

summer activity guide

Safety Considerations
for Virtual Programming

QUICK
Guide



About the Summer Activity Guides

Summers are for fun and engaged learning. In 2020 as the impact of the pandemic is widely felt, summer opportunities will be different for young people, families, and afterschool and summer program staff. The Summer Activity Guides were developed to help engage youth with supportive adults in a range of places.

The activities and resources in the Summer Activity Guides are intentionally designed to support youth-serving summer programs in driving consistent engagement and providing ongoing opportunities for youth skill-building and emotional well-being. In addition to the activities for youth, supplemental materials will be available to support professional development and enhance family engagement.

The Guides include 150 original activities and challenges organized by four different age groups (5-9) (10-12) (13-15) (16-18). The activities are adaptable for in-person and virtual instruction, or a hybrid of both, as well as sent as take-home packets.

All activities should be safely executed and aligned with state and local health guidelines.



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Safety Considerations for Virtual Programming

INTRODUCTION

With the continuation of stay-at-home orders and social distancing guidelines, programs are serving youth through a wide-range of approaches, including through virtual programming. If your program is planning to deliver programming fully or partially through virtual channels, you should first be thinking about safety. Just as with in-person programming, the safety and well-being of youth is the #1 priority, and many of the things you do in-person, like maintaining an appropriate staff-youth ratio, still apply to virtual settings. With the right planning and facilitation, you can maintain the same level of quality and safety virtually as you do with your in-person programming. A foundation of clear expectations and safe guidelines sets the stage for strong, positive relationships and effective and engaging learning experiences.

The purpose of this Quick Guide is to provide guidance to programs on how best to design, implement and monitor their virtual programming in a way that protects both youth and staff. This guide is a supplement to the Summer Activity Guides, which is a suite of activities and resources intentionally designed to support youth-serving summer programs in delivering programming through multiple approaches during the COVID-19 pandemic.

TIPS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Below are tips and considerations for creating a safe virtual environment for your summer programming. Prior to implementing the resources, think about how you would use all aspects of the activities and challenges in a virtual environment. (*Check out the “Quick Guide for Implementing the Summer Activity Guide” for more tips on how can use multiple approaches for program implementation.*) You will find that the tips below can apply to all activity types, age groups and types of engagement, including facilitated discussion between staff and youth, and youth sharing the outputs of their activities with their peers online.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PLATFORM

Your program may already be using a specific platform to engage with their youth. These could include Google Hangout, Zoom, GoToMeeting, Adobe, or Facebook Live. If you are not already using a platform you can use one of these, or another platform from a reputable company. Below are tips and considerations for choosing the right platform.

- Review available technologies before selecting a platform that works for your program and your target audience. Most platforms have free online tutorials you can watch. Take a close look at their privacy and security features. For example, do they require a password to enter private sessions?
- Review the platform’s terms and conditions related to privacy and data collection. Do the platforms collect private information about the youth? What do they do with this information?
- Make sure the platform is age-appropriate and complies with [federal laws](#) related to the privacy of children online.
- Many of your youth will have limited or inconsistent internet access and may be accessing from phones or tablets. Make sure the virtual platforms you are using are mobile-enabled and that you have permission to access youths’ email addresses and/or mobile numbers.

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CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

There are many steps programs can take to create a safe and inclusive virtual environment for youth, and most virtual platforms have built-in security features. Before you begin, know your organization's policies, think about the sensitivity of topics, and the age and abilities of the youth participating, and then pick the tools that make sense for you.

Reduce Risk to Staff and Youth

- If you plan for youth to participate via video, you may need to get express consent from their parents and caregivers. Let them know how you will be engaging with youth online and encourage them to be part of the process. Here is an example of a [Parental Consent Form](#) for virtual programming.
- If your program prohibits 1:1 staff and youth interaction, then make sure there are always at least three people in a virtual session, including breakout sessions on platforms like Zoom. This also includes turning off participant-to-participant direct private communication.
- Think about what technology features you will need and not need. Most platforms allow you to disable the features like chat, file sharing, or screen sharing. Disable those you do not need before the sessions begins. You want to avoid opportunities for youth or staff to share content that is inappropriate or unwanted.
- Encourage youth to login from a neutral location at home, such as in front of a blank wall. Youth should avoid logging in from their bedroom or other places in their home that could lead to an embarrassing or inappropriate situation. Staff should follow the same rule.

Control Access

- Your virtual programming should be done by invite-only. Send the meeting information directly to your youth and their parents and caregivers. Meeting information should never be made publicly available.
- Create a password or PIN for youth to use to login to the session. This will prevent someone from guessing your URL or meeting ID.
- Know who is in the virtual meeting at all times. Most platforms have a dashboard feature the facilitator can use to see who is online.
- To limit unsupervised contact between youth use the "green room" or "waiting room" feature. This feature will not allow the session to begin until the host joins. Many platforms also include a function where the facilitator can approve each person individually before they can join the session.
- Make sure you have the ability to turn off/on participants' audio and video, as well as the public chat function.
- Do not record the session unless you have express consent from the youth's parents or caregivers, especially if youth are interacting and sharing virtually. It may be okay to record and disseminate video that features only the facilitators.

