



Our mission is to coalesce, inspire, and support the Head Start field as a leader in early childhood development and education.

# Head Start Social Media Marketing Guide



## How to Use this Guide

NHSA’s Head Start Social Media Guide covers five major social media channels: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and TikTok. Each section includes quick tips, a step-by-step guide to getting started (if you are brand new to the platform), and content ideas (prompts, customizable text, and example posts!) to use as a jumping off point for your social media marketing efforts. In addition to the major platforms, this guide includes a primer on current best practices, hashtags to use, a planning calendar with key dates and holidays relevant to Head Start. At the end of the document you will find templates to customize including a photo consent and release form.

The [NHSA digital resource library](#) has lots of supporting tools and information to strengthen marketing and communications efforts. Here are three that you might find useful as you dive in:

- [Media Toolkit](#): For joining the conversation about issues that matter to your families and community.
- [Language Playbook](#): For tips on tailoring your message to specific audiences.
- [Fact Sheets](#): For the latest data about Head Start’s reach and positive impact.

Regular use of social media gives you a seat at the table with the families you want to reach and the community members you want to engage with and influence. We hope the strategies and ideas in this guide will help you to connect, start conversations, and generate positive attention for the amazing work you do!

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## The Basics & Best Practices

With social media, you have a daily opportunity to engage in conversations with the families and communities you serve and to promote your work! This has the potential to translate into more donations, recruitment, and enrollment.

- ✓ **Know the Rules:** Before you start posting, make sure you know what content has been approved for social media. If your Head Start is run by your local government or a community action program, you will likely have guidelines or restrictions about what can appear on your program’s pages.
- ✓ **Balance Your Content.** Be careful not to overload your followers with too many posts. Aim for three posts about your Head Start center life for every one post about your advocacy campaign.
- ✓ **Tag Your Community.** If you have an opportunity to speak with a community leader or an elected official, express your thanks on social media and tag them on your channels!
- ✓ **Use Visuals.** Creating visual content can help you to stand out on social media as well as share important information, such as videos or infographics. There are some free resources that can be used to help you create visual content, such as [Canva](#), [Unsplash](#), and [Creative Commons](#).
- ✓ **Create a Response Plan.** Anything could happen when you are using your voice in the public square. Identify the people you will call on if a crisis develops and let them know ahead of time that you may need them to add their voice to the discussion. Maintain a list of who should be notified and the steps you need to respond.

## Make the Most of Your Time

**Know Your Audience.** The first question to ask is: “Who am I doing this for?” This is your intended audience. If you know who you are trying to reach, it will help you to focus your efforts and use your time effectively.

**Pick Your Platform.** Let’s be real: there are too many social media channels to choose between. Unless you have a full-time communications person on your team, trying to cover all of the channels is a mammoth task. Find out where your intended audience spends time and focus there. A good way to do this is by asking the parents in your program what social media platforms they use most. If they are all on Facebook, then Facebook is where you will find your audience. If they are not on Twitter, then you don’t have to be on Twitter either.

If you choose one platform to get started, we recommend Facebook, which has the broadest user base and widespread adoption in a number of communities. If you have the capacity to choose two platforms, consider your goals and how they align with each platform’s strength:

- ✓ **Facebook** is very mobile friendly, and translates automatically into over 111 languages.
- ✓ **LinkedIn** is dedicated to professional development and is a great place to share resources that demonstrate your expertise and culture—both of which can potentially help you to recruit new staff
- ✓ **Twitter** offers a powerful way to join meaningful policy conversations with other organizations, policymakers, and thought leaders.
- ✓ **Instagram** images have high rates of engagement and could help with recruitment.
- ✓ **TikTok** allows users to see and interact with each other in new, innovative ways.

**Do Your Research.** It is helpful to observe similar organizations on social media for inspiration. Find out what’s working for them and what is not. Then, think about how you can apply similar tactics. [NHSA has created a list of Head Start programs on Twitter](#) where you can start your research.

**Get Organized.** There are plenty of social media management programs that can help you to schedule posts, analyze performance, and manage multiple accounts in one place. NHSA recommends [Buffer’s free plan](#) where you can link up to three social accounts.

**Spread the Word.** Tell everyone about your social media channels, including your staff. Include links on your website, emails, and physical signs in your center to advertise your accounts and encourage people to follow, share, and connect.

