Office of Youth Protection
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

Best Practices for Virtual Programming for Youth
Version dated 5/20/22; to be reviewed October 2022

A. Use devices and software approved by UW – Madison

1. Youth activity staff must use devices that are compliant with How to Stay Safe Online While Accessing Campus Remotely.
2. The youth activity must use meeting software that is approved or licensed by UW-Madison and is secured with a NetID login (for staff) for all synchronous online activities with minors. Follow guidance in Web Conferencing Tools Simplified and Which Tool Should I Use?
   a. Pros and Cons of Virtual Platforms: Safety Considerations is a helpful resource provided by the American Camp Association (ACA).
3. *To avoid one-on-one contact with minors, youth activity staff should use the activity's service email account (if one exits) and social media accounts for the activity instead of their personal account. See Section D, Adopt best practice standards for online communications with minors.*

B. Control access to the online platform

1. To invite participants to an online session, use blind copy (BCC) to avoid cross-sharing everyone's email addresses. Copy the Authorized Custodian or another program staff member in the invitation.
2. The instructor must have and use a participant roster, including verified email addresses and phone numbers, so participants can be identified by the instructor.
3. Use only the first name and last initial of each participant during online sessions (or follow another naming convention that avoids showing both the first and last names together).
4. Take verbal attendance. Remember to account for people who come in late.
5. Remove people whose identities cannot be verified (try to confirm identify first).
6. Set up new meeting links through the online platform for each scheduled session. Don't use "personal rooms."
7. Password-protect sessions and send the password directly to rostered participants, or use the waiting room to ensure that only people who should have access are admitted.
   a. Don't post the meeting identifier or password to a location visible to the public.
   b. Use the platform's "waiting room" feature and verify identities before admitting devices to the session.
8. Disable participant screen sharing, unless it is essential to the effectiveness of the activity.
9. Disable private chat features or make all chats visible to the host (instructor and/or additional program staff) and save the chat transcript.

C. Make online interactions observable and interruptible

Increase visibility of online interactions either by recording the sessions or by including more than one staff member in each session.

1. When recording online interactions:
   a. Convey that the session will be recorded in registration or other pre-program information.
      i. Communicate how the recording will be used.
      ii. Obtain written permission from parents/guardians if screen shots or recording of interactions will be used in future promotional materials.
   b. Use meeting software or apps that are accessible to participants without NetIDs and use meeting software that is approved or licensed by UW-Madison and is secured with a NetID login (for staff) (e.g., Zoom).
   c. Store recordings and control access to them.
2. Include more than one staff member in each session:
   a. In addition to the instructor, include another Authorized Adult in the session.
   b. The additional Authorized Adult may also be responsible for managing the online space, including taking attendance and monitoring the chat.
3. Alert the Authorized Custodian to all meetings. Authorized Custodian should randomly drop in on meetings.
4. Share the program schedule with parents or guardians and youth participants.
   a. Identify group activities, special events, and scheduled times for online tutoring or small group sessions.
   b. Encourage parents to help monitor their child's participation.
5. Provide a way for participants to offer feedback about their experience in the group.
6. Evaluate outcomes (this applies to all programming and is not unique to online programming).

D. Adopt best practice standards for online communications with minors

The following list outlines best practices for online communications with minors:
1. Avoid one-on-one contact between adults and minors in video conferencing or email, text, chat, and other online communications.
   a. Suggestions for video conferencing:
      i. Include another Authorized Adult or multiple minor participants.
      ii. Lead small group advising and tutoring instead of one-on-one.
      iii. Reschedule or record the session if only one youth is available to participate.
   b. Suggestions for email, text, and chat communications:
      i. Email from the program's service email. Avoid using your personal email account.
      ii. Include a parent, Authorized Custodian, or group of youth in all email correspondence.
      iii. Save email, chat, and text message strings.
      iv. Limit contact with participants to reasonable program hours. Schedule emails sent outside of typical working or program hours to arrive during these hours.
   c. Suggestions for social media:
      i. Do not interact with program participants through personal accounts on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and others.
         1. Deny requests from program participants to become friends on social media (personal accounts).
      ii. Encourage youth participants to follow the program's or activity's social media accounts (if applicable).

2. Use of cell phones, cameras, imaging, or digital devices is limited to the purpose consistent with the program mission.
3. Do not make sexual materials available (in any form) to minors or assist them in any way in gaining access to such materials.
4. Do not use or be under the influence of alcohol or drugs during online interactions with minors.
5. Do not engage in discrimination or harassment.
6. Do not engage in verbal abuse toward or in the presence of a minor.
7. Follow incident reporting requirements to report online behavioral issues, suspicion of child abuse or neglect, and violations of campus policies.

E. Consider ways to enhance access and inclusion
1. Think about possible barriers to participation and consider ways to promote equity in terms of access to technology for the youth (e.g., are local computer labs available to youth who do not have access to reliable internet at home?)
2. Use accessibility features of the online platform as needed to enhance the experience of youth participants.
   a. Consider using auto-generated or manual captions.
   b. Pin a sign language interpreter on the video display so that they are always in view for everyone.
   c. Incorporate real-time translation services.
3. Incorporate best practices for accessibility when designing slides.
   Accessibility@UW-Madison includes a variety of resources that can assist with accessibility considerations for\ web pages and presentations.
   a. Use plain language
   b. Include alternative text with all images (screen reader tools)
   c. Give slides clear titles
   d. Incorporate charts and tables
   e. Use effective color and contract
   f. Share the presentation with participants in advance