# A logo with text on it  Description automatically generatedBest Practices: Virtual Family Council Meetings

This resource is intended to share strategies to create policy and procedures to support Virtual aspects of Family Council Business (email, meetings).

## Update your terms of reference

If your Council was active prior to COVID-19, you will need to update your terms of reference to include information about the use of technology (email, meeting platform). If your Council is new, you will need to include a section with details about the role of technology. A terms of reference describes the goals for your Family Council, its structure and operating procedures.

## Update your code of conduct

The actions and behaviour of one Council member can impact the Council as a whole. A Code of Conduct helps Council members understand what is and is not allowed during a Council meeting. Given the growing role of virtual interactions , think of how your Code of Conduct would apply to virtual interactions between Council members and staff (i.e. Facebook groups, email, Zoom meetings).

## Plan for succession

Succession refers to a plan of action that guides the transition when someone takes over a specific role and responsibilities. Given that turnover in Council membership is on-going, it is important to consider how this impacts the virtual resources used for Council Business. If using their own email (i.e. Gmail) and social media accounts (i.e. Facebook, Twitter) then Councils should consider the following:

* Who will take over the accounts?
* When and how often are passwords changed?
* What will happen to the accounts if they are no longer used by the Family Council?

## Respect confidentiality

Similar to in-person meetings, Council members understand that confidentiality means never discussing what is shared during a virtual meeting without permission. In meeting minutes, record the number of members in attendance. In emails and the meeting chat use initials rather than full names of family or staff.

## Use disclaimers for emails

Many forms of electronic communication are not considered confidential. When you send someone an email, they can share the email with as many people as they want. Include a disclaimer at the bottom of an email to communicate that you are unable to assure confidentiality. Use this example:

#### "This message contains confidential information and is intended only for the individual named. If you are not the named addressee you should not disseminate, distribute or copy this email. Please notify the sender immediately by email if you have received this email by mistake and delete this email from your system"

## Use Bcc in email correspondence

For Council members sending an email to all members of the Family Council use the Blind Carbon Copy (BCC) feature. In doing this you are keeping email addresses of all recipients protected. People will get the message but will not be able to see the addresses.

#### Tip: You can share Council Member emails with other members if they provide the Chair/Secretary/Staff Assistant written consent

## Understand online etiquette

Just as there are rules shaping your participation during in-person meetings, it is important that all Council members understand the rules during a virtual Family Council meeting. Council Chairs can help remind participants of meeting norms at the start of the meeting as well as at the top of your meeting agenda. Some examples of norms to understand for virtual meetings are:

* Make sure you mute your microphone when you are not speaking
* Use the Chat or Q&A function to ask questions and share resources
* Raise your hand if you would like to speak/add to the conversation

### To Learn more about Virtual Family Council Meetings, visit the FCO website or contact Family Councils Ontario:

Toll Free: 1-877-622-9968

Phone: 647-427-5551

Website: [www.fco.ngo](http://www.fco.ngo)

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