Youth in Care and Social Media Use

Facilitator's Guide

Overview

This training is intended to engage social workers in considering how youth in foster care use social media and how social media impacts youth in care. This includes considering the benefits and risks, as well as how social workers can help caregivers keep youth safe on social media sites. This guide includes a background on the current literature, best practices for youth and caregivers, discussion questions, scenarios social workers may face related to social media, and resources for social workers, caregivers, and youth in foster care.

Audience

Social workers and other professionals working directly with caregivers and youth in foster care are the primary audience for this training. It is intended to support social workers and professionals in helping caregivers and youth navigate social media safely.

Training Time

This training should take about 45 minutes to complete.

Training Materials

Print a copy of each of the following training materials for each member of the group.

- Research Summary
- Scenario Activity
- Best Practices for Youth in Care
- Best Practices for Caregivers
- Discussion Questions
- Resources for Youth in Care
- Resources for Caregivers
- Resources for Social workers

Training Outline

Introduction

Begin with introductions. Ask participants to share their name, role in the child welfare system, and what type of tech user they are based on the table on the following page.

Pew Research Center's [10 distinct groups of tech users](#)

	Group name	What you need to know about them
Elite Tech Users	Omnivores	They have the most information gadgets and services, which they use voraciously to participate in cyberspace and express themselves online and do a range of Web 2.0 activities such as blogging or managing their own web pages.
	Connectors	Between featured-packed cell phones and frequent online use, they connect to people and manage digital content using ICTs-all with high levels of satisfaction about how ICTs let them work with community groups and purse hobbies.
	Lackluster Veterans	They are frequent users of the internet and less avid about cell phones. They are not thrilled with ICT-enabled connectivity.
	Productivity Enhancers	They have strongly positive views about how technology lets them keep up with others, do with jobs, and learn new things.
Middle-of-the-road Tech Users	Mobile Centrics	They fully embrace the functionality of their cell phones. They use the internet, but not often, and like how ICTs connect them to others.
	Connected But Hassled	They have invested in a lot of technology, but they find the connectivity intrusive and information something of a burden.
Few Tech Assets	Inexperienced Experimenters	They occasionally take advantage of interactivity, but if they had more experience, they might do more with ICTs.
	Light But Satisfied	They have some technology, but it does not play a central role in their daily lives. They are satisfied with what ICTs do for them.
	Indifferents	Despite having either cell phones or online access, these users use ICTs only intermittently and find connectivity annoying.
	Off the Network	Those with neither cell phones nor internet connectivity ten to be older adults who are content with old media.

- Display the following table for participants, found on the Pew Internet Research site (we recommend not showing the percentages since they can change frequently.): http://www.pewinternet.org/2007/05/06/a-typology-of-information-and-communication-technology-users/

- The Pew Research Center found that most Americans sort into 10 distinct groups of tech users that broadly fit into high, medium, and low categories.

  » Knowing the level of social media use among participants will help gauge their level of understanding about certain features of social media sites discussed later in the training. This also helps participants visualize and understand where they themselves fall as a tech user and recognize how diverse tech users can be.

  » Individual social media use influences one's perspective on youth social media use. For example if a participant is someone who does not use any social media, they may be less likely to support youth social media use, may have a harder time recognizing its benefits, and may have a harder time discussing simply because the language and functionality is less familiar.

  » Encouraging participants to recognize their own social media use and how that impacts their perspective on social media use can be a great way to start the conversation about youth and social media.

Objectives

Go over the objectives of the training with participants. Participants may have a specific question or situation that brought them to the training. Encourage participants to ask questions as you go and remind them there will be time for additional questions at the end. If a question is off topic you may want to defer it until the end of the session.

- At the end of this training, participants will:

  » Understand why youth want to be on social media

  » Learn about the benefits of social media for youth in care

  » Learn about the specific risks that youth in care face online

  » Be prepared to support both youth and caregivers when risks arise on social media

- Have a list of resources for yourself, caregivers, and youth

Background

Begin with the research summary. This document summarizes the current literature on youth in care and social media. It explains the specific benefits and risks these youth gain from social media use. To save time it may be helpful to split into small groups and assign half to read the benefits of social media use and the other half to read the risks of social media use. Allow time for small group decision and then bring everyone back together for a full discussion. The benefits group could start as the benefits can be harder for adults to realize. Encourage participants to remember that the risks and benefits they identify may be different from the benefits and risks youth identify; it is important to recognize both perspectives.

