



# Resources

## Confidentiality and Privacy in Online Programming

The transition to online programming presents unique considerations to protect participating youth's confidentiality and privacy in the virtual space. We consulted evidence-informed and community-engaged resources to offer recommendations to support the development of youth-focused confidentiality and privacy guidelines for online programs. These recommendations are grounded in the principles of trauma-informed care. For more information, click here.

### 1. Consult and Create Organizational Policies to Protect Online Confidentiality and Privacy

- Depending on the platform selected for online programming, consider adhering to the guidelines below for online safety:
  - Password protect all online meetings, and send meeting links and passwords in separate emails/texts
  - Create a waiting room so that program host(s) (i.e., facilitators) can see who has joined the session before inviting them to the main space
  - Lock the online meeting after all participants have joined to prevent uninvited others from joining

### 2. Create a Safe Space for Youth to Participate Virtually

- Meet with each youth individually before the program begins to support them in creating a safe and private space to participate in the online program. Support the youth to:
  - Identify a private space to join the online program sessions
    - If a youth does not have access to a safe and private space, consider alternative formats of communication to connect (e.g., emails)
  - Navigate access to reliable and regular Internet and a trusted electronic device
    - Offer alternative ways (e.g., via telephone) to connect in case a youth loses Internet connection during the session, and make sure all participants know the alternate plan before the session starts
  - Provide youth with access to headphones for the sessions
  - Develop a safety communication plan in case youth have to leave sessions without informing facilitators
    - For example, how would facilitators reach the youth? Is there another trusted adult in the youth's life that the facilitator can contact?



## 2. Create a Safe Space for Youth to Participate Virtually (continued)

- Co-establish non-verbal communication cues in case youth need to inform facilitators and peers that their physical space is not private anymore and they are not comfortable sharing or reflecting about certain topics (e.g., relationship violence, power, personal mental health)
  - Offer non-verbal mediums of communication during sessions: chats, interactive whiteboards, etc.
- Ask all participants to include their pronouns in their screen name if they are willing

## 3. Review Confidentiality and Privacy Protocols with Youth (and also their Limitations)

- Facilitators will not video/audio record sessions or save/download chats from sessions
- Youth may create an alternative email address that only they have access to in order to receive links to join online sessions
- Youth may choose to use pseudo names for sessions
- Co-develop steps for facilitators to verify the identity of youth for online correspondence (especially if youth choose to keep their video off during sessions)
- Provide youth-focused education for safe Internet space
  - Opening websites in “incognito mode”
  - Deleting browser history
- Co-create guidelines about virtual and individual privacy and confidentiality (e.g., respect the privacy of other peers and not repeat what is said in the group)
- Limitation: Like any other group programming format, remind youth that facilitators cannot guarantee what peers in the group may share with others. It is important that youth are well-informed and use their agency to choose what they would like to discuss and share in sessions.



## 4. Offer Additional “Drop-in” Hours or Individual Check-ins

- Drop-in hours or individual check-ins with youth could support youth in having discussions on topics that they might not feel comfortable sharing with program peers or during the session
- During the drop-ins or check-ins, work with youth to determine:
  - If youth need additional resources or individualized mental health supports

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