

Quick Reference Guidelines for Online Interaction with Minors

Permission from parent(s) or legal guardian(s)

- Collect a signed parental consent form with language for parents/guardians to consent to online interactions (and recording if applicable).
- Collect participant registration information including name, email (if available), phone number, physical address, age/grade, gender.
- Collect emergency contact information for the parent(s) legal guardian(s) including phone number and email address.
- Inform parents/guardians of their responsibility to monitor the minor participant throughout the duration of the program if it is offered in real-time.
- Inform parents and obtain their consent if live interactive sessions will be recorded.
- Inform parents/guardians on how to report technical problems, raise concerns about staff or the program, report discrimination/harassment, and request disability accommodations.
- Clearly outline the days/hours of the Program, outline exactly what the Program entails and state that there is to be no contact between staff and minors outside of the established Program.
- Provide rules or a [code of conduct](#) for online interactions to the participants and have the parents/guardians sign it along with the participant.
- Include a disclaimer or content advisory if there is risk of physical injury or emotional distress, if you are providing content via video that can be viewed at will.
- Use a [Program Expectations and Parental Permission](#) form that can be modified to meet the needs of your program or activity.

Communication

- Follow the [Guidelines for Interacting with Minors Online](#).
- Have two or more Program staff present in online interactions with minors. Or, send the virtual meeting link to the participant's parent/legal guardian so they have the option to participate.
- For live programs with minors, conduct a check-in at the beginning of the program with cameras on to confirm the identity of the participant.
- Define which platforms will be used for communication, content delivery and storage and limit all communication to official Program platforms.
- Use proper NC State credentials, such as logging in with your unity ID and password in Zoom, Moodle or REPORTER, etc.
- Avoid using personal email addresses and personal social media platforms. Only properly branded program/unit specific platforms should be used.
- Avoid texting directly with minors, use a group platform and involve another adult staff member.
- Take steps to eliminate the presence of unregistered attendees and risk of

"[zombombing](#)" by having the leader admit each participant individually.

- Check attendees against registration lists.
- Follow the [Personal Boundaries for Working with Minors in WSSU Programs](#).
- Remember there is to be no staff-to-youth contact outside the Program.
- Determine how participants will be allowed to communicate with each other. Monitor posts or submissions to ensure appropriate content.
- There is to be zero tolerance for bullying or harassment.
- Consider sending a short survey to the parents after real time interactions to gather any concerns, questions or feedback.
- Consider disability accommodations in the online environment. Can minors with sensory impairments participate?

Recording

- Avoid recording sessions with minors. There are legal risks, and children who would miss in-person activities would not typically have a recording of the event. Participant privacy must be protected and FERPA and/or other privacy laws may apply. There may also be a need for intellectual property protections. It is best to avoid recording interactions with minors.
- If you decide to record, the content should be "locked down," password protected, and only available for a specified amount of time to those associated with the program, an exception would be content that is used for promotional purposes to be shared through Program websites and communication channels in the same manner as in-person interactions.
- Avoid recording personally identifiable information (PII) of minors such as names with photos, or chat transcripts.
- Consider if the participants need access to recorded material or if only the program leaders need access.
- The person recording must announce that the recording is starting before recording so that all are aware.

Staff Training

- Prohibit "friending" youth on social media. Any private electronic communication between staff and youth, including the use of social networking websites such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, direct messaging, texting, etc. is prohibited.
- Make all communication between staff and youth transparent.
- Maintain boundaries: keep discussions to curriculum or activity; no discussion of personal issues, sexual conversations, pornography or references to drugs or alcohol.
- Provide examples of appropriate electronic communications. For example: only respond to emails/text/messages when copying a supervisor or parent/guardian, only utilize work-issued email addresses or phone numbers.
- Provide examples of inappropriate electronic communications, such as "friending or following" youth on social networking sites, engaging in sexual conversations or sharing

of intimate personal information.

- Stress importance of professional appearance and setting.
- Provide clear expectations of when staff can use their personal cell phones (emergencies, field trips, when approved by a supervisor).
- List of information or items that can or cannot be stored on staff's personal devices such as photos of youth participants.
- Provide staff with the [Program Expectations form](#) that meets the needs of your program or activity.

Staff Supervision

- How will Program staff be supervised?
- Will leadership "sit in" on programs, perhaps at random, unannounced times?
- Will there be staff meetings to reinforce staff training or hold discussions with individual staff?

Reporting Incidents

- Incidents that cause concern can be reported [here](#).
- Disclosures of child abuse must be reported to DSS and law enforcement.

Resources

- [Winston-Salem State University Privacy Statement](#)
- [CyberTipline](#) is a place where the public and electronic service providers can report suspected online and offline child sexual exploitation.
- Darkness to Light is a resource for teachers to provide a safe environment for online learning.
- [NetSmartz](#) is NCMEC's online safety education program. It provides age-appropriate videos and activities to help teach children to be safer online with the goal of helping children to become more aware of potential online risks and empowering them to help prevent victimization by making safer choices on- and offline.
- The American Camp Association [COVID-19 resources](#)
- [ACA Best Practices for Keeping Online Programming Safe](#)

Contact

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