

PRAESIDIUM

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS WITH YOUTH

Electronic Communications with Youth in Challenging Times

We know that this an unprecedented time and electronic communication may be a critical method for staying in contact with youth from your programs. Praesidium wants to help you stay connected virtually with youth while also maintaining safe boundaries.

Appropriate Ways to Maintain Electronic Communication:

- Send and reply to text messages with youth in group messages, preferably with a supervisor or another staff member copied in
- At 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 mobile phones OR utilize services like Google Voice that allow for connection through cell phones without necessarily 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.)
- Ensure that staff designate their personal social media profiles to "private" so youth cannot befriend or access staff's personal information
- When using video conferencing apps, ensure both staff and youth are aware of their background surroundings and personal appearance or attire in order to maintain professionalism and personal privacy
- 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

Also, remember:

- 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

