

Electronic Media Use Protocols

Electronic media in its various forms is both an incredible tool to stay connected but also has the potential for inappropriate use that could result in accusations of abuse. For this reason, the following protocols are recommended for all leaders and volunteers of Rivers Edge Church whilst remaining in a ministry capacity.

1. Maintain accountability with all internet forums. We recommend that you allow your leader access to your personal profiles so they can, at any point, read or view what you post and upload.
2. As far as practical, keep what you post public but as "internet safe" as possible and of the highest level of integrity and honour. If you would not be happy for Senior Church leadership to read or see what you write or upload- including via instagram, or any other app, then it should not be posted.
3. We recommend that you do not, at any time, upload, publish or electronically send photos of children or young people under 16 years without express parental consent.
4. 'Friend' requests from children and young people 16 years and under open the way for both accountability and inappropriate interaction. While we understand that Facebook or equivalent social media networks are a great medium for communication, and allow people in a leadership position to see what those in their care are saying and doing, we recommend that you do not comment or post onto the page of these young people, but utilise this only as a means of being aware of the spiritual condition of someone in your care. Should you see something posted that is of concern to you, you should follow more appropriate means of communication to raise concerns, or express encouragement.
5. Should you be concerned about the nature of a personal profile, internet site visited or established by a member of Rivers Edge Church or emails or text sent to you, we recommend that you immediately bring your concerns to a staff pastor and seek advice.
6. We recommend that you do not continue conversations via any electronic media or phone with children or young people not your own age past what would be a reasonable bed time for the age of the child or young person.
7. As best practice, we recommend that you be willing to be accountable for emails, social media messages and texts sent to anyone within your small group, children's ministry or youth ministry.

8. No material is to be sent as an email, text or via a social media network that is defamatory, in breach of copyright or the Church confidentiality
9. Emails, text or material posted via social media networks should not contain material could be offensive, demeaning, persistently irritating, threatening, discriminatory or involves the harassment of others or concerns personal relationships
10. We recommend that social media networks are not utilized as a forum to enter into arguments or controversies about faith or criticisms of the church or leaders
11. When using email, phones or social media networks, a person should not pretend to be another person, or use another person's computer or phone without permission
12. Care needs to be exercised when sending group emails or texts to ensure that contact details are not disclosed to others without permission. Contact details of others should not be passed on, without the person's express consent.
13. We recommend that you are proactive in ensuring parents know you have their child's or young person's phone number and email address and/ or have been requested as a 'friend' on a social media network. Ask if parents are happy with you having this information, or being in contact via a social media network. *Leaders of children's connect groups (12 years and younger) must have written permission to contact children and must speak directly to a parent before speaking to the child.
14. Immediately cease personal contact with any child or young person if a parent withdraws permission for you to remain in contact. Should a child or young person continue to attempt to contact you, after parental consent has been withdrawn, we recommend that you save all messages or emails and bring them to your leader for accountability. As far as possible, get in contact with the parent and let them know their child or young person is still trying to contact you. Do not respond to any message or email personally. Should you be concerned for the welfare of the child or young person, follow reporting guidelines.
15. As a child or young person, should you have communication sent to you in any form, that is a of an inappropriate sexual nature by any member of Rivers Edge Church or anyone you feel should be accountable (eg teacher, family member, coach), this must immediately be brought to the attention of the child protection officer or staff pastor for appropriate action to be taken.