Child Safeguarding and COVID-19

Webinar 2, 30th April 20

Recap

In Webinar 1, we discussed the following:

- Child Safeguarding vs. Child Protection

- Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment and Mitigation Tool

- Challenges in Reporting

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Today's Webinar

- Child safeguarding risks associated with low-tech instruction mediums (SMS/WhatsApp/Phone) and high-tech instruction mediums (Zoom and Google Classroom)

- Kinds of risks associated with different groups of students

- Mitigation controls

- Key student-facing, parent-facing and staff-facing safeguarding considerations as schools plan for re-entry.

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Instructional platforms used by GSF members

Low-tech Instructional Mediums used during COVID-19

- WhatsApp

- SMS/Text/Phone Call

- E-mail

High-tech Instructional Mediums used during COVID-19

- Zoom

- Google Classroom

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Low-tech instructional mediums

SMS/Text/Phone call/E-mail

Main risk areas:

Risk #1: One-on-one contact (teacher – student)

Risk #2: Lack of supervision by parents/guardians

Associated Risks

Primary Students	Secondary Students
Teachers using age inappropriate language on the phone	Teachers using inappropriate language on the phone
Risk of teacher grooming the child for sexual abuse (sharing verbal/visual sexual content)	Risk of teacher targeting and (and/or) ignoring specific students
	Risk of teacher grooming the child for sexual abuse (sharing verbal/visual sexual content)

What does Grooming mean?

In child sexual abuse, the grooming process is how a person in a position of power or trust gains the trust of a child in order to wear away personal boundaries and gain sexual access.

Stage 1: Create opportunities

Stage 2: Target a child

Stage 3: Introduce sexualized behaviors/act

Stage 4: Secrecy

WhatsApp

Main risk areas:

Risk #1: Privacy

Risk #2: Cyberbullying

Risk #3: Sharing inappropriate and secretive content

Risk #4: Fake news

Associated Risks

Primary Students	Secondary Students
Risk of teacher taking screenshot/screen recording of interaction with students	Risk of teacher taking screenshot/screen recording of interaction with students
	Student group chat links can be copied by group members and shared with anyone who can then click and join without any vetting.
	A rumor, mean comment or conflict situation can get intense very quickly and easily spill beyond the WhatsApp environment
	Exchange of inappropriate content among students
	Exposure of personal phone numbers to a larger group of students

Controls to mitigate the risk:

Primary Students	Secondary Students
Students to be made aware of safe and unsafe situations	Students to be made aware of safe and unsafe situations
Parents to be present during phone conversations with students	Students to be made aware of the reporting procedures
Parents are informed to turn on the phone speaker during the call	Copy another teacher/child safeguarding point person when sending emails to students
	Provide explicit training to the teachers on using technology safely

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Risk no.	Who is at risk?	What is the risk?	What factors place them at risk?	What controls are in place already?	Risk rating H,M,L	What additional mitigation controls are to be put in place now?	By whom?	By when?

Child Safeguarding Risk assessment:

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Case Study (low-tech):

A secondary student reports that his/her teacher, during one-on-one phone check-ins, has been asking her how his/her personal routines have changed during shelter-in-place (hygiene, clothing choices, relationships etc.)

Is this a child safeguarding concern?

Why?

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High-tech instructional mediums

Google Classroom

Google classroom is a platform to share files and assignments, and to communicate with students

Main risk areas:

Risk #1: Teacher has access to personal e-mail addresses of the students

Risk #2: Allows teacher to share video links/files with an individual student

Associated Risks

Secondary students:

- Teachers have access to student email addresses

- Risk of teacher connecting with the students one-on-one via social media or other communication platforms using the email address

- Student trying to be-friend the teacher via social media

Zoom for Education

Zoom Classroom is a cloud-based virtual classroom

Main risk areas:

Risk #1: Entry of unauthorized person to the virtual classroom

Risk #2: Private chat/messaging

Risk #3: "Zoombombing"

Associated Risks

Primary Students	Secondary Students
Risk of teacher taking screenshot of students without their consent	Risk of teacher taking screenshot of students without their consent
	Unsupervised private chat among students
	One-on-one chat between the teacher and a student
	Students posting inappropriate contents in the room (pornographic images, racist comments)

Controls to mitigate the risk:

Primary Students	Secondary Students
Data privacy guidelines are developed and implemented	Students are provided with information on point people to raise concerns
Students should be emailed on parent's/guardian's address.	Provide explicit training to teachers and staff on using technology safely
	Avoid sharing link to virtual classroom on social media platforms / with others
	Virtual classroom sessions to be recorded by default and saved in the school server
	Child safeguarding point person to review the recording periodically

Case Study (high-tech):

The physical education teacher is proposing to do 1:1 physical education tutorials with the students.

Does this present a risk?

Why/why not?

School re-entry considerations

Student-facing considerations

Short-term (within a month of re-entry)

- Students are reminded of how to keep themselves safe (different approach based on the age of students)

- Students are reminded of who the safeguarding point people are at the school

Medium-term (within 6 months):

- Develop age-appropriate awareness materials (posters, short videos)

- Awareness materials for children with special needs/differently abled

- Student representatives are included in the safeguarding committee/meetings

Parent-facing considerations

Short-term (within a month of re-entry):

- Parents/caregivers are reminded of reporting procedures

- Provide a copy of the child safeguarding policy to all parents

Medium-term (within 6 months):

- Include child safeguarding as a key topic in Parent-Teacher meetings

- Include parent representatives as part of the child safeguarding committee

- Organize periodic trainings on key child-facing issues such as sexual abuse, online risk etc.

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Staff-facing considerations

Short-term (within a month of re-entry):

- A list of students who historically have been unsafe at home is created. Staff are directed to keep a special eye on them and report on observations on a regular basis.

- Designated staff/counsellors are assigned to have Special 1:1 meetings with students who are at-risk

- Creation of a list of therapists who can support children identified with high levels of trauma

Medium-term (within 6 months):

- Develop and implement policies and procedures that focus on safeguarding the staff (example: Whistle-blower protection, Data protection)

- All staff (teaching and non-teaching) are provided with general training on child safeguarding

- Staff selection process needs to incorporate stringent child safeguarding screening

- Designated safeguarding staff are provided with in-depth training by experts

Some useful websites

www.keepingchildrensafe.global (child safeguarding tools/info)

https://ikeepsafe.org/ (education and technology related info)

https://beinternetawesome.withgoogle.com/en_us/ (kids safety online)

https://www.remind.com/ (app for safe school communication)

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Q & A

THANK YOU

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