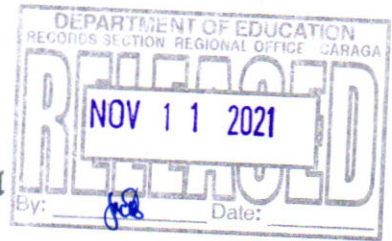




Republic of the Philippines
Department of Education
CARAGA REGION



November 8, 2021

REGIONAL MEMORANDUM

No. 885, s. 2021

To: SCHOOLS DIVISION SUPERINTENDENTS
This Region

REQUEST FOR COMMENTS ON THE GUIDELINES ON CHILD ONLINE
PROTECTION: CHILD SAFEGUARDING FOR ICT AND SOCIAL MEDIA
FROM TEACHERS, PARENTS AND LEARNERS

1. Pursuant to the unnumbered memorandum dated October 27, 2021, the Department of Education through the Child Protection Unit (CPU) was mandated to formulate policies concerning all matters pertaining to the right of the child in basic education to protection from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation and maltreatment.
2. In view of this, the Department shall issue a policy entitled, **"Guidelines on Child Online Protection: Child Safeguarding for ICT and Social Media"** to protect learners who are exposed to risks in social media & other ICT platforms. Having said this, all SDO's are requested to **submit comments and inputs** regarding the said Guidelines.
3. The submitted documents should contain comments from **teachers, parents**, through the Parents-Teachers Association, and **learners** through the Supreme Student Government and Supreme Pupil Government under your jurisdiction not later than **November 12, 2021** and email to cpu@deped.gov.ph.
4. For your information and immediate action.


MA. GEMMA MERCADO LEDESMA
Regional Director

Encl/s.: Annex A: Draft Guidelines on Child Online Protection: Child Safeguarding for ICT and Social Media.

Reference/s: Unnumbered Memorandum dated October 27, 2021

To be indicated in the Perpetual Index
under the following subjects:

CHILD PROTECTION UNIT LEARNERS PARENTS-TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

ESS/egc
11/08/2021



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Republic of the Philippines
Department of Education
OFFICE OF THE UNDERSECRETARY

MEMORANDUM

TO : **BUREAU AND SERVICE DIRECTORS**
REGIONAL DIRECTORS
SCHOOLS DIVISION SUPERINTENDENTS

FROM : 
ATTY. REVSEE A. ESCOBEDO
Undersecretary
Field Operations, Palarong Pambansa Secretariat, and DEACO


ATTY. SUZETTE T. GANNABAN-MEDINA
OIC- Assistant Regional Director, MIMAROPA Region
OIC- Head, Child Protection Unit

SUBJECT : **REQUEST FOR COMMENTS ON THE GUIDELINES ON**
CHILD ONLINE PROTECTION: CHILD SAFEGUARDING FOR
ICT AND SOCIAL MEDIA FROM TEACHERS, PARENTS AND
LEARNERS

DATE : October 27, 2021

With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the country had to adjust and adapt to the drastic changes in one of the most affected sectors-- the education sector. As a response, the Department of Education issued DepEd Order No. 12, s. 2020, or the "Adoption of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) for School Year 2020-2021 in light of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency." Under the BE-LCP, some of the platforms being utilized by learners to undertake their studies at home include social media and other Information and Communications Technology (ICT) platforms. Consequently, learners are now much vulnerable due to more exposure to risks that are prejudicial to their protection.

Given this, the Child Protection Unit (CPU) was mandated to "formulate policies concerning all matters pertaining to the right of the child in basic education to protection from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation, and maltreatment."¹ In view of this mandate and in consideration to the need to protect learners who are exposed to risks in social media and other ICT platforms, this Department shall issue the policy titled, "**Guidelines on Child Online Protection:**

¹ DepEd Order No. 003, s. 2021, paragraph 12(a).



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Child Safeguarding for ICT and Social Media² to address the aforementioned concerns.

In view of the foregoing, may we request your Office to **submit comments and inputs** regarding the said Guidelines. The document to be submitted should contain comments from **teachers, parents** through the Parents-Teachers Association, and **learners** through the Supreme Student Government and Supreme Pupil Government under your jurisdiction.

Please submit the documents containing the aforesaid comments to cpu@deped.gov.ph not later than **November 10, 2021**.

Attached in this memorandum is the copy of the said Guidelines.

Thank you very much.

² Attached as Annex A.

