### This policy has been compiled with the best practices of Plan to Protect®, and some of the leading insurance companies in United States and Canada and their legal departments.

### Our review, research, development and distribution of these recommendations was undertaken with great care. However, we strongly recommend that you seek legal counsel as well as advice from your own insurance broker or insurance company so that they can provide written confirmation concerning the specifics of your own particular circumstances and requirements. This recommendation is current as of the date of publication and does not constitute legal advice.

### Published March 26, 2020 Online Forums and Gatherings

Online Forums and Gatherings provide an opportunity for us to connect with students during times of self-isolation and quarantines. However due to the high-risk nature of online presence, the following protocols are in place when hosting an online forum / gathering [Name of Platform i.e. Zoom]:

* Online Forums/Gatherings must be hosted by [Name of Organization’s] licensed and operated accounts only, no personal accounts may be used.
* [Name of Organization’s] licensed and operated accounts must be accessible to more than one member in leadership (passwords, usernames and email credentials).
* To host an Online Forum/Gathering, Personnel must first secure permission in writing from the Ministry Lead/Pastor/Director overseeing the department.
* An Informed Letter of Consent must be prepared and submitted to the parent prior to the event. Parents must sign and submit the Informed Letter of Consent to allow a student to participate utilizing and electronic signature platform (i.e. SmartWaiver or Docusign).
  + Parents will be provided with an opt-in option on the Informed Letter of Consent to allowing their child(ren) to use webcam while a session is being recorded.
  + Parents should be notified of the documentation management and retention policies outlined in [Name of Organization’s] Plan to Protect® policies and procedures.
  + Any Children or Youth that do not have expressed, written permission from a parent to use the webcam will not be permitted to do so.
* For the duration of the meeting, the Leader/Facilitator will have the video platform in ‘Moderator’ mode to restrict the video and webcam sharing of other attendees.
  + If the ‘Moderator’ mode is unavailable on the video platform, or [Name of Organization] deems it beneficial for attendees to use a webcam, only Children and Youth that have express written consent from a parent to be recorded will be permitted to use a webcam. Those that do not have consent to be recorded will not be permitted to use their webcams.
* The screened, unrelated adults will either:
  + Remain on the video platform until all attendees have left before closing the session; OR,
  + Close the session to end the meeting for all attendees.
* The Leader/Facilitator is encouraged to use videos, fun games and songs to share with families, to limit direct attendee communication.
* All persons (Children, Youth, Parents, Volunteers) will be educated on the expectations for the use of the online platforms, both video and social media, to encourage safe and productive use.
* If Personnel is found to be contacting children/youth through personal accounts, he or she will be subject to disciplinary action by [Name of Organization].
* In the event that conversation with a Child or Youth moves beyond regular program activities, Personnel must inform Leadership and provide a copy of the conversation immediately. Leadership will follow procedure outlined in the Plan to Protect® manual for Suicide, Substance Abuse and Self-Injury. Procedures may include:
  + Reporting to the proper authorities; and/or,
  + Informing the parents of the Child or Youth

**For children Grades 1-6:**

In order to create a safe experience, [Name of Organization] will:

1. Maintain at least TWO screened, unrelated adults (in accordance with the Recruitment and Screening section in the Plan to Protect® manual) in our [Name of Organization’s] Gatherings. This is a practice under [Name of Organization’s] Plan to Protect® policy in all our Children Ministry programs.
2. [Name of Organization’s] host will be recording the program. The recordings will not be posted online and only used for security and resource purposes.
3. Attendance will be taken at each Forum/Gathering.
4. A parent must be in the room at the beginning and at the end of a call. This is our check in and out process.
5. Parents should remain in the same room as their children when they are on the call. Do not leave your children in front of the computer alone in an isolated room.
6. Parents are requested to ensure that the call be played on computer/device with speakers instead of earphones/headphones.
7. The [Name of Organization’s] Gatherings are not permanent to facilitate chat rooms. Parents will be required to check in their children in each Zoom Gathering. Hence, children will not be able to join a [Name of Organization’s] [Name of Platform i.e. Zoom] Gatherings outside our pre-set program time.
8. Upon completion of the call, the attendance record and the recording must be sent to the Pastor/Director of the department.

**For youth Grades 7-12:**

In order to create a safe experience, [Name of Organization] will:

1. Maintain at least TWO screened, unrelated adults (in accordance with the Recruitment and Screening section in the Plan to Protect® manual) in our [Name of Organization’s] Gatherings. This is a practice under [Name of Organization’s] Plan to Protect® policy in all our Youth Ministry programs.
2. [Name of Organization’s] host will be recording the program. The recordings will not be posted online and only used for security and resource purposes.
3. Attendance will be taken at each Forum/Gathering.
4. The [Name of Organization’s] Gatherings are not permanent chat rooms. Hence, youth will not be able to join a [Name of Organization’s] [Name of Platform i.e. Zoom] Gatherings outside our pre-set program time.
5. Upon completion of the call, the attendance record and the recording must be sent to the Pastor/Director of the department and retained permanently.

See also Policies: Technology Concerns (Computer and Internet, Communications via Social Media, Email and Text Messaging, Photography and Video Taping), Recruitment and Screening, Reporting and Response, Suicide, Substance Abuse and Self-Injury.