

# Online Programs for Minors

## Background Checks

SMU faculty, staff, and students who run an online program for minors must successfully complete a criminal background check.

## Setting up an Online Program

Online programs should utilize SMU-approved software, such as Zoom. OIT has created resource pages for [Zoom](#), including troubleshooting and FAQs. Zoom has also created some [guidance](#) for the K-12 environment. Additional resources and platforms are available through OIT.

Program administrators must be SMU faculty, staff, or students and must use their SMU credentials at all times.

## Safe Contact and Privacy Rules

The following safety rules apply to online programs for minors:

- Avoid one-to-one virtual contact with a minor.
- SMU recommends that **at least two adults are online** during live programs.
- Utilize the waiting room feature, and ensure that all participants are identified and expected.
- Appropriate backgrounds should be utilized by administrators.
- No private direct messaging, texting, chatting, or personal emails between a minor and a program supervisor/online teacher is permissible. Group messages and posts are acceptable and must be viewable by all participants.
- It is strongly recommended that chat functions are disabled.
- Minors may not engage in activities involving hazardous materials (chemical, biological, radiation) or work with mechanical tools at home during an online program. For questions about whether a proposed activity can be done safely, please contact [riskmanagement@smu.edu](mailto:riskmanagement@smu.edu).
- Parents/guardians must be provided with access information to all virtual meetings and programs.
- Clearly communicate conduct expectations to participants. This may vary depending on the age of participants and type of content.

## Recording of Online Sessions

If program administrators wish to record any online sessions, they should contact the Office of Legal Affairs at [ola@smu.edu](mailto:ola@smu.edu). OLA will provide guidance as to recommended recording parameters, as well as a Release of Liability form to be signed by all parents/guardians.

Program administrators may not record online sessions to their personal computer or device. If interested in sharing recorded sessions with participants or their parents, please discuss with the Office of Risk Management, who can provide further resources and guidance.

## Required Forms

Parents/guardians of participating minors must complete a Release of Liability Form and submit them to the program administrator. These forms are available from the Office of Legal Affairs upon request to [ola@smu.edu](mailto:ola@smu.edu). Completed forms should be stored by the administrator following appropriate records retention practices.

## Reporting Concerns

The requirement for reporting abuse and neglect remains the same for online programs; reports can be made to the SMU Police Department. If anyone has other concerns about online programs for minors, you may send an email to [riskmanagement@smu.edu](mailto:riskmanagement@smu.edu).

## Disability Accommodations

Participants who need to request disability accommodations should contact their program administrator.