



## Examples of Best Practices for Virtual Youth Activities

### 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 exists) and social media accounts for the activity instead of their personal email or personal work email account. See Section D, *Adopt best practice standards for online communications with minors*.

### Control access to the online platform

1. To invite participants to an online session, use blind copy (BCC) to avoid 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.

## **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 screenshots 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 using a secure Google Drive or Box Drive and control who has access to them. Retain recorded sessions according to records retention schedules.
2. Include more than one staff member in each session:
  - a. Keep participants in the virtual waiting room until at least two staff members are present.
  - b. Consider assigning a staff member responsibility for managing the online space, including taking attendance and monitoring the chat.
3. Alert the Authorized Custodian to all meetings. Authorized Custodians 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).

## **Adopt best practice standards for online communications with minors**

The following list outlines examples of 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 a 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 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, LinkedIn 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. Use language appropriate for a professional setting; never engage in verbal abuse.
- 4. Do not make sexual materials available (in any form) to minors or assist them in any way in gaining access to such materials.
- 5. Do not use or be under the influence of alcohol or drugs during online interactions with minors.
- 6. Do not engage in discrimination or harassment.
- 7. Follow incident reporting requirements to report online behavioral issues, suspicion of child abuse or neglect, and violations of campus policies.

### **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 (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 (when needed) 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](mailto: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 contrast](#)
  - f. Share the presentation with participants in advance
- 4. The same ADA guidelines should be followed when providing virtual programming as followed in physical classrooms or meetings.
  - a. Have questions about accommodations for program participants? Complete the Visitor/Guest/Program Participant Reasonable Accommodation Consultation Form, call the McBurney Center at voice/Relay711 at (608) 263-2741, text us at (608) 225-7956, or email us. Business hours are 8:00am- 4:30pm, Monday through Friday.

## Parent/Guardian Involvement

1. While the virtual program may be offering guided activities, youth activities cannot take “custodial care” of youth in a virtual setting. Therefore, it is important to engage with parents/guardians.
  - a. Obtain consent for participation in online youth programming. Provide details about how, when, and by what means youth will be interacting virtually with your program.
  - b. Inform parents/guardians about how youth participants will interact with technology and encourage them to discuss online safety with their children.
  - c. Include supervision expectations and requirements for the duration of the virtual program.
  - d. Inform parents/guardians of the setting requirements and materials needed to conduct virtual program activities.
  - e. Encourage parents/guardians to be aware of their child’s online activities.
  - f. Communicate with parents/guardians about who will have access to the online course. Due to the privacy of other youth participants, parents/guardians are not allowed to “sit in” on online courses.
  - g. Share any resources that may assist parents in supporting their youth and achieve successful participation in the program.
  - h. Inform staff prior to program start time if their youth participant must be absent.