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Review your church or group child protection policies. If your volunteers have not received child protection training, consider setting up a group training through an organization such as Plan to Protect®.

15 Considerations for Safe Online Engagement

1. Review your current child protection policies. Policies for in person meetings should apply to online engagement. Review and/or rework your ministry policies and procedures to fit with this adaptive ministry opportunity.
2. What are your church policies around online engagement? Talk to your insurance company to understand what you need to have in place in order to protect your program, your church, your leaders and volunteers.
3. Consider your platform. What platform will you use? Assign someone on your team to platform risk assessment. This person should be very familiar with the platform and be able to make security recommendations but also help you maximize the potential of the platform.
 - a) Control your platform and who your audience is by making channels invite only. This will help protect your participants from unsolicited comments or activity.
4. Secure in writing permission from organization/church leaders. This is particularly important when it comes to volunteers running online engagement activities.
5. Develop a program plan and ask yourself some key questions.
 - a. What are our goals and how will we measure success?
 - b. Do we have reasonable expectations that align with our biblical vision and mission? This might not be the time to reach for the stars. Focus on your core mission and values.
 - c. How can we maximize our volunteers and continue to make them feel valued? Think about age segmentation, allowing volunteers to oversee things such as review of online engagement, parent engagement etc.

6. All online forums should be hosted by the organization. No personal accounts. Programs and platforms need to be accessible to more than one member in leadership. Password, email, whatever is required for periodic spot checks.

7. Informed letters of consent from parents. You can utilize electronic signature format. Check with your insurance company if electronic signature is sufficient. Expressly note in the informed letter if you intend to have children on camera, recorded meetings, or will use pictures in social media for promotion or celebration purposes.

8. Always have at least 2 screened unrelated adults present. Only a husband and wife are considered related, not brother and sister or cousins etc. This is based on the Canadian legal definition of related.

9. Educate and set expectations for leaders, volunteers, participants. Let them know what you are doing and what is appropriate for them and for the kids who are participating. Create rules and guidelines just as you would do for your awana weekly program.

10. Have discipline guidelines in place just in case anyone is doing something they shouldn't. If you would not accept certain behaviours from children during face to face program time, consider how you will respond to these behaviours during online program times. There is an opportunity in this for you to teach and model appropriate online conduct.

11. Divide your participants based on ages or grades

12. Take attendance on paper and keep in your records.

13. For younger kids recommend that a parent checks in at the beginning and end of call. Encourage parents to participate or at minimum be in the same room. Recommend children to be in a public place in the house.

14. Grades 1 through 6 recommend not using headphones or earbuds. Parents should be able to hear headphones.

15. Expect trial and error. Social media is here to stay. Have fun figuring it out and don't lose track of what you learn as you go. Don't let your guard down. Continue to monitor your activity and assess safety every couple of months as you transition back to traditional policies and procedures.