

# Youth Protection Guidelines: Virtual Youth Programming

During this challenging time we know that many programs are finding new ways to engage their audience. As many of you enter the world of virtual and online programming it is important to consider the safety and security of your participants in a new way. We have created guidelines and best practices specific to the University Safety of Minors Policy to help guide your decision making.

As always, if you have any questions or would like to review your specific program, we are available to help. Please email [youthprotection@utah.edu](mailto:youthprotection@utah.edu), and we will respond as soon as possible.

## University Safety of Minors Policy Requirements

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- Consider virtual programming in the same lens that you would for in-person programming:
  - All people interacting with minors in any capacity (including virtually) should still have background checks, go through the Safety of Minors training, and adhere to the Code of Conduct.
  - Programs must register with YPPS and include all Authorized Adult information.
  - If accepting registrations, you must collect a Liability Waiver.
  - If a program has already been registered but has moved to a virtual format, you must submit a revised Risk Management Plan taking the additional risks into consideration.
- All Code of Conduct rules apply:
  - No one-on-one interactions. Have a second adult managing or participating in the virtual programming or virtual communication.
  - All electronic communication should serve a programmatic or educational purpose.
  - When communicating electronically, you must copy another Authorized Adult or parent/guardian.
  - All communication and providing of programming should be done through official University channels and not personal accounts.
  - Don't meet with any of your participants at private locations.

## Virtual Programming Best Practices

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- Inform parents that you will be using virtual platforms to connect with their child.
- Let parents know of the precautions you are taking to provide for their safety in your program but that they are responsible for monitoring their children's online activity.

*Information related to online safety:*

<https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/topics/protecting-kids-online>

<https://website.praesidiuminc.com/wp/wp/electronic-communications-organizations-duty-protect/>

- Be mindful of the risks involved in connecting minors online or virtually:
  - Bullying and harassment may look different in an online setting, so ensure that standards of conduct are met.

*Information on cyberbullying:* <https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/prevention>

- Consider updating your program code of conduct to include online etiquette and cyberbullying.

- Ensure that comments or chat features are limited to participants and that personal information is not being shared.
- Make sure settings are private and no outside people can enter the virtual space. Any meeting should have a password that is only sent to participants.
  - Example: Zoom bombing <https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2020/03/20/keep-the-party-crashers-from-crashing-your-zoom-event/>
  - Guidance from the University on Zoom bombing prevention: <https://attheu.utah.edu/facultystaff/avoid-being-bombed-keep-your-zoom-meetings-safe/>

## Virtual and Electronic Communication Considerations

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- Keep conversations professional and focused on programmatic and educational purposes, not on personal or private lives. While encouragement and support is important, especially during this time, boundaries must be maintained for the safety of both adults and the youth.
- When creating virtual classrooms or meetings, ensure that the background settings and presenter's personal appearance is professional and appropriate.
- Do not engage in or share any sexually oriented posts, memes, comments, etc.

## Outside Party Connections

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In addition to programming that you are providing, there may be outside resources that you would like your audience to engage with. Please be mindful of where you are directing the youth you serve and the content they may be exposed to. Please carefully consider any outside resources. When connecting to these outside parties, please also include language such as the following:

*"Note that the University of Utah has no control over the content offered by third party websites. Parents and guardians should monitor the online activities of their children to ensure the content is age appropriate and to ensure the safety of their children"*

## Accommodation and Accessibility

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Please be aware of the accessibility of virtual programming and ensure that the same guidelines are followed as in physical classrooms or meetings.

- Make any participants aware of their right to an accommodation. For example:
 

*"[i]f your student requires special accommodations, please contact us in advance. To get a better idea of what accommodations are available, please contact the [Office of Equal Opportunity](#) at 801-581-8365."*
- All accommodations requests will be case-by-case, and the program administrator or director should direct anyone who is requesting an accommodation to the OEO.
- Any electronic mediums should be ensured to have accessibility. For example, everything online should be in a format that is usable by screen readers, video captioned, etc.