

Guidelines for Online Programs

Safety & Protection of Minors Resources



VCU

Center for Community
Engagement and Impact

Even in an online environment, the [Safety and Protection of Minors Policy](#) applies.

Online programs offer new opportunities as well as challenges when presenting content to participants. This document will provide best practices in youth engagement, parental involvement, privacy and safety protocols, online platform options, and Zoom safety protocols.

Creating Youth Engagement

- **Engagement**
 - Use more activities and less lecture, if possible.
 - Work with youth to create group norms and expectations.
 - Call youth by name.
 - Energize the group by taking breaks (ex. stretching, dancing).
 - Provide opportunities for youth to engage with each other.
 - Use reflection activities to gain feedback from students.
- **Presentation**
 - Simplify materials needed for activities.
 - Use video and chat boxes (consider restrictions and privacy/safety features).
 - Consider visuals and accessibility.
- **Involvement**
 - Enhance feelings of physical and emotional safety.
 - Consider leadership opportunities in activities.
 - Incorporate youth voice and choice.
 - Focus on relationships, safety and skill building.
- **Resources:**
 - Tips on facilitation, course design, and accessibility: [Making Remote & Online Learning Accessible & Flexible](#)
 - American Camp Association: [Quality in Online Camp Programming](#)
 - Questions to address: [Considerations for Youth in Virtual World](#)
 - Consider student limitations: [Accessibility in Virtual Programs](#)
 - PBS: [5 Ways to Build a Virtual Classroom Community](#)
 - Teach for America: [7 Tips for Being a Great Virtual Teacher](#)
 - [Building Strong Relationships with Young People](#)

Parental Involvement

- Provide information about the online learning platform and privacy/safety features.
- Share the instructor/program's contact information to parents to communicate with questions.
- Connect with parents as much as possible. Use emails, texts, or apps to keep parents up-to-date on upcoming activities. Communicate changes when necessary.
- Share goals or expectations openly with parents and ask parents to do the same.
- Provide opportunities for parents to connect with program activities.
- Address common challenges that inhibit parent engagement.
- Get feedback from parents about what is working and where additional support is needed.
- Plan for a variety of learning experiences, online and off, and be able to support parents by modifying or adapting activities to meet the needs of their students.

Resources:

- For tips on keeping your child engaged: [8 Tips on Keeping Your Child Focused and Engaged During Distance Learning](#)
- How to better serve students and parents: [Online Consent Forms](#)
- Example of [Virtual Consent Form](#)
- [Parent Engagement with Student Online Learning](#)
- [How Parent Involvement Leads to Student Success](#)

Privacy and Safety Protocols

- Sites should work with participants to create a standard of conduct while in an online platform, laying out guidelines for appropriate conversations and behavior in meetings. Review and consider guidelines from [Children's Online Privacy Protection Act](#), which provides valuable best practice recommendations for programs operating with youth under 13 years of age.
- All youth participating must register for the program. Unregistered individuals should not accompany registered youth participants in the virtual programming (e.g. friends or siblings)
 - Program staff should be the only individuals providing youth participants with the online meeting information.
 - Consider adding a password to the meeting invitation.
- Encourage participants and staff to be aware of their background surroundings and virtual backgrounds (to maintain both professionalism and privacy).
 - Program staff should encourage youth to put their first name and last initial in their video image.
- Communication outside of virtual program should be discouraged unless for official program responsibilities and using official program channels. The parent/guardian of the youth participant must be copied on all written communication between program staff and the youth participant.
 - Program staff are prohibited from following youth participants on any social media platform or exchanging any personal contact information such as cell phone numbers, etc.
- If a conversation could be misinterpreted as inappropriate, bring it up with a supervisor.

- Two-deep programming - All events should have either two adult leaders or if there is only one, there must be at least two youth participants at all times (1:1 interactions between program staff and youth participants is prohibited in an online platform).
 - Private chats should be disabled, as well as whiteboards, annotation of shared screen, and file transfer (educational considerations should be considered when enacting this practice).
 - Disable join before host.
 - Disable remote support.
 - The same recommendations should apply to any breakout rooms.
 - Keep check-in/check-out times consistent and communicate them to participants parent/guardian.
- Video recording should be disabled in video conferencing platforms.
 - Prevent participants from saving or copying chat information.
 - If recording is necessary, only record the presentation portion, not the participant video/names or a recording of the “chat box.”
 - Be transparent and let youth and parents know that they will be monitored or recorded, how long the data/recording will be stored, who has access to it, and allowing them to opt-out of attending a live recording.