- Ask participants to read through the benefits of social media section of the research summary.
- Go through each point with participants. Ask participants about their own experiences with youth in care for each point:
  - » How do participants feel about social media being a positive tool for youth?
  - » Have they considered any of these benefits before in their work with youth?
  - » Have they experienced youth reporting difficulty accessing technology?
- Ask participants to read through the risks of social media section of the research summary.
- Go through each point with participants. Ask participants about their own experiences with youth in care for each point:
  - » Have they had any experience with these risks and youth in their work? What did they do? Did they know where to turn to for help?
  - » Have they had any experience with unregulated contact online in their work? What did they do? Did they know where to turn for help?
  - » Keep in mind the allotted amount of time for this training activity, if spending more than 15 minutes on this section, ask participants to save additional thoughts or questions for the end.

Scenario Activity

Once you have discussed the risks and benefits of social media and participants' experiences with each in their work, begin the scenario activity.

- If your group has less than 6 people you can do the activity as a large group. Read through each scenario and follow the discussion questions on the Youth in Care and Social Media: A Training Activity sheet.
- If more than six people, break participants into groups of 3-4. Divide the scenarios up between the groups and have

them discuss. Even with smaller groups, each individual participant can choose a scenario that best addresses their concerns. If there's time, discuss additional scenarios as a large group. After small group discussions, come back together as a large group and have each group:

- » Read their scenario aloud.
- » Summarize what their group discussed related to the scenario.
- » Open the conversation up to other participants for comments and discussion.
- The following discussion questions are on the scenario activity handout to help guide small and large group discussions.
  - » What questions would you ask the caregiver and/or youth?
  - » What advice would you give to the youth?
  - » What advice would you give to the caregiver?
  - » How might the youth react to their rules? What other rules could you try?
  - » Are there things the caregivers could have done differently?

Best Practices

After you have gone over the scenarios in the Youth in Care and Social Media: A Training Activity sheet, discuss other situations that emerged in the groups' discussions, share one or both of these handouts: (1) Youth in Care and Social Media: Best Practices for Caregivers, (2) Youth in Care and Social Media: Best Practices for Youth.

- Tailor your training to your audience; use the best practice fact sheets that make most sense.
- Review the best practices guides as a full group, depending on group size, it may be helpful to break into smaller groups or dyads to talk about the discussion questions.

Best Practices-Youth in Care

- If the group is generally unfamiliar with social media sites, you should spend more time discussing the best practices for youth handout. It is important that social workers and other professionals have a general understanding of these guidelines so they are able to support caregivers and youth when problems arise.
- It may be helpful to provide the online links to training participants so that they are able to find and print the resource lists later.
- Discussion questions to support the best practices guide:
  - » *What are some ways to start conversations about social media with youth and share this information?*
  - » *How have you used any of these strategies with youth?*
  - » *What other ideas do you have for monitoring social media use?*

Best Practices-Caregivers

- It may be helpful to provide the online links to participants so that they are able to find and print the resource lists later.

- Some discussion questions for the best practices guide:

  » *What are some ways to start conversations about social media with caregivers and share this information?*

  » *How have you used any of these strategies with caregivers?*

  » *What other ideas do participants have for monitoring social media use?*

Resources

Included in the training guide are resource lists for youth in foster care, caregivers, and social workers. It may be helpful to provide the online links to training participants so that they are able to find and print the resource lists later.

- Participants may have resources they find helpful that are not on these lists. Ask participants if there are any (local or otherwise) resources they have used before and add them to these lists.

Questions and Wrap Up

If time permits, invite participants to ask any specific questions they may have that were not addressed during the training. Thank them for their time. It can help to revisit the objectives of the training stated in the beginning.

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