



Virtual Recreation Programming and Online Safety Policy

Policy Manual Section: Governance – Culture & Recreation

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Policy Statement

It is the policy of the Town of LaSalle (hereby referenced as “The Corporation”) that the privacy, safety and consideration for participants engaging in virtual recreation programming shall be considered the top priority when developing and implementing online programs.

Purpose

Online forums and gatherings provide an opportunity for the Culture and Recreation Department to connect with residents and program participants outside of regular programming and to fill the gaps in recreation programming during times of mass shelter, lockdown and isolation. The purpose of this policy is to establish a set of guiding principles for the development and implementation of online recreation programming to ensure safety in an online environment. This includes:

- Providing common-sense protocols and best practices to ensure safety and security of online programming.
- Demonstrate importance of internet safety in regards to online virtual recreation programming to all Town of LaSalle employees

Scope

This policy applies to all employees within the Culture and Recreation Department who engage in, or hold stake in, online and virtual recreation programming.

This policy also applies to any technological application where Town of LaSalle Culture and Recreation employees are engaged in business activities in the performance of their jobs and within operation of Town of LaSalle programs, including, but not limited to:

- Video conferencing applications such as Zoom or Teams
- YouTube videos
- Pre-recorded videos

- Live videos or streams

Roles and Responsibilities

The Corporation is committed to ensuring appropriate internet safety while hosting and operating online virtual recreation programming within the Culture and Recreation Department. The Corporation understands the organization's responsibility, both ethically and legally, in taking all reasonable precautions, evaluations and safeguards when operating online programming. This includes having safeguards in place to uphold safety as well as securing personal information.

Definitions

Access refers to gaining entry to a network provided by the Town to its employees and other authorized users, on or outside Town premises, including Telework situations and where employees or authorized users are using the network for business purposes or for personal use in accordance with the provisions of this policy on their own time.

Authorized Users refers to persons using a computer or computer account in order to perform work in support of Town business.

Disqualifying/Disconnecting refers to removing the access and participation of an individual from an online recreation programming, as deemed necessary by the moderator.

Instant Messaging is an Internet communications service used to send and deliver messages and content immediately. To use the service, users must be logged on to the server that hosts the instant messaging service, for example Private chat room.

Internet refers to the worldwide collection of networks which is linked through a common communications protocol and which collection of networks is used as a common basis for communications for all types of applications. Use of the Internet specifically includes access to the World Wide Web (WWW).

Online virtual recreation programming refers to programs and activities operated by the Town of LaSalle in an online format. This includes programs operated on Zoom, Facebook or other platforms.

Video-conferencing application/program refers to an application or program which can be utilized as a video-chat for online recreation programs. In most cases, the Corporation will use the video-conferencing platform Zoom.

Youth participant refers to a youth under the age of eighteen (18) who is a participant in an online recreation program hosted by the Town of LaSalle and requires adult consent for participation in such programming.

Procedures

The following procedures shall be used to ensure the safety of both employees

(authorized users) and participants engaging in virtual recreation programming:

Technology

- Online virtual programming shall be hosted using the Town of LaSalle's licensed and operated accounts only. No personal employee accounts shall be used in the execution of online programming.
- Town of LaSalle licensed and operated accounts must be accessible to more than one member in Management. This includes making the username and credentials available to multiple persons.

Safety

- Online virtual programs shall only be operated with prior permission from a person from Management. Employees are not permitted to operate their own programs without first notifying Management and receiving approval.
- An Informed Letter of Consent must be prepared and submitted to the parent prior to the program. The Town of LaSalle must receive the completed Letter of Consent to allow a minor to participate in virtual recreation programs.
- The employee administering the online program shall operate the video-conferencing program in an administrator or moderator mode. This will allow the employee to close the program to unregistered participants, control access to the platform, and have the ability to mute, disqualify or disconnect any user.

The Corporation recognizes the various populations that online recreation programming may appeal to. Therefore, it is necessary to develop different rules for different populations to create a safe experience.

