The social work profession should revise its standards of practice to meet the challenges presented by the Internet and technological advances. Social workers need to expand the way they think about ethics to include online social media, and reframe how they think about privacy, confidentiality, and professional boundaries. The development of explicit guidelines/policies for social work practitioners will help to clarify some of the current ambiguities that exist related to the use of social media, particularly as it relates to ethical practice as well as in training the next generation of social workers during their field placements. Recommendations for the ethical use of social media include:

- Discuss online privacy issues with clients and offer alternative, appropriate means of communication (cell phone, email, etc).
- Review online identity content and take appropriate security precautions before posting anything.
- Conduct personal Internet search and have inaccurate or clinically inappropriate information removed.
- Create professional website with relevant links or purchase a domain name to reduce online misrepresentation.
- Become familiar with personal social media account settings and limit undesired access to personal information.

Agencies and schools of social work must facilitate a stronger foundation for ethical social work practice with social media going forward, through the development of social media guidelines/policies and when educating students on ethical use of social media. Social workers do not need to fear social media, but they do need to understand it, and make a place for it in their policy development and ethical awareness.

This article discusses the importance of developing risk management strategies and provides recommendations for the ethical use of social media for social workers. It addresses the need for social workers to stay focused on maintaining client privacy while simultaneously establishing and maintaining their professional and personal boundaries. It also highlights the development of comprehensive social media guidelines/policies and training that focuses on effectively preparing new social workers for the ethical challenges they will confront in the global world of social media.