# Keeping Young People Safe Online

A checklist for staff and volunteers leading youth programs

The University of Minnesota is committed to providing a safe environment for teaching, learning and community outreach. That commitment extends to young people who engage in online 4-H Youth Development experiences. These practices provide more clarity to the [University of Minnesota's Safety of Minors policy](#) and the [Minnesota 4-H Risk Management Program Policies and Practices](#) as 4-H clubs and groups connect online.

## Setting up the online program

- Choose a suitable platform (e.g. [Zoom](#), [Google Hangouts](#), [Flipgrid](#))
- Set up the meeting to control access.
  - If using Zoom, [secure your meeting](#); follow these tips for [Flipgrid.](#)
  - Disable private chat.
  - Don't enable others to join before the host.
- Assign one or more adults as co-host during the program to
  - Monitor chat, respond to questions, and remove conversations as needed
  - Mute/unmute participants
  - Share screens
  - Turn on closed captioning
  - Handle technology issues
- Ensure all youth participants are enrolled or registered. Staff should follow these [guidelines](#) if hosting an online event that does not require 4-H enrollment.
- Inquire about special needs related to youth with disabilities and youth who may have limited access to technology and internet services.
- The online experience must be publicly [scheduled](#) and an Extension employee notified. Do not publicly list the connection link*. Instead, provide it to members using other media (e.g., email). Instruct members to first name only, or family name, when they enter the room.

*The connection link may be publicly available if the event is one of the [exceptions](#) that does not require 4-H enrollment.

## 4-H code of conduct applies online

- The authorization statements agreed to in the 4-H enrollment apply to online environments. These include [code of conduct](#), medical authorization, transportation consent, media release, privacy statement, and waiver and release.
- We take safety seriously in all 4-H learning environments. Ensure youth, parents/guardians, volunteers and staff report code of conduct incidents to the adult responsible for the program. If, however, they are

not comfortable reporting the issue to the responsible adult, or have already done so and feel their concern has not been addressed, they may contact Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action office at eoaa.umn.edu/report-misconduct or 612-624-9547.

# Online programming expectations

- At least two Minnesota 4-H Volunteers and/or Extension employees must be present online to ensure a safe learning environment. Supervision ratios must be met.
- If youth participants are moved to virtual breakout rooms:
  - An adult should not be alone with a young person in a breakout room; one adult may be in a breakout room with two or more youth.
  - Young people may be in a breakout room without an adult (similar to having youth in small groups in different corners of a room). Before breaking into groups, set expectations and let youth know adults will be checking in and out of the breakout room. Make sure youth know how to call an adult into the breakout room if they have a question.
- Staff or volunteers should not have 1:1 chats with program participants.
- It is recommended that youth under 12 have a parent present. Youth should be online in a public space or common living area.
- Do not use social media or other communication tools, such as Snapchat, that purposely do not maintain a record of communication.
- In most cases, programs should not be video/audio recorded. Secretary minutes can capture meeting actions or an informal notetaker can be designated. If a program does need to be recorded, for example to share project instructions not available in writing, only the adult responsible for the program should do the recording.
  - If program staff must record, decide where the recording will be housed, how long it will be kept and who will have access.
  - Prohibit youth/parents/guardians from recording, unless necessary as a disability accommodation.
  - At the beginning of the session, announce that it is being recorded.
  - Make sure the recording setting does not show the chat box.
  - Youth should only use their first name; the youth or host may update the youth name after they enter the room.
- When project instructions are given online, it is understood that because of the experiential nature of the 4-H youth development program, young people will practice, or explore subject matter to build new skills offline. Program staff or volunteers should encourage young people to practice or explore based on youth comfort level rather than providing directives to accomplish a specific task by a certain time.
- Staff/volunteers(s) must be the last person to leave the meeting to ensure all youth have signed out.

*Adapted from the UMN Online Precollege Programming Requirements. Please send your feedback to Becky Harrington, willi107@umn.edu.. This will be revised as we learn more.*

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