Online Platform Options: Strengths and Challenges

There are many meeting and educational platforms to consider when designing your online program (with more being added daily). There are strengths and challenges to each. Below is three of the most common video conferencing platforms.

Zoom

Provides cloud platform for video/audio conferencing, collaboration, chat, and webinars across multiple devices (desktops, telephones, room systems, etc.).

- Strengths
 - Share Screen
 - Send files through chat
 - Free pro account for VCU faculty/staff (Up to 100 participants, 24 hr. duration limit, cloud recording)
 - Ability to annotate share screen (if desired)
 - No additional fee for call-in participants
 - Allows remote control of machine through share screen
 - Easy to use platform
 - Calls and up to 100 participants in group call
 - Endorsed and supported by VCU (see below for more information)
 - Encryption of Video and Recordings
- Challenges
 - Free (non-VCU) account limited to 40 minutes
 - Requires download of an app or browser extension
 - Need to turn off pop-up blocker

Google Meetings

A video conferencing platform that is part of the G Suite (the portfolio of services that Google provides).

- Strengths
 - Free up to 60 minutes
 - Share Screen
 - Send files through chat
 - Calls and up to 100 participants in group call
 - Currently free for everyone
 - No additional fee for call-in participants
 - [Ease of launch to start a meeting](#)
 - [Encryption of video and recordings](#)
 - [Security already set up](#)
- Challenges
 - Creator of the meeting must be present if someone from outside of the domain would like to join.
 - Only G-Suite users have access to a dial-in number for other participants.
 - Many of the security features are controlled at the system level and thus, Google Meet may not be as configurable as Zoom.

Facebook

Facebook is a website that allows users, who sign-up for free profiles, to connect with friends, communities, and interests in the digital equivalent of a town square.

- Strengths
 - The world's largest social website
 - Easy to share photos
 - Free video messaging
 - Connected to a variety of information about each person, allows for sharing opportunity. Each person determines what information they share with the public.
 - Facebook uses algorithms to determine what content to deliver to a user's news feed, based on previous engagement.
 - Increases in: comments using emojis, comments on question posts, interaction with short posts, and interaction with photo posts
 - Audiences are most likely to be on right before lunch or right after rush hour
 - Respond to people who respond to you (e.g. the "golden rule" of social media)
- Challenges
 - Requires continuous monitoring and administration
 - Public facing platform- increases potential for exposure of some type.
 - Potential lack of familiarity among some families
 - [Privacy](#) - Facebook works with many partners to gather information both on and [off-facebook](#).
 - Access to contacts in your phone
 - Installing the app can give permission to see wifi networks you connect to, type of phone you have, and other apps installed.

Resources:

- American Camp Association: [Best Practices for Keeping Your Online/Virtual Programming Safe for Campers.](#)
- American Camp Association: [Virtual Program Platform Pros and Cons](#)

Zoom Session Protocols

Zoom is a feature-rich teleconferencing tool that can enable our employees and faculty to remotely collaborate with each other and educate our students. VCU offers and utilizes Zoom for all employees. To set up an account, please login at vcu.zoom.us with your VCU credentials.

Setup Protocols

- Password Protecting
- Waiting Room on Entry
- Disable Video (for either participants, or presenter (or both))
- Disable join before host
- Disable sharing of files
- [Disable Recording](#) for host and participants
- Mute on Entry
- Only host can share screen
- Turn off annotation
- Disable remote support (1:1)
- Use a [one-time meeting ID](#), generated automatically, instead of your personal meeting ID.
- Disable whiteboard
- Disable virtual backgrounds
- [Require Registration](#) for zoom meeting
 - Username & Email Address
- [Each breakout room should have two adults](#)

During Meeting Protocols

- Mute all participants at once
- Disable participants from unmuting
- Lock Meeting (once all participants have joined)
- [Remove disruptive participants](#) from the meeting

Chat Rooms Protocols

- Disable private chats to one another
- Prevent participants from saving or copying chat info

Resource:

- VCU Zoom Meeting Security [Guidelines](#)