## Advocacy & Program Visits

Head Start programs and centers are on the frontlines to share information with their families and community members to drive grassroots advocacy efforts. Using the power of social media, advocacy actions can be shared to help your audience understand the decisions being made and their impact on Head Start nationally. NHSA encourages you to actively engage with your members of Congress, families, community partners, and audience to uplift advocacy messages. For advocacy resources, visit: <https://nhsa.org/advocacy/>

Hosting members of Congress at your program is one of the most powerful ways to illustrate the value of Head Start and provide lawmakers with memorable experiences that can shape their decision making. These visits allow you to educate your members about Head Start’s comprehensive, community-based model and wraparound services. A personal visit also provides an opportunity for photos and positive media coverage as well as **social media**—for both your center and your legislator. You can find your members of Congress directly by typing your address at this site: <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/members>.

Download [NHSA’s Visit Toolkit](#) for step-by-step guidance on how to invite your member of Congress or their staff to visit. Then, be prepared to lift that visit up across social media.

# Facebook

## Quick Tips

- **Keep Text Brief.** Posts under 90 characters are four times more likely to go viral and three times more likely to receive clicks. Give enough to tease the basics and generate an interaction.
- **Create Photo Albums.** Photo albums with descriptions of what is happening, help to illustrate your community impact. For example: “We had a great Parent Policy Council meeting today. Thanks to these amazing parents for their work!”
- **Like Community Leader and Partner Pages.** Many leaders in your community have Facebook pages, be sure to ‘Like’ and ‘Follow’ them.
- **Mentions and Comments.** Use Facebook tags to engage with your community leaders’ and elected officials’ pages. You can do this by tagging them on your own page or by commenting on posts that are related to your Head Start program.

## Getting Set Up

- **Create Your Page.** When you create your page, make sure to create a Facebook Business Page (not a Profile Page). The Business Page is free and offers a lot of different features. [Facebook](#) has a [guide](#) to help you get started. If you have already created your page as a Profile Page, you can convert it. All of your original followers and friends will automatically like/follow the new page. If you do not make the transition, you run the risk of Facebook shutting down your page.
- **Describe Your Organization.** When you are filling out your Page information, it is helpful to include as much (high-quality!) information and keywords as possible in order to help people find you!
- **Choose Your Profile Photo.** For your profile picture, the best practice is to use your logo. When selecting a cover photo, you have more freedom since it can serve multiple purposes. You want to avoid reusing your logo or using a stretched, pixelated image. Make sure you use a high-quality image that is optimized for the right dimensions.
- **Post Stories.** These short videos, which are similar to Snapchat and Instagram Stories, show up on the top of your followers' feeds. You can add multiple images or videos and, after a certain amount of time, stories vanish. It’s a great way to share snippets of your day and “behind-the-scenes” content.
- **Post Jobs.** Here, you can showcase any open positions that you are looking to fill.
- **Consider Reviews.** This feature is a great opportunity to reach new people; however, if you get a negative review, you cannot edit or hide the information. You can reach out directly to the person, remedy the situation, and ask them to take it down.
- **Share Events.** This allows your audience to show their interest, RSVP to upcoming events, and share information with their friends—a great way to share what’s happening and boost attendance!

# Twitter

## Quick Tips

- **Follow Community Leader and Partner Pages.** Just like Facebook, your local leaders and officials have Twitter profile pages, so be sure to follow them! You can gain attention by retweeting their work and amplifying their voice. You will position yourself as a partner to them on social media, which may help to open the door to other collaborations and potential partnerships.
- **Set Standards for Hashtags.** If you want to create a hashtag for a specific issue, take time to find out if anyone has used the hashtag before. Check out the list on page 10!
- **Keep it Light!** Tweets can only contain up to 280 characters. Keep it short, sweet, and to the point. Make a clear call to action and include a visual (pictures, GIFs, videos, links, etc). Retweeting relevant content, information, and news as well as positive feedback from followers or families is a great way to show your recognition and support!
- **Stay Organized and Engaged.** Try using [Tweetdeck](#) to help you follow groups, track hashtags and stay up-to-date on key topics.

## Getting Set Up

- **Create Your Account.** It is incredibly important to provide all of the information requested to set up your account so you can be discovered by potential followers. Describe your organization. You only have 160 characters—focus on how you can make your profile easy to find!
- **Pick a Profile Picture.** The best practice is to use your logo. When selecting a cover photo, you have more freedom since it can serve multiple purposes. Make sure you use a high-quality image that doesn't look stretched or pixelated.
- **Choose Who To Follow.** When you create your account, you will be given the opportunity to select who you follow. Look for those local officials, partners, community groups, and other Head Start accounts. Don't forget to follow us [@NatlHeadStart!](#)
- **Find Your Voice.** Twitter is a great platform to share your thoughts and calls to action. Find your voice and test your creativity to share and engage. Use the recommended hashtags, share your announcements, and have fun!