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GUIDELINES ON CHILD ONLINE PROTECTION: CHILD SAFEGUARDING FOR ICT AND SOCIAL MEDIA

These Guidelines provide user-specific instructions on the use of social media as a platform of communication of the school/community learning center, and between and among DepEd teaching and non-teaching personnel, community ALS implementors, learning facilitators, learning support aides, parents, guardians, caregivers and learners. Incorporated in this set of guidelines are, among others, relevant provisions from the Public Advisory of the Department of Justice - Office of Cybercrime on the Conduct of Online Classes,¹ as well as the National Privacy Commission Bulletin No. 16 on Privacy Do's and Don'ts of Online Learning in Public K-12 classes.²

A. Official social media pages and communication through online platforms

Should a school/community learning center decide to create an official social media page, the following guidelines shall apply:

1. Creation of the official social media page of the school/community learning center shall be with the approval of the school/community learning center head.³ The online platform to be used to create and manage the official social media page shall be at the discretion of the school/learning center head, taking into consideration the preference of DepEd personnel, community ALS implementors, learning facilitators, learning support aides, parents, guardians, caregivers and learners. In the selection of online platforms for the official social media pages, school/learning center heads shall be guided by the following criteria:
 - a. Zero tolerance policy for violence;
 - b. Children can access a reporting and referral mechanism;
 - c. Available child-sensitive technological safeguards; and
 - d. Good record in addressing complaints.
2. The school/learning center head shall designate the social media manager as the moderator and administrator of the social media page of the school/learning center. The designated social media manager could be any DepEd permanent employee capable of handling social media accounts. The moderator and administrator shall be in charge of monitoring and managing the social media page. The SDO shall provide training on handling of child protection issues to the social media managers of schools/learning centers within the Division.

¹ Department of Justice Office of Cybercrime, "Public Advisory of the Department of Justice - Office of Cybercrime on the Conduct of Online Classes," available at https://web.facebook.com/OfficeofCybercrimePH/?_rdc=1&_rdr accessed on September 22, 2020 ["DOJ-OOC Public Advisory"]

² National Privacy Commission, "Bulletin No. 16: Privacy Dos and Don'ts for Online Learning in Public K-12 Classes" available at <https://www.privacy.gov.ph/2020/10/npc-phe-bulletin-no-16-privacy-dos-and-donts-for-online-learning-in-public-k-12-classes/> accessed on October 7, 2020 ["NPC Bulletin No. 16"]

³ References to "school", "school head" and "teacher" shall also mean "community learning center", "community learning center head" and "learning facilitator/community ALS implementor", respectively.

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3. The social media manager shall follow these guidelines and further guidelines set by the relevant offices of the DepEd Central Office on the use, administration, and management of official school/learning center social media pages. The social media manager shall also coordinate with the CPC to ensure that child protection standards are being met in the official social media pages. The CPC shall also observe and monitor the social media accounts and provide feedback to the manager or administrator.
4. The social media platform shall be used to disseminate official announcements from the school/learning center, and the DepEd Central, Regional, or Division Offices, as well as other pertinent official public announcements. The social media platform shall also be used to facilitate communications between and among learners, DepEd personnel, learning facilitators, community ALS implementors, learning support aides, parents, guardians, and caregivers regarding learning materials and other concerns pertinent to home-based or distance learning and homeschooling. Announcements should be posted during office hours unless the circumstances require the posting of announcements outside said hours.
5. In the event that the social media page receives reports related to child protection, the report shall immediately be forwarded by the designated social media manager to the head of the school/learning center for action while ensuring the confidentiality of the report or information. If the report is communicated to the social media page via the comments section or through a post, the said post shall be preserved but hidden from public view, using the "hide comments" functionality or other similar options of the said social media platform.
6. Personal or sensitive information of and from children should be handled with utmost care and shall be kept confidential. Disclosure of personal information of children shall be subject to existing laws, rules and regulations.
7. If a readily identifiable image of a learner shall be used in the school/learning center official social media page for publicity, fund-raising, awareness-raising, or any other valid purpose in digital, video or print materials, the head of the school/learning center, through the social media manager, shall secure the signed consent of the learner and his/her parent or guardian,. The written consent must indicate that the child and his/her parent or guardian are aware of the time, place and manner of the use of the image or likeness. For this purpose, the written consent may be obtained through electronic signatures.
8. The child's image or likeness shall not be used to create materials that are degrading, victimizing, or shaming, or otherwise inappropriate for children.
9. No personal and physical information to identify the location of a learner that could put him/her at risk should be uploaded on the official website/social media page of the school/learning center or indicated in any official communications. Whenever necessary, the child's face must be covered or blurred to protect his//her identity, unless a written consent is obtained from the parents or guardians.

