

Digital Safety and Online Scouting Activities



Updated April 22, 2020

SUMMARY

As Scouting moves to virtual and online platforms, we offer the following reminders to help keep kids safe. The below guidance applies to all online Scouting activities and meetings.

Note: Some states may have legal requirements that differ from, and even go beyond, what is provided here. It is your responsibility to check and abide by your state laws and consult your local council when reviewing and applying the following guidance, which is not comprehensive.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- **Follow all youth protection policies.**
 - **All youth protection policies still apply in an online environment.** Ensure you always have two-deep leadership for online activities and meetings. Our ban on one-on-one contact between an adult leader and youth applies to all interactions – whether in person, online, through a web conference, over the phone, via text, or in any other form.
 - All aspects of the Scouting program are open to observation by parents, and the BSA suggests parents take part in online activities and meetings.

- **Use business-oriented conference platforms that include good safety and privacy features instead of platforms with other primary purposes (such as gaming).**
 - Review the terms of service, safety and privacy features, and data collection policies of any platform you use, and review the BSA Digital Privacy and Social Media Guidelines linked below.
- **Regularly review and implement the latest security features of your chosen platform to avoid unauthorized visitors or other security issues in your meetings.**
 - Just as you put in place plans for the physical security of your meeting place, here are some tips to consider as you get started developing your own strategy to manage online security:
 - Use unique meeting identification numbers for each session.
 - Utilize password features for all meetings.
 - Do not publish meeting invitations via public forums and remind attendees not to pass along invitations.
 - Use “waiting room” features to manage letting individuals into your meetings.
 - Disable features that you will not need, such as screen-sharing by non-hosts, private chats, and whiteboards.
- **Do not record online activities/meetings that include youth participants.**
- **Recording of online activities that only involve adults is subject to local council legal review and approval. Check with your local council for guidance.**
 - Call recording is subject to various legal requirements under U.S. law and the laws of individual states, some of which require all parties to a call consent to recording.
- **Safeguard personal information.**
 - If you collect a person’s personal information online—for example, through web forms used to register people for online meetings—then you should post a notice or disclosure at the point of collection describing how you will use the information. The notice should be conspicuous and written in plain English.
 - Meeting organizers must keep such information private and not share a youth’s personal information with anyone except that youth’s parent or guardian or the unit leader responsible for tracking advancements. For example, a merit badge counselor should not publicly post or otherwise show a roster with personal information of Scouts the counselor has worked with.
- **Collecting personal information from youth under 13 is not recommended.**
 - Do not collect personal information *directly from* youth under 13 years of age due to the parental notice and consent requirements under the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (“COPPA”). You should collect any data needed from the parent or legal guardian only.

<https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/safety-moments/digital-safety-and-online-scouting-activities/>

RESOURCES

- [COVID-19 FAQ's](#)
 - For questions not answered by the [COVID-19 FAQ](#), please email Program.development@scouting.org
- [Scouting's Barriers to Abuse](#)
- [BSA's Digital Privacy guidelines](#)
- [BSA's Social Media Guidelines](#)
- [American Camp Association Best Practices](#)
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
 - [Protecting Your Kids Online](#)
 - [Are Your Kids Home and Online](#)
- [Resources for Parents at Home During the COVID-19 Outbreak](#)
- [Common Sense Media 2019 Tweens and Teens Media Use Research](#)