

Safety Considerations for Working with Youth Athletes Online



CANADIAN CENTRE for CHILD PROTECTION®
Helping families. Protecting children.

To support the sport sector, the [Canadian Centre for Child Protection](#) has developed the following considerations for platform/technology safety and professional boundaries for engaging with youth athletes online. These safety planning guidelines are intended to support the valuable work you do as it shifts to online interactions, where necessary.

Digital Platform Safety

Choosing Digital Programs/Platforms

Consider the capabilities:

- Can you close a session urgently, if the need arises?
- Can you limit the personal information youth share (usernames/profiles, images/videos)?
- Can you mute attendees, control camera use, control recordings, disable chat functions?
- Can you limit access to a room and admit only those who are part of your session?
- Can you control the end of the session for all participants or can participants be in the room after you exit out?

Consider how the company uses and manages data:

- What/how much private information do youth need to share to set up an account/use the platform?
- How does the company or website collect, store, and process data of its customers and visitors: where is their data stored, and does information remain confidential, or can it be shared with or sold to third parties?

Review age-appropriateness:

- What other content may be on the platform that youth may inadvertently be exposed to?
- If there are age verification restrictions, who can use the platform?
- Does the platform have a social component where others may have contact with a youth outside of the programming/ sessions you are offering?

Planning Safe Sessions

Manage unauthorized access:

- Are you able to create unique and strong passwords and/or ID for access?
- Can you provide access to the session while avoiding publically posting any links or passwords?

Establish expectations with youth athletes:

- Consider having youth use a screen name that is different than a name they use on their social media platforms;
- Communicate about use of webcams, limiting their use during sessions where it is unnecessary;
- Prohibit youth from recording/taking screenshots of sessions (within the platform or with a third party app or device);
- Remind youth to keep chat on topic and appropriate for the session.

The above are general guidelines and are not intended as a replacement for legal advice.

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Professional Boundaries with Youth Athletes Online

Communication

- Communicating with youth and parents during appropriate times of day and through established and authorized organization platforms (as opposed to using personal accounts);
- Keeping communication goal-oriented and tied to session outcomes;
- Keeping all forms of communication transparent by including parents on all correspondence;
- Ensuring transparency during video chat discussions with youth: while chatting, all parties should be located in common/high traffic household areas (bedrooms/bathrooms are off limits), and proper clothing attire is worn;
- Refraining from sending or accepting friend requests from youth or liking content in their personal social media accounts;
- Examples of inappropriate electronic communication include personal texting with youth, using informal and unprofessional language, posting or forwarding content, links or comments that might be considered inappropriate, offensive or inconsistent with professional or ethical standards, or communicating with youth through personal social media accounts or apps.

Privacy

- Follow your organization's privacy policies if posting any youth work, digital pictures, or other identifying information on social media or websites;
- Set appropriate restrictions to maximize your privacy on your personal social media accounts, ensuring that youth cannot view or post content;
- If requiring youth to send in videos/images of themselves, store content according to your organization's policies and ensure parents/guardians know where the content is stored and how/when it will be deleted.

Ask yourself

- Would a reasonable observer consider my interaction with youth athletes and parents as reasonable and professional?
- Would I be comfortable if the session was inadvertently shared with others?

If you have any concerns about a child online, report to [Cybertip.ca](https://www.cybertip.ca)



COMMIT TO KIDS — A PROGRAM THAT FOCUSES SOLELY ON CHILD PROTECTION

We strongly recommend that sport organizations that work with children or youth participate in the Commit to Kids program.

Commit to Kids provides policies, strategies, and a step-by-step plan to help reduce the risk of sexual abuse happening within child-serving organizations, utilizing both print material and online training.

To learn more about the program and how to implement it in your organization, visit [commit2kids.ca](https://www.commit2kids.ca)

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