Youth Participants

For online programming involving youth participants, the Town of LaSalle will:

- Maintain a minimum of two (2) employees hosting a video-conferencing program;
- Maintain a record of attendance of each registered participant;
- Disqualify/Disconnect participants as needed;
- Request that a parent/guardian not provide the youth participant with headphones/earphones to ensure audio is available to both the parent/guardian and youth participant;
- Will not instant message a participant in a private manner through video-conferencing platforms or in the operation of an online virtual recreation program;
- Will request that a parent of a youth participant is in the room at the commencement and conclusion of each video-conferencing program, and;
- Will request that a parent/guardian remains in the same room as their child for the duration of the video-conferencing program to minimize the risk of a youth participant being left alone on the computer.
 - Note: Requests are made to ensure internet safety for all participants. The Corporation reserves the right to abruptly end the program or disqualify a participant at any time.

Adult Participants

For online programming involving adult participants, the Town of LaSalle will:

- Disable the camera and microphone for all participants at the start of the program;
- Disqualify/Disconnect participants as needed

Disqualifying/Disconnecting a User

While operating online virtual recreation programming, the situation may arise for an employee, moderator or administrator of a video-conferencing platform to disqualify or disconnect a user. The Corporation reserves the right to disqualify any user in violation of any Harassment or Discrimination Policy, as well as anyone who demonstrates inappropriate behaviour including, but not limited to:

- Wearing inappropriate clothing, as deemed inappropriate by the moderator;
- Using inappropriate or foul language;
- Displaying inappropriate or foul behavior;
- Violating the Town of LaSalle Harassment and Discrimination Policy

Note: the moderator of the program reserves discretion, where applicable or necessary, to determine what constitutes inappropriate behaviour where the manner is not immediately clear. Discretion shall be limited however and applied on a case-by-case basis as inappropriate behaviour shall be determined by common sense principles.

Emergency Action Procedure

While operating online virtual recreation programming, the situation may arise for an employee, moderator or administrator of a video-conferencing platform to enact the Emergency Action Procedure guidelines. Reference shall be made to the internal Emergency Action Procedure in the event a major incident occurs.

Confidentiality

The Town of LaSalle treats all information received as confidential information and any information shared or discussed online will not be shared with anyone other than those who have a legitimate right to know. In accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection Act, personal information is collected under the authority of the Municipal Act.

- Documentation and Letters of Consent shall be collected by utilizing an electronic document application, or by receiving a completed application from email.
- All live virtual recreation programs shall be recorded in accordance with the Town of LaSalle Video Surveillance Policy

Duty to Report

In accordance with the Ontario Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, S.O. 2017, section 125(1), the Town of LaSalle has a duty to report a child in need of protection. The

Act is publicly available at <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/17c14>.

The duty to report is a legal duty and shall be abided by in all online virtual recreation programs. All reports shall be made directly to the Children's Aid Society, as outlined by the Act. The duty to report supersedes confidentiality and a reasonable expectation of privacy due to the authorization by statute.

Employee/Management Roles

As an employee of the Town of LaSalle, you have the following responsibilities to our workplace.

Employee's Role

All employees are expected to:

- Understand this policy and its relevant application.
- Understand the severity and seriousness of practicing safe online programming.
- Employees found to be in violation of this policy, or engaging in inappropriate behaviour including but not limited to any of the following are subject to disciplinary action:
 - Contacting youth participants through personal accounts or after program hours
 - Using inappropriate language, actions or gestures
 - Other inappropriate behaviour or actions
 - Participate in, and apply the principals, knowledge, and information received during training.
 - Maintain proper online etiquette and follow procedural guidelines.

Management's Role

- Responsible for supervising the development and implementation of online recreation programming.
- Management is expected to understand, enforce and communicate this policy to all employees.
- Ensuring the ongoing process of monitoring and provide operational support to staff.

Training

All employees shall receive training on the Virtual Recreation Programming and Online Safety Policy at the time of hire, at the beginning of operation of an online recreation program, and at least annually using the LaSalle Learning Management System www.townoflasallesafety.com.

Training will also be provided, where appropriate, for employees who change position.

Evaluation

The Virtual Recreation Programming and Online Safety Policy is reviewed and updated annually by the Culture and Recreation Department, reviewing the implementation of the policy as well as its effectiveness, or as changes are made through provincial legislation. Deficiencies in the policy will be noted.

Commitment to Improvement

The Culture and Recreation Department remains committed to internet safety to eliminate the risk of harm to vulnerable persons, including seniors and children, participating in virtual recreation programs.

References

- Ontario Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, S.O. 2017
- Plan to Protect®
- Town of LaSalle Computer Acceptable Use Policy
- Town of LaSalle Harassment and Discrimination Policy
- Town of LaSalle Protecting Personal Information
- Town of LaSalle Video Surveillance Policy