

Child Safety Tips for Online OSHLSPs

Child safety online

With many homework clubs making the move to online tutoring during the COVID-19 lockdown, there are new concerns about child safety in online environments. Online platforms open new vulnerabilities around privacy, sharing information and content, professional boundaries, bullying, and grooming and predatory behaviour.

What are the first steps to making your OSHLSP more child safe?

- ✦ Assess the risks of the online platform you are using and mitigate them. This [toolkit](#) from the e-Safety Commissioner has more specific information.
- ✦ Think about the training of your volunteers and tutors. If you feel like they may need more training about online safety, look at resources like [ChildWise](#), or webinars and training from organisations like [ySafe](#) and [YACVic](#).
- ✦ Start conversations about online child safety with young people, families, and tutors in your OSHLSP. Talk to them about concerns that might arise, and what will be needed to keep everyone safe during online learning. It's important to include the voices and perspectives of young people in this process. Check out some tips on this [here](#).
- ✦ Look at your organisation's child safety policy. Does it include information about online safety? Is it still relevant to how your organization is operating? Consider making additions and creating new documents such as conduct and consent forms.

General tips:

Responding to incidents

- ✦ For online safety concerns, contact the eSafety Commissioner. Learn the process of reporting [here](#).
- ✦ If there is any inappropriate content or interactions that occur on an online platform that you are using with students, contact the platform as well as reporting it to the eSafety Commissioner.
- ✦ If you have any life-threatening concerns about the child or young person call the police. For other non-emergency concerns, contact the [DHHS](#).

Working with families

- ✦ It's important to include parents and guardians in the child safety discussion. Talk through any documents that you send to them, remembering that literacy can be a concern. You could also direct families to resources which explain online child safety in simple language, like [this](#).
- ✦ Try and include parents in each session. You could ask them to sit with their children or say hello and goodbye at the start and end of the sessions.

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Running sessions online

- ✦ Look at the safety and privacy settings available on the platform you have chosen and ensure that you are using the highest standards available.
- ✦ Always use professional email accounts, not personal ones.
- ✦ Encourage supervision of tutoring sessions, by parents or guardians, or by trying to ensure that a coordinator is available to oversee all activity happening in breakout sessions.
- ✦ Have a back-up plan for what will happen if the host of the session drops out, to ensure that safe supervision can continue.
- ✦ Remember to remind students of the rules and expectations at the beginning of each session. Just like you would in face to face sessions, include students in the creation of these rules to help them feel involved and take ownership of the process.

What documents should I use to make the process more child safe?

- ✦ **An online child safety policy.** This might be an entirely new document or might consist of adding a section on online safety to your current policy.
- ✦ **A tutor conduct form.** This should include: clear information about the platform you are using; guidelines about what constitutes appropriate online behaviour; clear professional boundaries about interacting with students online; and guidelines about what to do if tutors suspect a child is in danger.
- ✦ **A student conduct form.** This should include: guidelines about appropriate online behaviour, particularly during tutoring sessions; what they should expect from tutoring sessions; and what to do, and who to talk to, if they feel unsafe online.
- ✦ **An online consent form for parents/guardians.** This should include: clear information about the platform you are using and the technology needed to access these platforms; details about how and when tutors will contact students; and how parents and guardians can help to keep their children safe online.
- ✦ Find templates for these documents on our website [here](#). Add what you need to, and make sure they are appropriate for your online learning context!

Questions?

If you have any more questions about how to make your OSHLSP safer in online environments, get in touch with the MY Education team. For homework clubs based in the North-West, email ucliff@cmj.net.au; for those in the South-East, email ncharlton@cmj.net.au; or for general enquiries, contact ewraight@cmj.net.au. Some other great resources to check out are the newsletters of the [eSafety Commissioner](#) and [ySafe](#).