

## Remote Learning Precautions

Margaret M. Ochoa, Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Specialist

Colleagues:

As students across the state transition to remote learning, concerns arise regarding our ability to manage their communications, as well as our inability to have face-to-face contact with those who are most vulnerable. The Center is in communication with child-serving agencies who are considering how to protect students in less-than-ideal social isolation. We have compiled some tips to push out to your staff, students, and families to aid in that effort.

- Student/staff interactions:
  - Follow policy. (Remind staff if there is a specific policy relating to social media conduct and/or professional boundary violations. Examples could include such items as avoiding personal social media platforms or texting; and avoiding disclosure of personal, sexual, romantic, marital or employment issues or other private matters.)
  - When possible, use school/district devices that track history (as a best practice, AVOID personal devices when communicating with students).
  - If these suggestions are impossible given the district's capacity, use a platform that either sets up a firewall (e.g., Remind), is open and by invitation (a dedicated FB page), or a multiple person platform--(Google Meet or Zoom, with **more than one student** in the chat.) If a staff member must tutor a student alone, they should record those chats as best practice to protect themselves and their students. If staff must message one student privately, they should copy other adults in the communication where possible, or save copies of the correspondence. Please see the G Suite update dated March 19th, 2020, created to address unique concerns for online learning.  
[https://gsuiteupdates.googleblog.com/2020/03/hangouts-meet-edu-updates.html?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+blogspot%2FzRSig+%28G+Suite+Updates+Blog%29](https://gsuiteupdates.googleblog.com/2020/03/hangouts-meet-edu-updates.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+blogspot%2FzRSig+%28G+Suite+Updates+Blog%29)
  - It may be a good time to remind staff that they are mandated reporters of child abuse. If they have suspicion that a student is being abused, or is in a situation likely to result in harm, they must report to the statewide hotline dedicated for that purpose (1-844-CO-4-KIDS), the local department of human services, or local law enforcement. That obligation continues 24/7/365, during remote OR in-person learning.
  - Counselors/psychologists who operate under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act should be aware that Zoom provides a HIPAA compliant add-on:

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<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/207652183-HIPAA-Business-Associate-Agreement-BAA>

- Cyberbullying
  - Use this opportunity to remind your community of your bullying prevention policy. Focus on the positives of building a virtual community.
  - In addition to the multitude of bullying and cyber safety resources you likely have in place (or are available on our website) another resource was made available on March 16, 2020, by Cyberbullying.org:  
<https://cyberbullying.org/coronavirus-online-learning-social-isolation-cyberbullying>  
There are excellent tips here for educators, students, and families.
- Exploitation
  - Increased time online can place children at a higher risk of exploitation. Please see the tips on our website, as well as the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (<https://www.missingkids.org/>), and this press release from the Federal Bureau of Investigation dated March 23, 2020:  
([https://www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/school-closings-due-to-covid-19-present-potential-for-increased-risk-of-child-exploitation?mc\\_cid=5511aaa06b&mc\\_eid=1299441250](https://www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/school-closings-due-to-covid-19-present-potential-for-increased-risk-of-child-exploitation?mc_cid=5511aaa06b&mc_eid=1299441250)) The Denver Field Office contact number is 303-629-7171.
- Mental Health Resources
  - This challenging time is an excellent opportunity to remind your school community about Colorado Crisis Services at [\(844\) 493-8255](tel:8444938255) or Text “TALK” to 38255. All students are adjusting to social isolation, and it may be overwhelming for many who already rely on supports at school.
  - Safe2Tell ([1-877-542-7233](tel:18775427233)) or [safe2tell.org](https://safe2tell.org) or the mobile app (or whatever anonymous reporting tool you are using) is another trusted source for your community to report concerns of those in need.
  - The Trevor Project ([1-866-488-7386](tel:18664887386)) or <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/> has a crisis line for LGBTQ+ youth who might need extra support, especially if their home environment is hostile to their gender identification or orientation. One Colorado [one-colorado.org](https://one-colorado.org) and GLSEN <https://www.glsen.org/chapter/denver> are advocacy organizations who may be able to provide resources as well.