Best Practices for Online Interaction with Minors

Permission from parent(s) or legal guardian(s)
- Collect a signed [Consent Form for Appalachian Video Conferencing Youth Program](#) for parents/guardians to consent to online interactions.
- Collect a signed [2020 Medical Information and Video Conferencing Indemnity Agreement](#) from each participant prior to online interactions.
- Collect emergency contact information for the parent(s) or 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 consistent with [Appalachian's Guidelines on Video Conferencing Youth Programs](#).
- 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 Youth Program entails and state that there is to be no contact between staff and minors outside of the established Youth Program.
- Consider creating an outline of online [Program Expectations for Participants and Parents](#).

Communication
- Follow [Appalachian's Guidelines on Acceptable Behavior with Minors](#).
- Follow [Appalachian's Guidelines on Video Conferencing Youth Programs](#).
- Provide guidance to parents on the online platforms that will be used for your Youth Program.
- University-sponsored youth programs may utilize the University provided Zoom and ASULearn Global for their online Youth Programs. However, before use of these platforms you will need to contact [Appalachian's Information Technology Services ("ITS") Department](#) to ensure the platform utilized is appropriate for your Youth Program and the correct security settings and practices are in place for use by minors.
- Use proper App State credentials, such as logging in with your university issued ID and password in Zoom, ASU Learn Global, etc.
- Do not use personal email addresses and personal social media platforms. Only properly branded program/unit specific platforms should be used.
- Do not text or message 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 "zoombombing" by having a lead Youth Program staff member serve as the online platform host to admit each participant individually, and check attendees against registration lists.

- Remember Youth Program Staff members should not have external contact with Youth Program minors.
- 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. Contact the Office of Disability Resources or ITS for help setting up accommodations in your program's online environment.

Recording

- The recording of video conferencing sessions with minors (e.g., audio, visual, or both) is prohibited at all times. To the extent possible, recording functions on video conferencing platforms should be disabled and the prohibitions under this section should be communicated to all program staff, minors, and parents or guardians. Please contact ITS for assistance with disabling recording functions.

Staff Training
- Ensure all staff have reviewed
  - Appalachian Policy 111.1 – Minors on Campus
  - Appalachian Policy 111.2 – Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect.
  - Appalachian's Guidelines on Acceptable Behavior with Minors
  - Appalachian's Guidelines on Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting
  - Appalachian's Guidelines on Video Conferencing Youth Programs
- Prohibit Youth Program staff from "friending" Youth Program participants 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.
- Maintain boundaries: keep discussions to curriculum or activity; no discussion of personal issues, sexual conversations, pornography or references to drugs or alcohol.
- Stress importance of professional appearance and setting.
- Define clear definitions of when staff can use their personal cell phones (emergencies, field trips, when approved by a supervisor).
- Consider providing staff with a Program Expectations form that meets the needs of your program or activity.

Reporting Incidents
- If a minor is in immediate danger, contact the policy by dialing 911.
- Adults have a mandatory duty to report Child Abuse to the Appalachian Police Department. Reports must be made immediately if the adult reasonably believes that child abuse has occurred.
- Adults have a mandatory duty to report Child Neglect to the Watauga County Department of Social Services. If the detection of child neglect is identified outside of Watauga County and the

minor does not reside in Watauga County, then the adult must report the child neglect to the county department of social services in the county where the suspected child neglect was detected or the county where the child resides.
- If an Adult or any staff member for a Youth Program reasonably believes that child abuse, child neglect, or any form of child sexual exploitation has occurred the matter should be reported to the Appalachian Police Department.

Helpful Resources
- App State Privacy Statement
- School Administrators Guide to rolling out Zoom should be read if you plan to use Zoom for your Youth Program.
- Safe online learning provides great tips for keeping minors safe and engaged in online learning.
- NetSmartz is an online safety education program. It provides age-appropriate videos and activities to help teach children to be safer online with the goal of providing children with awareness of potential online risks and empowering them to help prevent victimization by making safer choices.
- Praesidium is a helpful resource for identifying child abuse and neglect offenders.
- The American Camp Association COVID-19 resources
- ACA Best Practices for Keeping Online Programming Safe
- Zoom Managing Participants in a Meeting
- Best Practices for Securing Your Virtual Classroom

Contact
For questions or concerns please contact:

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