

Technology Supports for the Workforce

Participant ideas and resources from the NCWWI webinar Using Social Media and Technology to Engage Children, Youth, and Families



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Description: Technology and social media support effective casework practice and require the use of effective social work skills. Just as with face-to-face contacts, caseworkers can use their social work skills to maximize technology, engage families, and honor families' cultures to achieve desired outcomes. Technology and social media are just additional tools in a caseworker's toolbox. [This webinar's](#) chat log contained information from participants about the various technology platforms used; strategies for engaging children, youth, and families; activities for virtual visitation; ideas to maintain confidentiality; and web resources shared back to the field in this document.

Technology

Apps/platforms for connecting with children, youth, and families:

- Google Duo
- Skype
- Zoom
- WebEx
- Facebook Messenger
- Instagram
- Microsoft Teams
- Texting
- FaceTime
- Doxy.me
- Google Hangouts
- WhatsApp
- GoToMeeting
- Google Voice (can set up a different number specifically for work purposes)
- Signal
- Telegram
- Marco Polo
- Houseparty
- BlueJeans app
- Roblox
- boardgamearena.com
- Jabber
- Google Hangout
- GroupMe app

Strategies for Using Social Media and Technology to Engage Children, Youth, and Families

- Hold a life skills Zoom group meeting with teenage youth in care to identify their innate strengths and how those strengths can be "tapped into" to help them through this time.
- Make specific social media accounts that are not connected to personal accounts/do not contain personal information. For example, use Facebook for family, search, and

engagement by designating a supervisor to manage a Facebook account/page used solely for seeking contact with a youth's family.

- Use social networking with runaway youth as a helpful and safe way to engage them and encourage them to share their location, leading to positive resolution. For example, one participant shared, "We had an undocumented teenager who needed to leave our county/state and we were able to use Facetime to assess the home he was going to rather than relying on or having to ask another state agency to make a home visit as well as follow up upon his arrival."
- Consider using only phone and texting and avoid video conferencing fatigue.
- Recognize that some teens may enjoy connecting over Zoom and with phone calls because they aren't as comfortable in in-person meetings.
- Help younger children understand substance abuse by looking at the Sesame Street short skits available online. A foster parent can watch it with them and then you can discuss it with them, or they can talk to their parent.
- Use the language phone line (i.e., translation services) when a family has an English-language barrier.
- Access Facebook groups for families dealing with specific issues.
- Recognize that older children in foster care are connecting with their families via social media, and this means providing support rather than banning the activity.
- Use Facebook live events or prerecorded events as a substitute for in-person programming.
- Caseworkers could put their pets on video to help children focus during virtual visits. For example, one caseworker's dog jumped on her lap during a Facetime visit and the child was able to focus as the "dog" had questions the child answered.
- Ask a child to take a caseworker on a virtual visit through the child's home to see the child's favorite things.
- Use a stuffed animal to ask children how they are doing.
- Use self to explain concepts. For example, if there is a concern about physical abuse, show the child a blister or a "booboo" to encourage openly talking about bumps and bruises.
- Develop an Instagram live hosted by foster youth council employees (for example, @ky_voc) and feature a different foster youth or worker/advocate every week.

Ideas for Visitation

- Board games and activities that can be done virtually:
 - Candyland (if both parties have the game)
 - Chutes and Ladders (if both parties have the game)
 - Simon Says
 - Video house tours (kids particularly enjoy being "in charge" of this)
 - Work on homework together

- Read books
 - Show animals in the home
 - I Spy
 - Karaoke
 - Paint parties (can mail painting supplies)
 - Scavenger hunts (find things and talk about why they're important to them)
 - Coloring pictures
 - Parent singing to child
 - Riddles and jokes
 - Peek-a-boo
 - Wiggle Box
<https://theideaboxkids.com/fun-indoor-active-movements-for-kids/>
 - Tic/Tac/Toe
 - Kids teach parents a dance
 - For babies: parent virtually tickles baby, and foster parent tickles the child on their end
 - Hide-and-seek
 - Show me all the toys in your bedroom
 - Celebrate birthdays with signs and song
 - Play with play dough
 - Blow bubbles (and pretend to catch them)
 - Take children for a virtual nature walk
 - Magic card tricks
 - Lego play
 - Treasure hunts
 - Rainbow coloring and identifying what each color means
 - Talent show
 - Manicure contests
 - Child shows their favorite spot to play outside
 - Celebrate graduations of youth in care
 - Show family photos
 - Puppets for young kids
 - Adoption prep activities for child individually and the family together
 - Facebook messenger games with your faces on it
 - Foster parents show bath/bedtime routine to parents with camera
 - Play "dress up" on camera
 - Create a COVID-19 time capsule
- Provide "activity kits" to foster families to help them engage in virtual visitation. Compile activity kits by age group and include songs, stickers, superhero/animal face masks, finger puppets, etc., to help everyone stay engaged during virtual visitation.
 - Check out Pinterest for chore chart ideas for small children.
 - Use virtual visits to show children their pets and old rooms and so biological families can see where their children are sleeping and playing.
 - For toddlers: foster parents can hold the phone up so biological parents can see what they're doing.
 - Create a genogram/family tree using PowerPoint for youth older than about 11.
 - Consider recording children, especially young ones, doing daily activities to send to the parents. This way parents can keep in touch, since young children don't always understand that parents are on the other side of the screen.
 - Talk to the family ahead of time to see what platform they are comfortable using. If you are not familiar with it, try it out beforehand. This can help ease anxiety around using technology.

- When using technology with younger children, pick a time of day when they are most alert.
- Set boundaries beforehand and maintain consistency. For example, start at the same time each week. Also, prepare activities beforehand and select those that can be completed telephonically.
- Confirm appointments the same day via phone call or text.
- Have a plan B for when there are technical issues.

Maintaining Privacy and Confidentiality

- Use a “special” hand signal that a person can give when someone walks into the room.
- Ask the client (parent or teenager) to go on a walk so they can get some privacy when talking on the phone.
- Consider using text messaging when supervising challenging visits. A teen or adult can send the caseworker a text message when they are ready to end the visit.
- Put a small white noise machine outside the room you are using when calling clients to prevent other household members from hearing the conversation.

Resources for Using Technology and Social Media

- Using Media Effectively with Young Children and Virtual Visitation/ Part One: Virtual Communication with Young Children (Training Video):
<http://centervideo.forest.usf.edu/video/qpi/ylc/mediaeffect/qpistart.html>
- Webinar support for families: "Trinka and Sam Fighting the Big Virus"
<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/trinka-and-sam-fighting-the-big-virus>
- Questions to consider when develop a social media policy:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/15ZzhOn2nmEc-lp50oonAEqXga4PrnWvM/view>
- AARP resources on how to use technology:
<https://www.aarp.org/home-family/personal-technology/>
- Learn how to safely use hand gestures to ask for help:
<https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/code-words-hand-signals-and-social-media-how-attempts-to-help-abuse-victims-might-backfire-1.4899062>