PROTECTING YOUTHS' EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Just because your youth may not be physically together does not mean they are not at risk for bullying. Cyberbullying includes posting or sharing negative, false, or mean content about someone else, or sharing personal information about someone that causes humiliation. It is the program's responsibility to be aware of risks related to cyberbullying and to take precautions to prevent it.

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Set Expectations at the Beginning

- Set expectations for youth to do the right thing and act appropriately. Their behaviors online should be the same as they are in-person at your program.
- At the start of each session, establish norms for the group to follow or review the norms from your program that are applicable to virtual programming. Some examples are: 1) be kind and considerate to each other, 2) take turns speaking, and 3) be a good listener.
- Remind youth about how to use the different platform functions, like turning on/off their microphone and video camera. Discuss scenarios and what to do in certain situations. For example, if a youth needs to use the bathroom during the session, it is okay for them to pause their video or go on mute.
- If you are using a public chat box feature, encourage youth to think before they type. They should stay on topic and avoid sarcasm or humor that could be misunderstood.
- Youth should not take or share screenshots of the video chat and share on their social media accounts without permission.
- Youth should create a space free from distraction. They should not play with pets or toys, or look at their cell phones.

Monitor Youth's Interactions

- Assign at least one staff member to monitor interactions online and look for signs of cyberbullying. They should look closely at the chat functions and what is happening in the background if youth are on video. If you are using breakout sessions on platforms like Zoom, then assign at least one staff member to a breakout.

Report Inappropriate Behavior

- During the session, if you see something inappropriate happening, address it immediately.
- Have a plan and know your organization's reporting policies. You should know how and who to report inappropriate behavior to, and be prepared to support the youth.
- Document inappropriate behavior and follow your organization's guidance and protocols for reporting. Many platforms allow the facilitator to download and save the chat and video content, and some automatically save the chats to your computer.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Children's Online Privacy Protection Rule (COPPA): <https://www.ftc.gov/enforcement/rules/rulemaking-regulatory-reform-proceedings/childrens-online-privacy-protection-rule>

American Camp Association's Virtual Program Resources: <https://www.acacamps.org/resource-library/coronavirus/virtual-program-resources>

CommonSense Media: <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/blog/how-to-get-kids-ready-to-video-chat-for-online-classes/>

Darkness to Light: www.d2l.org/safe-digital-learning-plans

The 50 State Afterschool Network



The Summer Activity Guide has been developed for the 50 State Afterschool Network with leadership from the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network to engage and support children and youth nationwide.

In each state, the afterschool network is broadening opportunities for youth. Seeking equitable outcomes for underserved children to succeed in school and future jobs, a statewide afterschool network brings together cross-sector leaders with a common vision and coordinated strategy to advance quality afterschool and summer learning programs

Alabama Afterschool Community Network
Alaska Afterschool Network
Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence
Arkansas Out of School Network
California AfterSchool Network
Colorado Afterschool Partnership
Connecticut After School Network
Delaware Afterschool Network
Florida Afterschool Network
Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network
Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance
Idaho Afterschool Network
Afterschool for Children and Teens Now (ACT Now) Coalition (IL)
Indiana Afterschool Network
Iowa Afterschool Alliance
Kansas Enrichment Network
Kentucky Out-of-School Alliance
Louisiana Center for Afterschool Learning
Maine Afterschool Network
Maryland Out of School Time Network
Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership
Michigan After-School Partnership
Ignite Afterschool (MN)
Missouri AfterSchool Network
Mississippi Statewide Afterschool Network
Montana Afterschool Alliance
Beyond School Bells (NE)

Nevada Afterschool Network
New Hampshire Afterschool Network
New Jersey School- Age Care Coalition
NMOST (New Mexico Out of School Time) Network
New York State Network for Youth Success
North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs
North Dakota Afterschool Network
Ohio Afterschool Network
Oklahoma Partnership for Expanded Learning Opportunities
OregonASK
Pennsylvania Statewide Afterschool/Youth Development Network
Rhode Island Afterschool Network
South Carolina Afterschool Alliance
South Dakota Afterschool Network
Tennessee Afterschool Network
Texas Partnership for Out of School Time
Utah Afterschool Network
Vermont Afterschool, Inc.
Virginia Partnership for Out-of-School Time
Washington Expanded Learning Opportunities Network
West Virginia Statewide Afterschool Network
Wisconsin Afterschool Network
Wyoming Afterschool Alliance