# Instagram

## Quick Tips

- **Use Authentic Imagery.** Make sure to share photos and videos taken in your center and community. Use the album feature to highlight a series of events and resources.
- **Use Locations.** Make posts more discoverable by tagging them with a location. This can be general like a city or specific address for your center or program.
- **Get Creative With Stories and Stickers!** Stories can be more personal, behind the scenes content. Get creative by adding fun text or stickers!
- **Tagging.** When applicable, tag your elected officials, partners, or supporters in the image to notify them and continue building the relationship.

## Getting Set Up

- **Create Your Page.** Just like with Facebook, make sure your organization is set up as a Business Profile. Think about your Instagram bio like the front door to your classroom: whenever there's a special event coming up, you can think about changing the decorations! Because Instagram users can't share links in posts, strategically switching out your link in your bio for special events keeps things fresh and helps you to direct your audience's attention.
- **Listen to Your Audience.** Look for creators to follow. Listen and see what content is being shared in your field. Then, share content that is relevant to your audience's interests.
- **Videos!** Like all social media, Instagram is always evolving. These days, the video feature is a fun way to elevate your content. Mixing up your media (photos and videos!) will be interesting to your audience and a really great way to capture highlights and impacts of your work.
- **Use Hashtags.** Hashtags are most beneficial on Instagram. They help your content to show up in searches and are supportive in the "Explore" section of the platform. Use them freely and include one or two in your bio, too!

# LinkedIn

## Quick Tips

- **Optimize the “About Us” Section.** The first 156 characters of a LinkedIn page description are pulled into Google search results as a preview of the page. Keep the description up-to-date with an engaging copy.
- **Share Content Frequently.** Just like Facebook and Twitter, frequently posting content that demonstrates a specific benefit for your community is a great way to drive engagement. Think about posts that might start a conversation, like parenting tips or early childhood trends.
- **Leverage Visuals.** LinkedIn reports that posts with images result in a 98% higher comment rate. Try sharing videos, too. Unlike Twitter, you can simply link to a YouTube video and it will play in the feed.
- **Get Personal.** Your staff can also help amplify issue messages to their peers through personal posts. LinkedIn is often seen as a more professional network, so messages shared there can have a big impact.

## Getting Set Up

- **Create Your Profile.** It is very important that when you create your profile that you are creating a [LinkedIn Business](#) page. You will be establishing a Company page. To establish your page identity you will need to include all of your business information and details. This will create your account. Next you will add your description (be sure to use keywords), your location, and establish followers.
- **Drive Connections.** Completing all components of your company page will increase your connections and allow followers to find you more easily. This is a good time to get all of the staff at your Head Start engaged in professional development.
- **Posting Employment Opportunities:** This page is a great place to post about position openings for free. You can even pin employment posts to the top of your feed so that anyone visiting your page can learn about employment opportunities right away. Utilize the opportunity to invite connections and share your page!
- **Optimize Your Company Page.** On this platform share articles, trends, and thought-leadership pieces as the audience on this platform is looking to engage with informative and educational content. This means sharing articles, resources, conferences, anything relevant to your related job function, and much more. Like other social media platforms, it is important to use high-quality visuals with your content.



# TikTok

## Quick Tips

- **Create a Challenge or Campaign.** TikTok challenges are a great way to get users to interact with your videos. This could be making fun recipes, art, or dances. Whatever your #HeadStartCuties like to do, then challenge others to join them!
- **Follow Trends!** One reason this platform is so fun is that there are new trends popping up all the time. Try out a spinoff video as the trends could pertain to your program. Trending content can help expand your audience.
- **Be Responsive.** There are a few different ways to be responsive and doing so will increase your engagement. If you receive comments or messages, be sure to respond. If you see a lot of likes on your videos, push to make more of that topic.
- **Short, Short, Short!** The shorter and more entertaining the videos, the better. On this platform it is so easy to keep scrolling through videos that don't catch your attention, so you need to share content that will capture the audience's attention in the first eight to 12 seconds.

