions for free. These include Instagram Insights, Twitter Analytics, Facebook Analytics, and LinkedIn Analytics.
- [Google Analytics]() is free and can be set up on your website to monitor and analyze traffic from your social media platforms.
- [Google Alerts]() is free and sends a notification when your name is mentioned on blogs, forums, news sites, the web, and YouTube.
- SumAll is also free and can post and track your followers and engagement on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.
- For additional resources on the best free social media management tools, view these articles on [16 Free Social Media Management Tools](), [The 7 Best Free Social Media Management Tools in 2019](), and [The 10 Best Social Media Management Applications.]()

What are some free social media graphic design programs CILs can use to create content?

- [Canva]() offers a lot of tools with access to photos, images, graphics, layouts, and fonts to create nice graphics and designs for social media, flyers, etc.
- [Get Stencil]() is a graphic creator with templates and two million royalty-free images.