



WEX Virtual ETMP E-Learning Safety Guidelines for Mentors





WEXVirtual

ETMP E-Learning Safety Guidelines for Mentors

Context:

Work Exposure in Government (WEX) program is an initiative of the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA). The Agency work in partnership with Education Training Management Perspectives (ETMP) to develop, implement and evaluate the WEX program. ETMP has been involved in the delivery of the WEX program since 2015.

An important element of the WEX program is the involvement of Indigenous Mentors, which have been intentionally used since 2017 by ETMP with great success. The success is due to the trust relationships built between Mentors and Students and the intentionality of the process aligned to the goals of WEX. ETMP aim to develop with the WEX participants, 'bonds of respect' forged on leadership principles and shared values, cultural underpinnings all aligned to forging new career pathways in the Australian Public Service for Indigenous students.

WEXVirtual presents new challenges with E-Learning Safety; and with these new challenges comes risks which are unique to working with students on *shared social media platforms*. ETMP appreciates and respects the fact that our chosen Indigenous Mentors have always conducted themselves with a high level of professionalism and integrity. These Guidelines between Mentors and Students for WEXVirtual does not deny that fact. It is a recognition however that we are working predominantly now in a virtual space with a 'vulnerable' group and these guidelines are here to manage risks, protect students, mentors, ETMP, and NIAA alike.

The **Guidelines** are as follows:

Remember that a wise and caring Mentor:

- Focuses on the needs of the student and always works in their 'best interests.'
- Manages expectations.
- Frames up clear boundaries.
- Reports concerns and discusses them with Mentors Coach and ETMP.
- Records notes and logs in contacts for reference.
- Models and fosters a caring and supportive relationship.
- Builds the students capacity and self-confidence to 'own' their personal decision making.
- Grows awareness and accountability of behaviour to self, group and the WEX opportunity.
- Develops and models positive attitudes towards assisting others.
- Develops active community partnerships – we can only do so much.



- Recognises that some students may become dependent so aims to build their self-reliance.
- Considers other interventions that may be in place.
- Possesses and develops a knowledge of relevant child protection issues.
- Remembers the core intention of WEX.
- Always maintain confidentiality except when a student is at risk.
- Respects alternate views and cultures and develops the diverse voice.
- Demonstrates the capacity to focus on the needs of the student.
- Demonstrates good listening skills.
- Has the ability to relate positively in a supportive, non-judgemental manner.
- Knows when to call in assistance.
- A willingness to do things differently and be flexible.
- Has the capacity to establish firm boundaries that will assist the student at school.

These guidelines for WEX Virtual Mentors, is in the best interests of our WEX Students. Aligning ourselves to them enables our duty of care, a supportive relationship, and safeguarding our Mentors, ETMP and NIAA. We take our care and development of WEX students as paramount. We believe this to be sound governance and stewardship of the responsibility given to ETMP.

WEX Virtual 2020, ELearning Safety Guidelines

- Only use the online learning and collaboration platform/s that have been authorised for educational purposes by ETMP and NIAA.
- Establish, communicate, and consistently apply clear guidelines for how adults and young people will interact online.
- If certain platform functions are not permitted (e.g. video or audio recording), use system level controls to disable them.
- Enable and set global content filters and appropriate privacy settings where possible.
- Make sure all mentors know how to apply platform security and privacy settings to online classes or sessions. Adults should know how to prevent uninvited attendees accessing online sessions, how to block video, audio, or chat functions, and how to avoid exposing personal information.
- Ensure mentor-to-young person interactions via all media always remains professional. It's preferable to wisely use emojis, (if at all) due to the risk of misinterpretation.
- Avoid using personal email or social media accounts, or personal mobile phones – use the platform provided for communication. Keep to allocated contact times, particularly for live video or audio sessions. Sessions should be scheduled to a regular timetable. Communicate any variations to the participants and parents.

Mastering and managing the functions – if you are using video conferencing, practise these skills and strategies for minimising safety risks:

- Use audio or chat functions if video conferencing is not essential.
- Lock/add a password to a meeting to prevent unauthorised access.
- Mute participants on entry.
- Remove unauthorised or disruptive participants from the meeting.
- Disable certain functions e.g. record function.
- Have a backup plan in the event of misuse.
- Have a practise to see what screen sharing reveals, to protect privacy.
- Disable email alerts and other notifications.
- Upload resources before your lesson or session.
- Work out if mentors can 'drop in' to observe online classes or sessions.
- Know how to shut down inappropriate chat, how to exit platforms properly.
- Address issues of privacy (e.g. obtaining informed consent) and security (e.g. in relation to file transmission and storage)
- Make sure all participants (including yourself) are appropriately dressed and in a suitable location.
- Use a customised background or a private space for mentors own privacy.
- Avoid 1:1 interaction with young people. If it is a 1 on 1 mentoring session, utilise a co-facilitator and record the session.

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

ETMP support and uphold the National Principles on Child Safe Organisations which are:

1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance, and culture.
2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
4. Equity is upheld, and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
5. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
6. Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.

7. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.

8. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.

9. Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.

10. Guidelines and procedures and stated values, demonstrate how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

In line with Australia's obligations as a signatory to the UN Convention, ETMP supports and upholds with the National Framework which is underpinned by the following principles: All children have a right to grow up in an environment free from neglect and abuse. Their best interests are paramount in all decisions affecting them.

- Children and their families have a right to participate in decisions affecting them.
- Improving the safety and wellbeing of children is a national priority.
- The safety and wellbeing of children is primarily the responsibility of their families, who should be supported by their communities and governments.
- Australian society values, supports and works in partnership with parents, families, and others in fulfilling their caring responsibilities for children.
- Children's rights are upheld by systems and institutions.
- Policies and interventions are evidence based.

References and Links for further reading, study, and support:

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators/classroom-resources/be-deadly-online>

<https://policies.education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/associated-documents/mentoringguidelines.pdf>

https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/National%20Principles%20for%20Child%20Safe%20Organisations_0.pdf

<https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/publications-articles/protecting-children-is-everyones-business?HTML>



Child Protection Services State and Territory Addresses:

1. ACT Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services, Child, and Youth Protection Services (CYPS)
2. NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS)
3. The NT Department of Health and Families includes the Northern Territory Families and Children's Division (NTFC)
4. The QLD Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (DCSYW)
5. The South Australia Department for Families and Communities (DFC) and Child Protection Services (CPS)
6. TAS. Department of Communities, Child Safety Service (CSS) Tasmania
7. Victoria Dept. of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
8. WA Department of Communities - Child Protection and Family Support (CPFS)