

## **Guidelines and Tips for Using Distance Learning Classes with Minors in the Parish Programs**

Due to Covid-19 some parishes have chosen to use Zoom or another social media platform to have sacramental preparation, religious education, or youth ministry sessions with minors. In using a social media site for your programs there are a few safety procedures to keep in mind. As we know from our Called to Protect, Armatus and CASE trainings, minors can be groomed or have their personal boundaries violated in social media settings as well as in person situations.

1. All safety and communication policies and procedures substituting in-person meetings should be applied to social media sessions.
  - a. Parents should receive written communication about when and how the meetings will be held. In the communication parents should be told who they can talk to if they do not want their child to participate in distance learning. (*See additional tips in your communication with parents below.*)
  - b. At least 2 adults with every group of minors meeting on social media. This is important for the safety of the leaders and the minors to have a second person who is aware that the interaction with minors and between minors is appropriate.
  - c. Attendance should be taken at distance learning classes just like you would at your in-person classes. Don't rely only on who has signed into the session but to acknowledge each child presence or ask for a response if you cannot see the child.
  - d. Providing supervision of the interactions between participants. The second adult could be monitoring chats to make sure there is no bullying or inappropriate communications between the participants. (*See other related information below on chat functions.*)
  - e. Review rules to participants about being respectful of others and how to assure that all participants get an opportunity to share.
  - f. Social media sessions with minors are not to be recorded. The exception is recording a presenter's presentation for future use. This can be possible by only recording the presenter's view and disabling the video and chat for participants. Another option can be to record only yourself outside of these live virtual meetings.
  - g. Monitor who has access to your sessions with minors. Know who is participating and block anyone who should not be involved in your session. Check your security on the social media so that you do not have unwanted guests joining in. (*See recommended security steps for Zoom meetings below.*)
  
2. Abuse and bullying incidents can increase and go under reported when children and youth are not present at in-person classes or meetings. The stress that families and those involved in the lives of minors is extremely high right now.

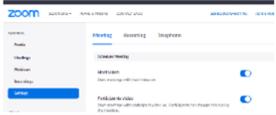
- a. Adults meeting with minors in social media settings need to be aware of what to watch for as well as listening for any disclosures made about what is happening in their lives. Follow up on disclosures and report them to the authorities when appropriate.
  - b. Watch for signs of bullying behavior happening during social media sessions, especially in the chat (*see more information below*). Monitor all chat and questions throughout your session.
  - c. Remind participants to listen and being respectful of others in the session. This should include what is typed in the chat or question box as well as verbal responses.
3. What is in the view of the camera for all to see?
- a. Adults should dress appropriate for leading a class or youth ministry session.
  - b. The background of the room you are in during the sessions should not be distracting or have pictures visible that are inappropriate for a class or session sponsored by the parish. Distance learning sessions should be considered an extension of the parish. If we would not have items on our walls in the church or parish meeting spaces, then they should not be visible on social media meeting rooms.
  - c. Minors should also be dressed appropriately for a class. Pajamas or revealing clothing should not be worn during the session.
  - d. When possible, minors should be in public areas of their home. If they do need to be in their bedrooms, they should be sitting at a desk rather than laying on the bed or the floor. What appears behind the minors in the video image is also important that it be appropriate for a parish program. This is for their personal protection and helps to keep their attention. The more serious and formal you keep these sessions the less likely they will be out of control.
  - e. Be sure to communicate with parents about appropriate location, behavior, and appearance of their child/youth during the distanced-learning session.

The following information is from the Department of Catholic Schools Distance Learning Handbook. These are some important steps to take to secure your meeting rooms on social media. You can access the full handbook for additional resources at

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1b4ds2xTpeLpTZdC2cOr8MYL9HxmNWmQ5Zawpws9epFo/edit>

See the next page for a chart of recommended Zoom setting for security.

**Recommended ZOOM settings to increase security in Meeting Rooms:**  
 (Adapted from the Diocese of Oakland)

To enable or disable features, <a href="https://zoom.us">zoom.us</a> on a browser and log into your account.	
<p>Once you are logged in, click on “Settings” from the bar on the left side.</p> 	
<p>Under the settings for “Meeting”, you will find several features. Scroll through and adjust the following (listed in order of appearance):</p>	
Join before host	<b>TURN OFF</b> so that students cannot join the meeting room before the teacher; if students join before the teacher, students will see a message that indicates they are waiting for the host
Use Personal Meeting ID	<b>TURN OFF</b> so that each meeting has a unique ID
Private Chat	<b>TURN OFF</b> so that students cannot privately message each other in the chat
Play sound when participants join or leave	<b>TURN ON</b> so that teachers are aware when someone enters the class
Screen sharing	<b>TURN ON</b> but set to HOST ONLY to control what is shared on the screen
Allow removed participants to rejoin	<b>TURN OFF</b> so that participants that are removed cannot rejoin
Waiting room	<b>TURN OFF</b> so that school admin can join the call at any time (think about it like a window in the classroom)
(Email notifications) When attendees join meeting before host	<b>TURN ON</b> so you are notified via email when someone joins a room before you
Additional note regarding use of Break-out Rooms if enabled:	
<p>It is recommended that break-out rooms should only be used if multiple school staff are available to monitor students in the break-out rooms. To achieve this, it is recommended that you work with your principal and faculty to determine availability of non-teaching or non-homeroom staff.</p> <p>As an alternative to the use of break-out rooms, it is recommended that teachers schedule meetings with small groups rather than the whole class at once to achieve this purpose.</p>	
To remove an unwanted participant once a meeting has begun:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the Participants panel is not visible, click Manage Participants at the bottom of the Zoom window</li> <li>• Next to the person you want to remove, click More.</li> <li>• From the list that appears, click Remove.</li> </ul>	