

## COVID-19 – Principles of using video conferencing platforms with children and youth

With the rapidly changing environment we find ourselves due to COVID-19, we are aware that many ministries are moving their meetings online during these exceptional circumstances.

On this page, you will find principles for using video conferencing platforms with children and youth. Examples provided below are for Zoom online meetings. Where your platform differs, please apply the principles accordingly.

**Definitions:** In these principles, we define **children** as 8-12yrs and **young people** as 13-17yrs. You may also find these principles helpful to apply to adults Small Group meetings.

### Video conferencing meetings should be run on church-owned accounts

Two or more adult leaders authorised by the senior minister (or his delegate) should be present in meeting and should understand their role and responsibility. See for example: [Zoom: Roles in a meeting](#)

Authorised leaders should be provided Host privileges and login details to the church account to run a meeting.

The Host and Breakout group leaders should run the gathering from a computer (laptop or desktop) and not an iOS or Android device.

Meetings can be used for a Children's Group (Year 3-6) or Youth Group (Year 6-12).

We strongly recommend the church has a paid account e.g. Zoom Pro. This will enable advanced meeting control, longer meetings and cloud recording/storage capabilities. Note that multiple accounts will be needed if meetings are run concurrently.

See for example: [Zoom plans](#)

### Parents should be clearly informed of the meeting details prior to the event

Ensure parents know

- the date and start/end time of the meeting,
- the platform being used e.g. Zoom and how to access it ([click here](#) for tutorial),
- the authorising leader and any leaders involved in the meeting,
- if the meeting will be recorded (and where the recording will be stored).

Meetings must be authorised by the head ministry leader and set for scheduled times.

Access to meetings for children's ministry should only be provided to parents and not be directed to the children themselves. Access to youth events may be directed to the young person where parent permission has been obtained.

Meetings should be limited only to those who have been invited by the head leader (invitations and links should not be shared by participants).

Parents and participants should be informed of the protocols for the meeting e.g. dress code, respectful language, expectations of leaders and participants.

Private chat functions should be disabled.

Parents should also be informed of who to speak to (and their contact details) if there is a breach of the protocols.

## **Parental consent is required**

Parental permission must be obtained before allowing children and young people to join a video conference meeting. A sample permission form is available here

<https://safeministry.org.au/resource-docs/>

Parents should be required to remain for the duration of the meeting for any children's groups e.g. participating with their child or remaining in the background of the video feed (this can be an acceptable form of permission from parents where written permission has not been obtained).

## **A "Waiting Room" (or similar) should be used**

A Waiting room allows the leader to ensure only those with parental permission or those invited to the meeting enter the video conference.

A waiting room will also prevent one leader and one participant being alone in a meeting if they join early.

If the church is hosting multiple gatherings from the same account throughout the week, the Host should set a new password for each meeting.

[Zoom: Waiting rooms](#)

[Zoom: Meeting and Webinar Passwords](#)

## **Video conference meetings should be recorded where there is only one leader**

Any meetings held with only one adult leader (e.g. Breakout rooms within a meeting) should be recorded.

Recordings (including any chat logs) should be kept indefinitely in secure church managed storage (local or cloud based). Where a local recording is created it must be suitably and clearly named then uploaded to the church storage as soon as practicable and deleted from the leaders local device.

Meetings where two or more adult leaders are present or where parents demonstrate their presence for the duration of the meeting may be recorded, however, it is not required.

[Zoom: Cloud Recording](#)

[Zoom: Local Recording](#)

## **The video conference should only allow the host to share screens**

This will prevent children and young people sharing inappropriate material.

[Zoom: Sharing your screen](#)

## **“Breakout rooms” (or similar) can be used within a scheduled meeting**

Where possible, two or more adult leaders should be present in a Breakout room.

Breakout rooms must be recorded where there is only one adult leader present (recordings must be stored as indicated above).

The meeting host should not be a Breakout room leader (where possible) but should check in on groups while they are running and manage the time they return to the main group.

[Zoom: Managing Breakout Rooms](#)

### **Helpful blog posts**

<https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2020/03/20/keep-the-party-crashers-from-crashing-your-zoom-event/>

[https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2019/12/04/hosts-admins-secure-zoom-meeting-experience/?zcid=1231&\\_ga=2.94353053.1056251583.1585024987-2078803637.1584845352](https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2019/12/04/hosts-admins-secure-zoom-meeting-experience/?zcid=1231&_ga=2.94353053.1056251583.1585024987-2078803637.1584845352)

[https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2020/02/14/secure-your-meetings-zoom-waiting-rooms/?\\_ga=2.57505322.1056251583.1585024987-2078803637.1584845352](https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2020/02/14/secure-your-meetings-zoom-waiting-rooms/?_ga=2.57505322.1056251583.1585024987-2078803637.1584845352)