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10. Communication with children should be appropriate and should not contain offensive or potentially abusive language.

11. All media responses, public information announcements, advocacy and promotional videos shall be child friendly. Where appropriate, the announcements, advocacy, and promotional videos shall have versions that may be understandable by learners of all ages.

12. Parents, guardians, and caregivers shall be guided by the age limits and community standards of all social media platforms. Only the social media profiles or accounts of qualified learners based on the age requirements of the social media platform shall participate in the social media groups of the school/learning center. For learners who do not qualify based on the age restrictions of the social media platform, the social media profile or account of the parent, guardian or caregiver shall be used to communicate with the social media page of the school, learning center, class/section or online forum.

13. The school/learning center shall provide learners, DepEd personnel, learning facilitators, community ALS implementors, learning support aides, parents, guardians, learning support aides, and caregivers an orientation, policy briefing and learning session on the child online protection requirements, including sessions on approved applications and their community protocols, complaint, referral and response mechanisms, code of conduct for online activities, and other relevant information to ensure online wellness and safety of the learners.

14. The school/learning center shall devise a plan, in line with the Child Protection Policy, this DepEd Order, and other related issuances, on responding to reports of child abuse, violence, exploitation, neglect, and other forms of violence against learners as reported through the social media platform.

15. Contact details of key school personnel, especially the school head and the guidance counselor, and the head of the Parents-Teachers Association, shall be provided in the social media page and constantly updated. Information on the hotlines, contact details and appropriate reporting procedures for child protection issues shall also be provided in the official social media pages.

B. Employee and learner interaction through social media

1. Teachers, learning facilitators and community ALS implementors, in compliance with these guidelines and other relevant guidelines to be developed, may create social media groups or online forums to disseminate lessons, homework or assignment and provide support to the learners during home-based or distance learning. Real time-based group chats are highly discouraged as these may be used even during times when there is no adult

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supervision and must only be used if there are no other practicable means for teachers, learning facilitators and community ALS implementors to communicate with learners. Group codes of conduct shall be posted in these social media groups or online forums.

2. When social media groups or online forums are created for educational purposes, the administrators or moderators of the said group or forum shall be the teacher and the president of the Parent-Teacher Association per section or class or any qualified parent representative selected by the parents of the section or class. The parent representative shall observe the interaction between teacher and student to help ensure appropriate behavior online. The parent representative, however, must exercise utmost discretion to minimize any disruption in the communications between and among the teacher and the learners. Parents are prohibited to communicate directly to other learners other than their own children, whether privately or via the class/school social media group.
3. To ensure that parents are well-informed of all school activities, all announcements or information relating to school activities and other public information concerning learners shall be coursed through the parents, guardians, learning support aides, or caregivers and, as far as practicable, copy furnished the learners, except for Senior High School learners who can directly receive such announcements and information and, as far as practicable, copy furnished their parents, guardians, learning support aides, or caregivers.
4. To mutually protect learners and school personnel from any potential abuse, school/learning center personnel are discouraged from conducting direct-private communications with learners through phone call, SMS, e-mail, and social media accounts. Unlike in a physical school/learning center setting where other learners or personnel are present and can prevent child abuse or violence or false accusations of such, there is no presence of other people in a direct private digital communication.
5. Teachers, learning facilitators and community ALS implementors may, as far as practicable, and with consent from the parents, guardians, or caregivers, communicate directly with learners strictly on academics-related matters. All communications between the teacher/facilitator/implementor and the learner must, as much as possible, be done only during school hours. For this purpose, parents, guardians and caregivers can give a general consent to such communications between the teacher/facilitator/implementor and the learners. For elementary and Junior High School learners, as far as practicable, teachers shall furnish copies of messages to the parents, guardians, or caregiver of the learner. For Senior High School students, as far as practicable, parents, guardians or caregivers may request for a copy of such messages.
6. An exception to the prohibition on direct private communications between DepEd personnel and learners is when the DepEd personnel receives complaints related to child protection from learners. After determining that a

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communication is a child protection-related concern, a third person such as the guidance counsellor, homeroom adviser, or any other trusted school personnel by the learner shall be included in the communication with the learner. Such third person shall be copy furnished in all communications with the learner, observing the proper child protection reporting protocols thereafter.

