KEEPING TRIBAL CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM DATA SAFE WHILE WORKING REMOTELY

BEST PRACTICE TIPS – JUNE 2020

Capacity Building CENTER FOR TRIBES

During an emergency, tribal child welfare programs must respond quickly to ensure the safety of their team and the children and families they serve. Staff may need to work from home and provide some services virtually. Though there are further long-term actions to take to protect program data, the simple tips below can help tribal child welfare workers safely manage data and information when working remotely.

Protecting Data on Your Computer

Password protect your files

If using Excel to store data, make sure you lock the worksheet to protect it. Our sample CPS intake spreadsheet can be used in an emergency if you don't have access to your regular data information system.

To lock a sheet:

1. Go to the "Review" tab on the ribbon.
2. Click on the "Protect Sheet" button.
3. Enter a password for unlocking the sheet later. Make it easy to remember! If you forget the password, you won't be able to unlock the sheet again if you want to edit it.
4. Click "OK."

Even though you're making it as safe as possible by password protecting and limiting users, it's always best to use a unique identifier – a numeric code that replaces a name or other identifier – to protect information further.

Learn more about capturing Title IV-B data with Excel.

Using Word? Password protect a Word document.

Keep your operating system and software updated

Installing updates ensures that your operating systems are protected. If you're running a Windows operating system, see: How to keep your windows computer up-to-date. Mac users can refer to: Keep your Mac up to date. What software are you using? You can visit the websites for any software or programs you use to check for updates.

Password protect your computer

A password-protected computer means that you'll have to enter a password each time you use your device; but, if it's accidentally left unattended, it also means others won't be able to access your information easily. Remember to create robust passwords that others can't guess. You can also adjust your settings so that the password is required when the screen saver is activated. Note: Mac devices may be set to log in during startup automatically. Learn how to disable that setting here.

You can go a step further and encrypt your hard drive for optimal protection in case your computer is lost or stolen.

Backup your data

There are several different ways to backup your device and the files stored within. Backing up your data frequently allows you to preserve your data and restore your computer should your device become compromised for any reason. Cloud-based storage options such as iCloud can also be considered when backing up your data, and they ensure access to your files in the event your device breaks.

Backup and Restore in Windows 10

How to back up your Mac.

Install firewalls and anti-malware applications

Software firewalls and anti-virus (or anti-malware) applications serve different purposes and can be used together. Anti-malware applications protect your computer from malicious software and viruses and can remove unsafe files. Newer devices include firewalls and anti-malware applications such as Windows Defender automatically. Make sure you're using the most updated version of whatever protections you have.

Help prevent viruses from getting on your PC. This article includes helpful reminders on how to use a pop-up blocker.

Connecting to the Internet Safely

Only connect to trusted Wi-Fi networks

Reliable internet access is a concern for many. However, hotspots and public Wi-Fi networks are not secure and can be easily compromised. Avoid networks you do not know or trust, including public Wi-Fi networks at shops or restaurants unless you have a virtual private network (VPN) connection. Always check to make sure you're picking a legitimate network before connecting. If you can join a network without entering a password, it's not secure. Also, make sure your devices are set to ask before connecting to a network. This setting can usually be found within your Wi-Fi preferences.

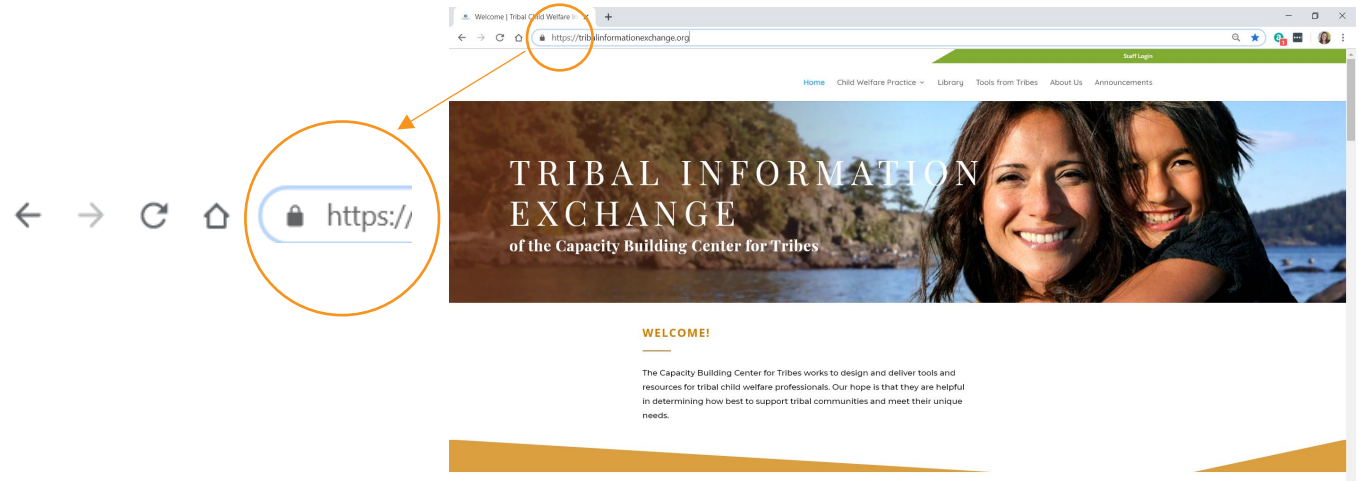
Consider file sharing services

Sites like Google Drive, Box, and Dropbox can allow you to share files with others in your organization efficiently. The files are stored in secure data centers, and permissions can be applied that make the files accessible to only those that you select. Make sure you review the security settings from whatever file sharing service you choose. As always, it is best to use a unique identifier and not names or Social Security Numbers for any data you will share.

These sites can serve as alternatives to storing files on USB or thumb drives, which can be lost or stolen.

Make sure the websites you visit are secure

Secure websites use HTTPS (versus HTTP) to make more secure connections. A lock icon is also an indicator of a secure website. Depending on the web browser you're using, a lock icon or the word "secure" are also indicators of a safe website. You can also enable pop-up blockers within your web browser settings to add an extra layer of security.



Bonus Tip – Forms and Tools Online

If you are working remotely and do not have access to the forms and tools you frequently use, check out the Tools for Tribes feature on the Tribal Information Exchange. There are sample case plans, intake forms, risk assessment protocols, and more shared by tribal child welfare programs that can be downloaded and modified to fit your needs.