PRAESIDIIUM
Maintaining Youth Protection Practices During Modified Operations
“NORMAL” IS A MOVING TARGET

- Not the time to take on new youth ministries
- Stick to what you know how to do safely
- What can we offer that won’t require assuming new risks?
## Praesidium Safety Equation®

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Adult-to-Youth Abuse and False Allegations Occur

Access

Privacy

Control
POLICIES

- You will need some flexibility.
- Need to enforce some rules and re-calibrate others.
- Communicate any changes to staff, volunteers, parents and youths
- Encourage everyone that if they are not sure, ASK.
SCREENING & TRAINING

- If you have new volunteers, try to screen just as you would normally. If you have to make exceptions, strictly limit the access an unscreened volunteer has with youths.

- Make sure all new staff and/or volunteers know your policies on boundaries.

- This may be a good time to offer online training to your existing staff and volunteers.
BOUNDARY GUIDELINES

- Establish uniform guidelines for modes of communication.
- Set parameters on when staff may interact with students, and keep a log of them.
- Require staff and youths to dress appropriately during video communications.
- Be mindful of your surroundings and what could potentially be seen or heard.
In the spirit of transparency, consider recording sessions.

When a youth needs a 1:1 conversation, keep a log of the individual sessions. Document the platform used, date, time, length of session, name of the person, and if a situation arises that could be misinterpreted, feels uncomfortable, or causes concern.

Follow existing rules about the types of topics that can or cannot be addressed in the sessions.

Be mindful of wording choices, avoiding those that may be misinterpreted.
Minimize barriers to reporting. Solicit feedback on how things are going.

Encourage staff to discuss concerns with their supervisor immediately.
- Follow existing reporting chains internally and externally.

Share ways for parents and students to report concerning behaviors.
- Use this as an opportunity to share your reporting protocols with them.
Signs of Abuse

✔ Physical Abuse
- Bruises
- Unexplained injuries
- Burns with distinctive patterns
- Broken bones
- Anxiety or depression
- Social maladjustment

✔ Psychological/Emotional Abuse
- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Lack of social skills
- Insecurity
- Substance abuse
Signs of Abuse

✔ Neglect
- Malnourishment
- Inappropriate dress for the weather
- Wearing dirty or unfit clothing
- Poor hygiene
- Developmental delays

✔ Sexual Abuse
- Sudden change in behavior
- Severe anxiety or depression
- Fear of being touched
- Fear of being alone with a certain person
- Self-harm
How to Respond if a Youth Discloses Abuse or Neglect

- Stay Calm
- Listen
- Comfort
- Don’t Criticize
- Note the Facts
- Report

Remember: It is never your responsibility to probe or investigate. Always report the allegation to the authorities and your supervisor.
Praesidium Resources

- **Praesidium COVID-19 Resources** (note that there are multiple resources embedded in this document)
- **2020 Praesidium Report**
Armatus® Learn to Protect Training System

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Background Screening Services

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KEEP IN TOUCH

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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