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Manage Minors in K-12 Remote Learning

Due to their youth and naiveté, minors are particularly vulnerable to the challenges and dangers of the internet. K-12 schools providing remote learning must consider the important risk management issues that come with teaching minors in an online environment.

Review the following tips to learn how your school can manage these risks.

Assess Your Technology

Having a learning platform that provides excellent security and functionality is critical and should be accompanied by teacher training. By addressing technology issues head-on, teachers and students are not slowed by poor systems and processes.

- **Choose platforms wisely.** Assess e-learning platforms based on their security measures, data collection practices, accessibility with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and education-specific functions. Require teachers to choose from school-approved remote learning platforms. Purchase licenses rather than allowing teachers to use free versions.
- **Provide teachers with tech support.** Instruct teachers in the use of the remote learning platforms. Ensure they know how to use host controls such as disabling chat and screensharing, using a virtual waiting room and passwords to protect meeting entry, turning off a participant's camera or microphone, and removing a participant from a class session. Provide teachers IT support throughout the school year.
- **Establish recording policies.** Create policies on recording class sessions and taking screen shots. Publicize and uphold these policies.
- **Monitor communication practices.** Require students and teachers to use only authorized communication platforms. When use of other methods (such as texting or emailing) is necessary, require parents to be copied.
- **Seek legal counsel.** Many state and federal laws including the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA), and Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) apply to online education of minors and cover issues including recording, internet privacy, and student data. Consult with legal counsel to ensure your school properly complies with applicable laws.

Protect Students

Once your school vets its technology, focus on your learning environment's safety and accessibility.

Arc

- **Solve technology accessibility challenges.** Without necessary devices and stable internet connections, students will be unable to keep up with your online learning program. Ensure all students have technology necessary to access the online content. Provide students (and parents, as appropriate) lessons about the technical details of logging in to platforms, communicating with teachers, and submitting work.
- **Enforce child protection policies.** Review your child protection policies and ensure they apply to online interactions and virtual instruction. Add new rules as necessary. Share the policies with students, parents, and staff and reiterate the importance of maintaining appropriate boundaries. Continue the same precautions as on campus, including limiting or prohibiting one-on-one interactions with minors. Remind mandated reporters of their obligations and ensure details about reporting options are easily accessible online. Teach age-appropriate lessons about topics such as internet safety, hacking, and online predation. Learn more by viewing [Protecting Children From Educator Sexual Misconduct: A Series of Checklists](#) and [Protecting Children Learning Program](#). Schools offering online camps also should consult [Considerations for Conducting Virtual Camps](#).
- **Protect student privacy.** Control student and teacher usage of online platforms by providing school-issued passwords. Train teachers in online privacy protections including how to limit student access to screen sharing and chat functions, and how to respond to online misconduct. Make sure online classes are secure and any recordings are stored and archived properly. Prohibit posting or sharing of student images or video on social media without permission. Get legal advice to determine whether to use consent forms for remote learning or recording of classes and student images.
- **Accommodate disabilities.** Proactively reach out to parents about current accommodations and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and address how they will be implemented in a remote learning environment. Work with staff to ensure accessibility in online learning course design, teaching methods, and evaluation techniques. So that students in need of new services can receive support, publicize resources for requesting accommodations.

Set Expectations for Online Behavior

Protecting students includes providing structure around expectations for behavior. Identify all applicable rules, then educate students and parents so they understand their roles and what is expected. In addition to providing policies and rules in writing, consider hosting an

orientation to online learning. That way all students are on the same page.

- **Establish a code of conduct.** In addition to reiterating that your in-person rules regarding behavior still apply, add other provisions to address online interactions. Include the Title IX policy where applicable, including details about the reporting process. Create [rules specific to online classroom interactions](#); include policies about student attire, use of virtual backgrounds, screen name requirements, chat or screensharing permissions, and rules about recording or sharing screen shots of classes.
- **Prohibit harassment, discrimination, and hate speech.** Reiterate that school policies against harassment and discrimination remain. Review whether your cyberbullying and cyberharassment policies need updates or should be better publicized. Continue enforcing all conduct rules, even with misconduct happening over a remote learning tool.
- **Focus on rules about technology use.** Educate students and parents about your technology and internet use policies so they are not surprised when the policies are enforced.
- **Be specific about performance expectations.** Be clear about attendance and participation requirements. Provide details about how students will be evaluated and graded in the remote learning environment. Ask teachers to be explicit about requirements and the submission process for coursework.

Communicate Early and Often

Your school's risk management efforts to protect students only can be successful with effective and frequent outreach to students and parents.

- **Make good, clear communication a top priority.** Reach out to students and parents frequently — especially during periods of change within the remote learning plan. Keep them abreast of developments. Offer resources and support.
- **Create office hours for teachers and administrators.** Encourage teachers to offer office hours for students to confer about classwork. Consider also setting up office hours with staff and administrators to answer questions and offer support or information in their various capacities. For example, the college counseling office might have office hours for questions from seniors, or the vice principal may have office hours for parent questions and concerns.
- **Remind parents about online safety.** Educate parents about dangers of the internet and online learning, including warning signs, reporting options, and how to talk to

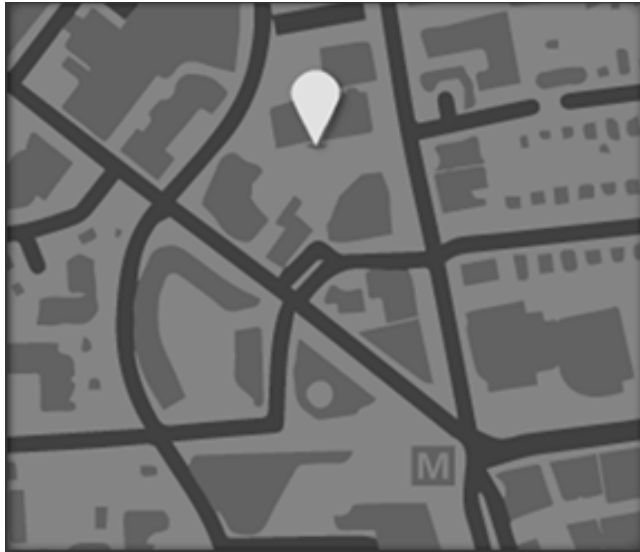
their children about these issues. Share information about online monitoring systems for home use.

Build Community

While focusing on the challenges facing minors, keep in mind that creating a sense of community among your students and teachers is as important in remote learning as it is face to face.

- **Publish school resources online.** To the extent possible, move student services online and make these services easily accessible. Consider a landing page that includes links to all available resources, including disability services, mental health resources, and technological support. Include a directory so teacher and staff contact information is readily available for students and parents.
- **Create activities for community bonding.** Help students ward off feelings of isolation by engaging them in social activities online. Identify clubs that can operate in an online environment. Consider virtual parties and social activities that can boost morale. Offer extracurricular lessons in age-appropriate topics such as time management, schoolwork scheduling, self-motivation, and mental health. Offer incentives to motivate students to remain engaged.

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