



Seven tips on electronic communication for churches

Communication encompasses much more than church mailboxes these days. Many churches and youth groups now have email Listservs and Facebook pages. Electronic communication—including but not limited to e-mail, social media, texting, and cell phone conversations—provides a unique challenge and opportunity for those working with children and youth.

Approved adults are encouraged whenever possible to limit one-on-one electronic communications by using public social media pages, copying parents or other adults on emails, and keeping parents apprised of ongoing texting or phone conversations. An “approved adult” is anyone over 18 years of age who has satisfied the requirements of the church’s protection policy.

Your church may want to consider using this list in your child protection policy or as a resource for parents and child/youth leaders.

1. Approved adults must consult the youth’s permission form and always follow parent/guardian requests for electronic communication and photo releases.
2. All electronic communication will occur between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., unless it is an emergency situation, in which case the parents/guardians will be notified.
3. Minors will never be referenced by name or labeled with other identifying information on any social media or website locations.
4. Any photographs taken of minors will be sent first to the parent/guardian, who will decide to whom the photos will be released and/or how the photos may be used by the church. This policy applies to photos of children that appear on the church’s website page and Facebook page, in e-mails sent by the church, and in the church newsletter that is posted online.
5. All communication between adults and minors must be traceable. Facebook, Twitter, e-mail, and texting are traceable. Snapchat and other such communications are not traceable, and thus are prohibited.
6. All writers are urged to be cautious about autocorrect and encouraged to always proofread electronic communications before sending.
7. Social media can take away personal connections. Approved adults should consider if there are better ways to communicate with children and youth that will build up relationships in a healthy manner.

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