SOCIAL NETWORKING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUTH SERVING ORGANIZATIONS

• Direct youth participants and their parents into a public discussion page or group page instead of "friending" you as an individual. If you create a group page such as "Apollo Student Leaders," then students, leaders and parents can converse about the topics at hand without needing access to an individual's page. Group administrators cannot access their members' pages, so it provides a way to communicate while still respecting the privacy of the youth members.

• No adult staff member or volunteer can "friend" a youth participant in a program. It puts the youth in an awkward place if he receives a request from someone in a position of power when he would prefer to keep his online life private.

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- Do not use the "chat feature" or go into private discussion chat rooms with youth. Take breaks between any messages to give the young person his space to process. Young people may overshare in back and forth messages and have a hard time putting on the brakes. As always, it is up to the adult to set healthy boundaries and a healthy tone. Youth use texting as a primary mode of communication. Texting for specific details (the time of the meeting/clarifying what to pack) is fine. Texting emotional or social conversations should be avoided.

- Avoid using the Internet when angry or upset. If a young person has violated a rule or acted inappropriately, have a face-to-face discussion about the consequences. Parents should always be notified.

- Decide ahead of time what the rules are for your staff and volunteers in approving friend requests, realizing that different social media platforms have different opt- in/opt-out options. Some examples may be:
    - Only approve friend requests when the young person is at least 18 years old and out of high school.
    - Only approve friend requests if you are already friends with the young person's parents on social media and feel comfortable discussing online concerns with their parents.
    - If young people choose to "follow" a one-way social networking option, be sure that your word and photo content are appropriate for youth to view. If your content is not youth friendly, as the adult you are expected to create a boundary and block youth access from your account.
    - Do not engage with young people on applications that encourage immediate message responses or back-and-forth photo sharing.

- Remind young people that if you see images or words on their pages that lead you to believe they are being hurt, may hurt someone else or may be hurt in the future, it is your role as a leader to report those concerns. Do follow through if you see concerning behavior.

- Above all – remember that you are setting an example for young people in every interaction they have with you in person and online. If you would like to keep your online life private and free of youth examination, it is suggested to not approve friend requests from minors. If you do opt in, keep any communication ministry-appropriate or mentor-appropriate. If communication or boundaries start to feel cloudy, print off any discussion so that you have a record and then check in immediately with a supervisor to assist with accountability and setting up new boundaries.

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