



## YSO Policy: Staff Participation and Presence on Social Networking Sites

This policy is from a youth-led summer program. For this policy, BE SAFE recommends the following:

- Include a similar policy for youth in the program about social networking with other youth and staff;
- Adjust the policy to keep up with the addition of new social networking sites, and extending the policy to any websites that display personal information (*For example, although Instagram is not necessarily a “Social Networking site”, it may fit with the parameters of this policy*).

### Policy:

The following statements below provide guidelines for professional staff, advisors, summer staff, and volunteers coexisting with Program D participants on social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Instagram, Tumblr, Google +, etc)

- Program D professionals, advisors, summer staff and volunteers are not prohibited from appropriately communicating with teens via general instant messenger programs.
- Program D professionals, advisors, summer staff and volunteers shall refrain from any proactive one-on-one communications with teens on social networking sites. They may accept invitations to profiles, groups, and events, but may not initiate any type of communication with teens. Responses to teen-initiated communications should be limited to those that are Program-related. Public one-on-one communications (i.e. posting a comment to a wall) are discouraged at all times.
- Mass (one-to-many) communication from these sites is not prohibited provided that the content is appropriate and Program-related. However, since Program D is a youth-led organization, staff should utilize teen leaders to broadcast virtual messages to teen online communities before issuing any type of information online (message board posts, group messages) themselves.
- Program D professionals, advisors, summer staff and volunteers must recognize that they are role models for teens at all times, and should limit their public profile to information, comments, photos, etc. that are appropriate should a teen or parent/guardian view them.
- Program D professionals, advisors, summer staff and volunteers agree to be respectful of the program, its teens, and its policies in all postings in profiles, blogs and other mediums of Internet communications.
- Program D professionals, advisors, summer staff and volunteers agree not to use a social networking profile, group page, blog, or other Internet medium to discuss behavior that is prohibited by Program D policy or the *Code of Conduct*, including, but not limited to, alcohol or drug use, sexual behavior, delinquent behavior, etc.
- All official Program D and Program D-related correspondence must be initiated via email or through the Program D dashboard.
- Official Program D websites must be maintained on, however teens may (and are encouraged to) use non-Program D sites to market and promote their programs. All non-Program D site publicity should push other teens back to register for the program. Program D staff may neither initiate non-Program website promotions nor use the non-Program D site for post-event follow up.

Should a professional, advisor, summer staff or volunteer choose to maintain a virtual presence and see something on a teen’s profile that is immoral and/or illegal, it is the responsibility of the adult to notify their





## YSO Policy: Staff Participation and Presence on Social Networking Sites

field services supervisor. The supervisor will provide guidance on any next steps (to possibly include notifying the online community, the teen's parents, appropriate state agency, and/or law enforcement). Representatives of Program D have a legal and moral obligation to protect Program D teens and acts of omission, in this case, are considered far more detrimental than acts of commission

