

Recommendations for virtual youth programming

Select appropriate technology and safety protocols:

- 1. Select a communication method your staff will use with participants.**
 - a. Look for communication tools such as:
 - Shared @wvu.mail.edu email addresses
 - Messaging services such as Cisco Jabber through IT that do not require staff to use personal phone numbers
 - Program-sponsored Facebook pages or other social media profiles
 - b. Do not use tools that allow for private, unmonitored interactions and communications.
- 2. Enable available security features.**
 - a. Look for technology with security features to protect youth privacy and strengthen safety and enable them whenever possible. For example, in [WVU Zoom Video Conferencing](#) you can:
 - [Use Best Practices for Securing Your Virtual Classroom](#)
 - Require a password to join a meeting,
 - Enable the “waiting room” feature to give meeting organizers control over who joins the meeting,
 - Disable screen sharing by non-hosts,
 - Lock a meeting once all known participants join,
 - Turn off file transfers.
 - b. You may also want to review privacy practices for your chosen software.
- 3. Design program activities to eliminate private, unmonitored 1:1 interaction.**
 - a. For example, if using real-time video software, ensure there will always be two staff members in each video session.
 - b. Plan ahead to ensure the Rule of Three is observed and include this requirement in your communications to parents.

Set Conduct expectations with youth participants:

- 1. Update participant conduct codes.**
 - a. Online youth-to-youth interactions can look very different than in-person interactions. Update existing participant Codes of Conduct by integrating online safety and conduct expectations or create a new online-specific Code of Conduct.

BOG Rule 1.7 Rule on Child Protection: Recommendations for Virtual Youth Programming

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- See our template for participant Code of Conduct which includes virtual interactions.

Set and enforce conduct expectations with staff regarding online interactions:

1. Integrate online conduct expectations into your existing staff Conduct Code.

- a. Include a new addendum for virtual interactions.

2. Address program-specific considerations in your staff training.

- a. Topics to consider addressing include:
 - What do 1:1 interactions look like in an online environment? How are they different from in-person interactions? What additional risks do they pose?
 - What additional preparations need to be made to ensure 1:1 interactions do not happen?
 - How can staff set and maintain appropriate boundaries online? For example, communicate your 'online' hours to participants and their families and strictly avoid contact during 'offline' hours.
 - The importance of using official University accounts at all times for program activities and communicating with participants. What might be challenging about using shared accounts and how can you overcome those challenges to ensure transparency and youth safety?

3. Engage with staff around Conduct Code violations or general concerns.

- a. Have ongoing conversations with all program staff about how the program is running, and specifically address virtual interactions.
- b. Solicit and address any group concerns.
- c. Monitor methods of communication for program staff and participants to ensure safe and appropriate interactions. Immediately address any concerning behaviors or violations of the Conduct Code.

Engage with Parents:

1. Inform

- a. Educate parents about the technology you are using and how youth will interact with them and encourage parents to discuss online safety with their children.
- b. Reiterate parents are responsible for monitoring their child's time online and that program staff are not responsible, nor able, to monitor this with distance learning.
- c. Consider sharing resources (such as those below) with families.

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2. Get consent

- a. Ensure you solicit consent for participation in online youth programming.
- b. Provide details about how, when and by what means youth will be interacting virtually with your program.

3. Enlist parental supervision

- a. Suggest parents/guardians be present in the room with participants during online engagements or programming.

Resources for virtual youth programs:

1. Online Safety

- a. [Common Sense Media](#)
- b. [ConnectSafely.org](#)
- c. [Darkness to Light Safe Online Learning resource for teachers](#)
- d. Praesidium
 - [Staying Safe on Social Media](#) provides strategies for organizations to protect youth from the risks of technology
 - [Electronic Communication with Youth in Challenging Times](#) outlines appropriate uses of technology
- e. [Cyberbullying Prevention](#)
- f. [Protecting kids online](#) provides strategies to talk to kids about online safety and employ parental controls for supervision
- g. [NetSmartz](#) provides age-appropriate videos and activities to help teach children to be safer online with the goal of helping children become more aware of potential online risk and empowering them to help prevent victimization by making safer choices on- and offline.

2. Accessibility

- a. “Does the participant require ADA or disability-related accommodation(s) in order to participate? (Yes or No)
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3. Support and Advice for Distance Learning

- a. [WVU Libraries](#)

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- b. [Online Advising best practices from the Adviser Education Program](#) includes tips for privacy information, technology tutorials, and supportive tips for both parties participating in online interactions.
- c. [Remote Learning Recommendations from the Illinois State Board of Education](#)
- d. Best practices for [safe online programming from the American Camp Association](#)

Document updated 5-15-20

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Source: Adopted by University of Washington Office for Youth Programs Development and Support March 2020