## Getting Set Up

- **Create Your Business Account.** Just as you have with other social media platforms, creating a business account gives you more access to features to help you build your audience as well as access to licensed materials.
- **Personalize.** TikTok videos are a quick glimpse into your program and your content. Ensure your profile is complete and that your profile picture matches your video content. While keeping your videos authentic to your program, it is good to tie in current trends, i.e. viral sounds, memes, or hashtags. The goal is to be authentic to your brand, connecting with your target audience, and engaging.
- **Know the Platform.** There are so many things to consider when using this platform. Look at those in your field that are already sharing content and learn how you can be unique. Learn who is using the platform and how to find your target audience. Knowing when to post videos and the TikTok algorithm is going to be instrumental in your success. Assess your analytics and build upon your strengths.
- **Create High-Quality Content.** This platform thrives on high-quality videos. There are several options for creating videos, from recording videos, to doing reactions or duets, to building slideshows, and more. We do not recommend reposting TikTok videos as the algorithm will identify these videos as low-quality. Therefore it is important to post your high-quality content at peak times of engagement with your target audience.

## Content Ideas & Prompts

Users follow brands and engage with their social media profiles because they find their content valuable, entertaining, informative, or useful. Best practice is to post a ratio of 80% content that your audience finds interesting and helpful and 20% self promoting pieces, but because you will \*hopefully\* be posting pictures of cute kids, you are allowed a larger ratio. Everyone likes cute kids.

Creating a plan ahead of time will give you a better picture of your social media plan. You can tie your social media content to the daily, weekly, and monthly themes that already exist as part of your curricular planning.

Content Ideas		
<p><b>Collaborations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introducing/Recognizing staff</li> <li>● Sharing family or staff stories</li> <li>● Hosting events</li> <li>● Parenting information</li> <li>● Articles related to early education, and child development</li> <li>● Newsletters</li> <li>● Weekly themes</li> <li>● Timely notices such as closings</li> </ul>	<p><b>Celebrations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Back to school</li> <li>● Graduation / Moving up</li> <li>● Holidays</li> <li>● Head Start birthday</li> <li>● Head Start Awareness month</li> <li>● Door decorating contests</li> <li>● Awards</li> <li>● Spirit week</li> <li>● Last day of school</li> </ul>	<p><b>Children:</b> (Ensure family consent)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Action shots on the playground</li> <li>● Performances</li> <li>● Storytime</li> <li>● Holiday celebrations</li> <li>● Accomplishments</li> <li>● Meal time</li> <li>● Enrollment openings</li> <li>● Milestones</li> <li>● Cooking classes</li> <li>● Gardening</li> </ul>

## Content Prompts

### Collaborations:

- An interview with a teacher highlighting their favorite things.
- A video tour of your school facilities.
- A graphic that outlines what your school’s activities are.
- Articles or resources from third-parties to share information relevant to families.
- Parent involvement and recognition are so important. Create posts to recognize the holidays: #MothersDay, #FathersDay, #ParentsDay, #GrandParentsDay, etc.
- Announcements such as: {Insert name} will be closed on Monday, July 4 for recognition of #IndependenceDay!

### Celebrations:

- A video that shows how your school is preparing for a new year.
- Welcome pictures, height measurements (good to recall for prompts later in the year).
- Try daily themes: #MondayMood, #TransformationTuesday, #WednesdayWisdom, #TBT, #FridayFeeling
- The letter K stands for Kindergarten...
- End of the Year Celebration for our #HeadStartCuties!
- Delve into key moments in Head Start history! Explore [this timeline for ideas.](#)

### Children: (Ensure family consent)

- Today in {Ms. Rachel’s} class...
- Milestones
- Pictures from previous events your school has held or sponsored (a little #TBT is always a crowd-pleaser).
- “You’re Looking for Head Start”
- Graduation to becoming #HeadStartAlum
- Proud moments

## Head Start Hashtags

#CareAboutChildCare  
 #ChildCare  
 #CareIsEssential  
 #CareCantWait  
 #ChildrenCantWait  
 #ChildCareNow  
 #ECE  
 #EarlyChildhood  
 #EarlyHeadStart

#Education  
 #FutureFocus  
 #GetAheadStart  
 #HappyBDayHeadStart (May 18)  
 #HeadStart  
 #HeadStartAwareness (October)  
 #HeadStartAlum  
 #HeadStartCuties  
 #HeadStartFamilies

#HeadStartForward  
 #HeadStartAdvantage  
 #KeepTheirHeadStart  
 #NameTheDifference  
 #Parenting  
 #ParentsChoose  
 #Kindergarten  
 #SupportHeadStart  
 #SupportHSTeachers  
 #UniteforHeadStart

