Electronic Communication including Social Media

Electronic communication is a modern tool for communication and engagement for many children and young people. While electronic communication brings many benefits, it can also be used to target and harm children and young people, and to provide contact and access outside the boundaries of the organisation.

Programs and activities that involve electronic communication with children and young people must communicate this feature of the activity or program openly with children, young people and their parents and carers, and seek express permission to do so through a permission or registration form.

Clergy, employees and volunteers should:

- not use any 'private' communication channels (e.g. personal email account, personal social media account) to conduct parish, agency or entity communication
- communicate using parish, agency or entity devices, if available (e.g. work mobile phone).
- 'Copy in' and include parents, carers and other parish, agency and entity representatives e.g. parish priest, program coordinator, manager
- keep a record of communication within the parish, agency or entity context e.g. save copies of communication
- communicate through specific 'group' pages set up in social media platforms and not connect with or contact children and young people using personal social media accounts (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter), unless they are a relative or socially related (e.g. neighbour).
- not encourage children and young people to communicate in private online settings (e.g. chat rooms), through game sites, or via any other channel that is not authorised by the organisation.
- direct communication to the group rather than an individual
- restrict communication to issues directly associated with delivering the activity or program and convey the service-related message in a polite and friendly manner, limiting personal content
- avoid any communication including texts, photographs, video, website links and jokes that a reasonable observer could view as being of a sexual nature, derogatory, discriminatory, threatening, illegal or obscene.
- not request that a child or young person keep any communication secret
- not include information that could reasonably be used by a third party to identify or make contact with a child or young person (e.g. do not add a young person's mobile phone number to a post).
- not be used to arrange 'secret' contact with a child or young person outside the boundaries of the program or activity
- not exchange personal contact details (e.g. phone numbers, social networking sites or email addresses) with a child or young person

Where a child or young person posts inappropriate content or engages in inappropriate online behaviour, clergy, employees or volunteers should notify their immediate supervisor to enable the situation to be managed in the interests of safety.

The Archdiocese of Melbourne is committed to the safety, wellbeing and dignity of all children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Electronic Communication including Social Media

Clergy, employees and volunteers need to consider the most appropriate methods of communication with children and young people, being mindful that:

- Some parents and carers may not permit their child to have access to electronic communication.
- Some children and young people may not have access to technologies to access electronic communication (e.g. mobile phones).
- Some children and young people may be under the age requirements for social media (see table below).

Social media app	Age limits (years)
Facebook	13+
Facebook Messenger	13+
Google+	13+
Instagram	13+
Skype	18+ (or under, with parental permission)
Snapchat	13+
Twitter	13+
Whatsapp	13+
YouTube	13+

FURTHER INFORMATION

Child Safe Organisations: Checklist for online safety
https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/inline-files/CSO%20Checklist%20for%20online%20safety_2.pdf

Office of the eSafety Commissioner resources for children and young people and parents:

Young and eSafe: www.esafety.gov.au/youngandesafe

Unwanted contact: https://www.esafety.gov.au/esafety-information/esafety-issues/unwanted-contact

Think U Know www.thinkuknow.org.au

iParent, Office of the eSafety Commissioner www.esafety.gov.au/education-resources/iparent

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