

Interacting with Minors Online

Protection of Minors on Campus



Communicating Expectations

Program Managers should provide parents and caregivers with a “Digital Learning Plan” to inform them of expectations and rules.

The plan should include the roles and responsibilities of students, teachers, and parents, terminology for online learning, attendance guidelines, interaction expectations, content and timing, assessment and progress monitoring, and specifics of the learning experience expectations.

Supervision of Minors

The program must address the need for supervision of the minor during the program.

- Participants under 12 need to have a parent/guardian/older sibling nearby.
- What if a youth without a supervising adult disappears for an undue amount of time or perhaps has a medical emergency?
- Be sure to have contact information for the child's parents/guardian readily available.

Guidelines

- Always have two or more Program staff present in online interactions with minors.
- Always use proper FSU credentials, such as logging in with your network ID in FSU licensed Zoom, MS Teams or other program platforms. Avoid using personal email addresses and personal social media platforms. Only properly branded program/unit specific platforms should be used.
- When using videoconferencing apps, ensure both staff and youth are aware of their background surroundings and personal appearance or attire in order to maintain professionalism.

Guidelines

- Programs must restrict discussion to curriculum or activity. There must be no discussion of personal issues, sexual conversations, pornography, drugs or alcohol.
- There must be no taking or posting images/video of classmates and instructors to the web or to social media without parent or guardian written permission.
- Send and reply to text messages with youth in group messages, with a supervisor or another staff member copied.

Guidelines

- At a minimum, ensure a supervisor and the youth's parent/caregiver are consistently aware that text messages are being exchanged between youth and the adult staff member
- To the extent possible, utilize corporate or agency-issued cell phones or utilize services like Google Voice that allow for connection through cell phones without giving away one's personal cell phone number
- Communicate with youth through designated or authorized organizational "group pages" or "group profiles" on social media platforms (Facebook, What's App, etc.)

Guidelines

- Ensure that staff designate their personal social media profiles to “private” so youth cannot befriend or access staff’s personal information. Authorized Adults may not accept friend requests from minors in the program.
- Use electronic communication strategically to communicate with youth by keeping conversations focused on curriculum or projects, goal attainment, and safety tips, rather than personal details of one’s life
- When providing general encouragement or support to youth at this challenging time, keep in mind the necessity to maintain consistent and professional boundaries to protect oneself from false allegations.
- Ensure any conversation that may be misinterpreted as inappropriate is immediately brought to a supervisor’s attention.

Guidelines

- Do not engage in any derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating conversations with youth.
- Do not engage with youth in sexually oriented conversations, memes or posts.
- Do not post inappropriate or suggestive comments on pictures/videos on youths' profiles.
- Staff should not have photos of youth participants on their personal devices (cell phones).
- 'Friending' youth on social media is prohibited.
- There is to be no staff-to-youth contact outside the program.
- There is to be zero tolerance for bullying or harassment.