## Template: Planning Calendar

January	February	March
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● New Year's Day</li> <li>● Letter Writing Week</li> <li>● Martin Luther King Jr. Day</li> <li>● International Day of Education</li> <li>● National Bath Safety Month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Children's Authors and Illustrators Week</li> <li>● Valentine's Day</li> <li>● Random Acts of Kindness Week</li> <li>● Black History Month</li> <li>● National Children's Dental Health Month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National Read Across America Day</li> <li>● Absolutely Incredible Kid Day</li> <li>● World Poetry Day</li> <li>● Take a Walk in the Park Day</li> <li>● Women's History Month</li> </ul>
April	May	June
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● World Autism Day</li> <li>● World Health Day</li> <li>● Black Maternal Health Week</li> <li>● Earth Day</li> <li>● Workers Memorial Week</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mental Health Week</li> <li>● Mother's Day</li> <li>● International Day of Families</li> <li>● Asian-American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) Month</li> <li>● Mental Health Month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National Children's Day</li> <li>● Loving Day</li> <li>● Juneteenth</li> <li>● Father's Day</li> <li>● Pride Month</li> </ul>
July	August	September
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Independence Day</li> <li>● Parents' Day</li> <li>● National Freezer Pop Day</li> <li>● Grade Level Reading Week</li> <li>● <a href="#">#SummerLearningWeek</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National Breastfeeding Awareness Month</li> <li>● Back to School Month</li> <li>● World Breastfeeding Week</li> <li>● National Honey Bee Day</li> <li>● Black Women's Equal Pay Day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Labor Day</li> <li>● Baby Safety Month</li> <li>● World Gratitude Day</li> <li>● National Grandparents Day</li> <li>● World Literacy Day</li> </ul>
October	November	December
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National Book Month</li> <li>● National Child Health Day</li> <li>● National Hero Day</li> <li>● Children's Environmental Health Day</li> <li>● Indigenous Peoples Day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Family Engagement Month</li> <li>● Native American Heritage Day / Thanksgiving</li> <li>● Veterans Day</li> <li>● American Election Day</li> <li>● National Family Literacy Day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Rosa Parks Day</li> <li>● National Human Rights Month</li> <li>● Pearl Harbor Remembrance</li> <li>● Bill of Rights Day</li> <li>● Winter Solstice</li> </ul>

## Template: Customizable Graphics

Click on the image below for the customizable Canva template, add your info, download, and go!

### Head Start Benefits:



### Head Start Awareness Month:



### Announcements / Spotlights:



### Quotes:



## Template: Photo Consent and Release Form

It is very important, especially when you're working with children, to ask for parental permission to take and post photos and videos. NHSA hosts our [consent form](#) on our website and collects signatures electronically. You can host yours online or have folks sign hardcopies to keep in your files. Below is a template to get you started.

I hereby authorize the \_\_\_\_\_, and its licensees, successors and assigns (collectively "\_\_\_\_") to interview, photograph, film, and/or audiotape me, and to use the any photographs, video, audio, and interview information (hereafter, collectively "Materials") in any of its materials, including but not limited to publications, presentations, websites, social media, advertising, which \_\_\_\_ determines advances its goals.

I also authorize \_\_\_\_ to provide the Materials to other organizations, federal, or state officials, media organizations, and any other individual or organization which \_\_\_\_ believes is acting to advance its goals.

If \_\_\_\_ wishes that I participate in an event or a one-on-one interview, \_\_\_\_ may contact me for permission and scheduling but I am under no obligation to participate in such an opportunity. I understand and agree that I will receive no monetary compensation for my participation or for the use of these Materials.

I release and discharge any and all actions or claims which I, my family members, or my heirs may have against the \_\_\_\_, its officers, trustees, employees, contractors and/or agents, and any other third party contracting with \_\_\_\_, arising for any reason whatsoever from any use, publication, distribution, or republication of these Materials in accordance with this Consent and Release at any time now or in the future. I agree to defend, indemnify, and hold harmless \_\_\_\_, and its employees, directors, officers, contractors, professional advisors, assignees and agents, from and against any and all claims, demands, expenses, losses or liabilities including, without limitation, reasonable attorney's fees arising out of or in connection with any breach, or alleged breach, of the terms of this Agreement.

I am above 18 years of age and understand and agree to the terms set forth above for myself or a minor on whose behalf I am submitting.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_