

# PRAESIDIUM

## ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS WITH YOUTH

### 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