7. School/learning center personnel shall observe professionalism and due diligence in their dealings with learners. To minimize the risk of child abuse or exploitation, school/learning center personnel are highly discouraged from accepting any social media friend requests from their learners or from sending social media friend requests to learners, except when the learner is a relative. For school personnel who are already friends with learners in social media, they should abide by the rules stated in this Annex on proper behavior in social media. Learners must be made to understand that it is for the protection of both the children/learners and the school personnel that this rule is to be applied.

8. Sharing of a learner's images online is prohibited, unless with written consent of the learner and his/her parent, guardian, or caregiver.

C. Safeguarding measures in the conduct of online learning

1. General Provisions

- a. Teachers are strongly discouraged from requiring assignments, exams, or homework to be submitted through social media.⁴ They are encouraged to utilize official channels such as their official DepEd email account or through the learning management system being employed by the school and orient their students on how to send their official schoolwork through official channels.
- b. Any announcement that involves the personal data of the learner or is intended to be viewable only by the learner (e.g. grades, test scores, etc.) shall be delivered directly and individually to the learner and his/her parent, guardian or caregiver.
- c. Teachers and other school personnel shall minimize the downloading of personal information of their learners. In all cases, the personal information of learners should be used only for official purpose. Teachers and school personnel must ensure that all files containing the personal information of the learners, whether online or offline, are safely secured and are not accessible by unauthorized persons. This can be done through the use of online drives for storage, adoption of a password protection process, installation of a secure embed system, among others, that the school might decide to adopt to secure their stored files. For information and guidance, schools/learning centers may coordinate with their SDO.

⁴ NPC Bulletin No. 16, Bullet No. 3 under Don'ts for students. Privacy Dos and Don'ts for Online Learning in Public K-12 Classes, October 1, 2020. Last Edit: October 5, 2020.

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- 234 d. Teachers and school personnel must ensure that all schoolwork submitted
235 by learners online are properly secured and are not accessible by
236 unauthorized personnel, including other learners and, unless otherwise
237 necessary, other teachers and school personnel.
238
- 239 e. Teachers must secure the permission of the learner and his/her parent,
240 guardian, or caregiver before requiring learners to open their webcams for
241 class, unless the opening of webcams is integral to the delivery of the
242 lessons for a particular class. For this purpose, the teacher may secure a
243 blanket authorization from the learner and his/her her parent, guardian, or
244 caregiver for the opening of the learner's webcam for all classes with the
245 teacher.
246
- 247 f. The provisions in paragraph (e) above likewise applies to the recording of
248 the online class. Further, the teacher must ensure that the recordings are
249 safely secured and are not accessible by unauthorized persons.
250
- 251 2. Special Provisions for the conduct of online classes using video conferencing
252 platforms.
253
- 254 a. The school shall identify the appropriate video conferencing platform to be
255 used in the conduct of online classes based on the available technology
256 and capacity of the school, the teaching personnel and the learners.
257
- 258 b. Regardless of the video conferencing platform to be used, school
259 personnel shall ensure that the privacy and safety features of the video
260 conferencing platform are enabled. When needed, teachers are
261 encouraged to seek the assistance of the Information Technology
262 personnel of the school.
263
- 264 c. Teachers must ensure that the video conference meeting details are
265 confidential and are only known to learners and/or their parents, guardians,
266 learning support aides, or caregivers. Consistent with other provisions of
267 these guidelines, the school head may designate and authorize another
268 teacher or another school personnel to be provided access to any video
269 conference meeting or online classes strictly for observation purposes.
270 Passwords shall always be required for video conferencing with learners.
271 The meeting room credentials, including the meeting ID and passwords
272 should never be shared with the public.⁵
273
- 274 d. Teachers must ensure that learners use their real names during the online
275 class.
276
- 277 e. At the start of the school year, teachers shall orient their learners on the
278 code of conduct for learners during online classes using video
279 conferencing platforms. In subsequent online classes, teachers shall
280 remind everyone of the same code of conduct by a quick review or by way
281 of flashing the code of conduct before the online video conference or online

⁵ DOJ -OOC Public Advisory par. A(1).

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class begins.

