

American Legion Auxiliary

Department of California



Public Relations Bulletin 5

Does and Don't

DON'T take photographs that focus only on one child or are a close up of their face. The use of images of children and minors has become a larger concern in recent years. There is a suggestion that such images may be used inappropriately, or in order to gain access to the children pictured. The issue has been further complicated with the advancement of Internet technology, meaning images and information are much easier to obtain and distribute.

DO use photographs that include many minors in the photograph. Instead of using one child in your advertising and publicity where they are easily identified, try to incorporate others so that it is a group picture where many children are included (all with parental consent of course). This will allow the focus to be on the event and not just a single child. It will also lessen the threats that an adult may use the knowledge gained from the photos to gain unintended access to them through techniques that employ familiarity.

Social media has changed the way in which we publicize our events and as a rule of thumb, it is important to post where you have been and not where you are going to further protect the safety and security of the minors you work with. In 1998, the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) was put in place to protect personal information of children on websites and online services – including apps – that are directed to children under 13. Generally, this applies to companies or groups that operate either commercial websites or online services directed at children (anyone younger than 13), which would include the American Legion Auxiliary.

COPPA requires those sites and services to notify parents directly and get their approval before they collect, use, or disclose a child's personal information. Personal information in the world of COPPA includes a child's name, address, phone number, or email address; their physical whereabouts; photos, videos, and audio recordings of the child; and persistent identifiers, like IP addresses, that can be used to track a child's activities over time and across different websites and online services. Even though this was originally passed 20 years ago, it is still very relevant when making decisions regarding public relations.

Public relations is a vital program of the American Legion Auxiliary and the youth we work with, both within The American Legion Family and the community. Paying attention to these suggestions will help you maximize your work within public relations, while maintaining a level of safety for the minors that you work with.

Donna L. Smith—Department Public Relations Chairman