
PILOT EDITION



ONLINE

Start-Up Guide

Welcome to the Pilot Edition of *Keep Connected Online*

Keep Connected is a two-generation, relationship-centered family strengthening resource focused on strengthening relationships with, within, and among families as the foundation for family well-being and resilience. An in-person, seven-session version has been used successfully for several years in schools, youth-serving organizations, child and family services, juvenile justice, faith communities, and other settings.

The 2020 coronavirus pandemic propelled us to create this online edition of *Keep Connected*. To do so, we reconceptualized the interactions to take advantage of the unique opportunities of online tools, rather than simply trying to make an in-person experience “work” online. Therefore, it is thematically consistent with the in-person experience; however, many of the activities and discussions are new. We hope that they are catalysts for important, meaningful conversations and interactions within and among the families in your community.

Thanks for Your Feedback and Collaboration

Because *Keep Connected Online* is new, we greatly value your honest feedback. We’ve created a [feedback form](#) that we ask you to complete after facilitating each session. Each time you give feedback, we’ll thank you with a **\$5 gift** card to Target or Amazon.

We at Search Institute appreciate your collaboration in partnering with families. It is our hope that this new resource will become a valuable tool for you and others in this work. We look forward to learning from you about what works, what you do to make it better, and ways we can improve it for greater impact.

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Overview of *Keep Connected Online*

Keep Connected Online is a four-session workshop series for families with youth in the middle school years (ages 10 to 15). It is designed to be offered remotely by schools and organizations to the families they serve. The four 60-minute sessions are based on Search Institute's Framework of Developmental Relationships. The four sessions are:

1. Thriving Through the Teenage Years: The Power of Family Relationships
2. The Power of Caring and Caring about Power
3. In the Zone: Challenge and Support Growth
4. New Possibilities for Our Family and the Future

Between sessions, families are expected or encouraged to be engaged in family activities, including the Keep Connected Pledge and Plan for Families. This project helps them focus on specific ways they will commit to each other to maintain and strengthen relationships together.

The sessions parallel the content of the longer, in-person *Keep Connected* workshop series. However, they have been substantially adapted to be effective and engaging in an online environment.

Technical Requirements

The facilitator guide has been prepared with Zoom as the assumed delivery platform, given its current widespread use. Most features can readily be translated to other platforms. Some may have to be adapted, depending on what is available.

These workshops do not have a lot of technological bells and whistles that will be intimidating to facilitators and families that haven't spent a lot of time in online sessions. Each session uses only simple interactive features that are valuable for advancing the session goals without requiring a steep learning curve. We have avoided any platforms that require payment to use (at least for the minimum use needed for these workshops). In some cases, we suggest low-tech alternatives if you are not comfortable with the recommendation.

Each facilitator and organization will have to judge the readiness of its families for various interactive features—or if they will only cause frustration and time delays. If the group is relatively small, raising hands may be easier than launching a poll!

In some cases, a group of parents may want to use more sophisticated technology tools that are recommended in the facilitator's guide. **You may want to supplement what's here** with additional tools. Let us know what works!

Structure

Each session has three parts:

1. A 30-minute online session just for youth
2. A 30-minute online session just for parents
3. A 30-minute session for parents and youth together

Because of the wide range of technological access and knowledge among families and agencies, it is impossible to say how this will work in every case. Each part plays an important role in the model, so it is important to be creative to make them work. And it is important that the parent only and youth only sessions occur before the family session. However, *the youth and parent sessions can be either at different times or concurrent*. Here are some points to consider when determining how to schedule the two sessions:

| | Both Sessions at the Same Time | At Different Times |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Potential advantages | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requires less time for families.• Parents don't have to find care/activities for their kids while they are in their session.• Fewer times to juggle and remember. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Only need one trained facilitator.• Only need one account for the webinar platform.• Families only need one computer and less internet access to participate.• More flexible for youth and parent schedules. (Could do youth in OST program when they aren't as tired.) |
| Potential disadvantages | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Likely need two webinar accounts in order to use interactive features with both groups.• Families have to be able to access the internet from two computers and two private locations.• Both sessions have to be timed to begin and end at the same time. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lots of schedules to juggle and times to remember for families.• Can complicate the calendar even more. |

The Keep Connected Pledge and Plan for Families

A significant part of the expectation for families between the online sessions is to reflect on what they are learning and thinking about together, and then to make commitments to each other that they write down as part of a craft project. *Note that the pledge weaves into the sessions as well.*

We've provided four options:

- A Pledge Box
- A Pledge Collage
- A Pledge Crest
- A Pledge T-Shirt

At the end, they are to select their most meaningful or important shared commitments, and then build a plan for how they'll stick with those, then they'll share those commitments at the final session. It can be a powerful act to publicly articulate those commitments and generate support for your family from your peers. *The Keep Connected Pledge and Plan: Start-Up Guide and Tool Kit* provides a step-by-step reflection guide for families based on each of the four options. You can just pick the one you need and copy that for families.

We strongly recommend that you provide a *Pledge and Plan* kit for families, rather than expect them to have or purchase the supplies they'll need. It's not a lot, but it might be a too much of a hassle for them to get around to it.


Preparing for the Series

Some things to consider as you prepare to offer this online series for families:

- Even though this series is online doesn't mean it will work just as well with lots and lots of people. It is designed as an interactive, interpersonal learning and community-building experience for families. There's still value in keeping it small (fewer than 10 families) so that they can build relationships, everyone can participate, etc. Its success depends on conversation and building trust among participants.
- Provide families with the *Family Workbooks* and the *Keep Connected Pledge and Plan for Families* kit before the workshop series begins. If you're able, delivering it to them in person and greeting them in person (even socially distant) may be an important connection to make.
- You may choose to add other treats for families as well. Some agencies provide coupons for snacks while families participate. Feel free to augment what is provided here!
- Each session will have a preparation section at the beginning. Take time to prepare for each session, including reviewing the slides, deleting (or hiding) those you don't need or doing any customization that is important for your organization or community.

Send Your Feedback

After each session, we will greatly appreciate it if you will take a few minutes after facilitating each session to send us your feedback about what worked, what didn't, and any adjustments you needed to make. We've created a [feedback form](#) for you to use. (There's a link at the end of every session.) Each time you give feedback, we'll thank you with a **\$5 gift card** to Target or Amazon. More importantly, your feedback will **shape the next, improved edition**.

Search  **Keep Connected Online Start-Up Guide**
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