- f. Teachers and learners shall ensure that their webcam feed shows appropriate and safe video and audio streams, both from the teachers and learners themselves, as well as the immediate environment of the teacher and learner.
- g. Teachers shall not leave learners on their own after the online synchronous class, ensuring there is continuous supervision while online.⁶
- h. Parents, guardians, or caregivers are allowed to be present in the virtual class with their children/ward but only as observers. They shall not intervene via audio, video or chat while the online class is ongoing.
- i. To ensure platform security, the video conferencing apps to be used shall be updated continuously to the latest version.⁷
- j. Teachers may encourage learners to use virtual backgrounds during the online class.⁸ Learners who are excused to go on bathroom breaks should be advised to mute their microphone and turn off their webcam until they return to the online class.⁹

D. Employee role modelling in social media

- 1. Teachers and other school personnel are expected to verify the truthfulness of information posted or forwarded on social media by checking credible sources and official statements from official channels such as the DepEd website or official social media page.
- 2. Consistent with R.A. No. 6713 or the "Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees," and the "Code of Conduct for Teachers," as well as all other applicable laws and rules, teachers and other school personnel are viewed with respect by the learners, parents, and community. As such, they shall refrain from posting, commenting, reacting to, offensive and inappropriate materials or communications.

E. Guidelines for Learners' Online Conduct to Create and Maintain a Safe Learning Environment

Learners are expected to:

- 1. Be kind to, and treat each other with respect regardless of physical

⁶ DOJ-OOC Public Advisory par. A(4); NPC Bulletin No. 16.

⁷ DOJ-OOC Public Advisory par. A(5).

⁸ NPC Bulletin No. 16. Bullet No.5 under Dos for teachers. Privacy Dos and Don'ts for Online Learning in Public K-12 Classes. October 1, 2020 Last Edit: October 5, 2020

⁹ NPC Bulletin No. 16. Bullet No.6 under Dos for students. Privacy Dos and Don'ts for Online Learning in Public K-12 Classes. October 1, 2020 Last Edit: October 5, 2020

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appearance, ethnic, regional, religious or cultural background, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability or disability.

2. Maintain and appreciate a positive learning environment with other learners.
3. Not engage in bullying of any kind and report any such incident to the appropriate school personnel if they become aware of it.
4. Not harass or verbally harm other students and personnel of the school through the use of cell phones or any social networks by exhibiting written or visual material or behavior that is unwelcome, offensive and hurtful, or expressing hostility, threats and intimidation, or ridiculing and humiliating others.
5. Be respectful in their online activities.
6. Protect their own and other people's personal information online.
7. Share only factual, truthful, and accurate information.
8. Report to their parent, guardian, caregiver or school/learning center personnel any behavior or experience that makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe.
9. The following behaviors are strictly prohibited during an online class:
 - a. Using obscene, profane, or vulgar language or any derogatory language regarding race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, citizenship, socio-economic status or ability;
 - b. Making sexually explicit, suggestive, humiliating or degrading comments;
 - c. Exhibiting harassing, intimidating or bullying behavior;
 - d. Doing any form of verbal, sexual or mental abuse;
 - e. Viewing any material inappropriate for children; and
 - f. Being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs;
10. Keep the meeting credentials of the online class confidential and share them only to the learner's parents, guardian, learning support aide, or caregiver.¹⁰

F. Guidelines for parents, guardians and caregivers

The following are guidelines for parents, guardians and caregivers as they guide and facilitate the learning of their children:

¹⁰ NPC Bulletin No. 16. Bullet No.6 under Don'ts for students. Privacy Dos and Don'ts for Online Learning in Public K-12 Classes. October 1, 2020. Last Edit: October 5, 2020

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1. Be mindful of the online activities of their children without invading their privacy.
2. Install child safety software. Guidance may be requested from the school ICT teacher/personnel for this purpose.
3. Observe or monitor the social media groups used by their children's class.
4. Guide children's access to the internet after classes to ensure that there is a healthy balance between screen time (both academic and leisure) and offline activities of their children.
5. Be aware of the community rules of approved social media platforms and abide by them, including the age restrictions set by the social media platform.
6. Be aware of the contact details of their children's teachers, guidance counselor, school head, the CPC of the school, the School Governance and Operations Division (SGOD) of the DepEd Division Office, the Education Support Services Division (ESSD) of the DepEd Regional Office, the Child Protection Unit (CPU) of the DepEd Central Office, and the BCPC for reporting and timely response in times of emergency.
7. Consult with their children's class adviser and teachers if they or their children have any safety concern related to the use of the internet and ICT.