



Electronic Communication and Social Media

In keeping with the goal of the Safe Haven program to address the growing need to protect children from abuse, which includes the invasion of privacy rights and/or volunteers from misunderstandings and false accusations, the following recommendations are proposed for electronic communications and the use of social media sites, such as Facebook or Twitter.

Consistent with Safe Haven Child and Volunteer Protection Policies, AYSO asks all adults, regardless of whether they have a current volunteer application form on file, to maintain transparency in their communications with children while protecting children's identity and privacy. It is the responsibility of adults to maintain appropriate boundaries.

All communications regarding AYSO activities and participation in the program must be directed to parents and guardians including voice messages, e-mails and text messages. It is up to a child's parent(s) and/or guardian(s) to forward necessary communications to their children. If, for older players or youth volunteers, parents/guardians allow direct communications with a player or youth volunteers, parents must still be copied on any and all messages. Adults should refrain from private, personal, on-going electronic conversations with children.

All AYSO websites and pages on Social Media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and MySpace must be monitored to prevent inappropriate postings, blogs or "tweets" which either divulge the identity of minors or include any disparaging comments or pictures. Neither AYSO websites or social media sites may be conduits for social bullying, airing grievances, or gateways for predators. All AYSO or social media sites/pages should conform to the rules and regulations for use and safety as outlined by the site owner.

The AYSO Player Registration Form includes a general photo release for non-commercial purposes. Pictures posted on public sites should not include the names of individual players to avoid identifying children to the wrong individuals. Team rosters with names, numbers and contact information must not be posted on any public website or social media page.

Operation and maintenance of all AYSO websites should conform to AYSO's Privacy Policy for online privacy protection and the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA of 2000) which establishes mandated disclosures, parental notifications and options for all online activities when information is requested from children under 13 years of age. A copy of the Privacy Policy is available on the website:

http://www.ayso.org/resources/legal/privacy_policy.aspx.

The advantages and convenience of electronic communications and social media pages make them valuable and necessary tools for communicating with AYSO participants. As long as the same Safe Haven guidelines for interactions between adults and children are used in electronic media, the risk of abuse and misunderstandings can be minimized. Parents play a critical role in keeping children safe online and they must be included in all communications. Encourage parents to help with online safety by providing links to documents such as "A Parents' Guide to Facebook" and the U.S. Federal Trade Commission's "How to Protect Kids' Privacy Online."