



FAQs for Parents

Kooth Digital Health, North America

What will happen when my child logs in to Kooth?

Making an account at Kooth is quick and straightforward; we ask for a few pieces of information to identify who they are, your child will be asked to create a username and password unique to them, and then they are able to immediately access the site. Access includes reading articles, written by Kooth staff and by other young people, and exploring different aspects of health, well-being, and day-to-day life. We also host discussion boards around particular questions or concerns, and there are various spaces that individuals can use for themselves, such as a journal, mini-activities (designed to support mental well-being), and a goal-setting area. They can also, if they wish, send a message to our team of practitioners to request a live conversation at a time that is convenient to them (between the opening hours of 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.).

If your child requests a chat with a clinician, they will be asked some brief questions about what they would like help with and asked to complete one or two short questionnaires. This information is to help us understand more about how things are going for them at the moment, and what the most appropriate next steps might be. For example, they could be offered up to an hour of “speaking” (using text-based communication) to the clinician, which will typically include thinking about any challenges or concerns they have, setting some goals, and considering how Kooth can best support them. For some individuals, we may suggest a series of weekly chats with the same clinician, working towards a particular goal. For others, the content and community aspects of the site may be most useful, and, for some students, we might make a recommendation to other services. All Kooth services are designed to help the youth access the right services at the right time.

How do you manage any safeguarding or risk concerns?

Safety is always at the core of all we do at Kooth, and we have a number of processes in place to support this. Our experienced team of clinicians are well trained to assess and manage risk, and our platform supports the early identification and communication of risk to enable swift action where necessary. In addition to our processes within the Kooth platform, we also have robust information sharing and escalation procedures outside of the platform. We do not routinely share information relating to chat sessions, as we know that this can prevent young people from talking to us, which can therefore

increase risk, rather than reduce it; however, we will always ensure that the relevant services/adults are alerted when significant safeguarding or risk concerns are identified.

Will Kooth respond to my child if they are in crisis?

Safety and a student's well-being are our top priorities. A Kooth team member will assess a student's needs in a crisis situation and provide the appropriate contact information for any needs identified. Kooth is not a crisis response program; therefore, all contact information for necessary services will be given to the student through partnership with the school. Through this partnership, internal and external resources are identified and provided to the student. In addition, a scheduled follow-up chat will address the needs with the student. If a parent has further questions regarding this protocol, Kooth encourages parents/caregivers to contact pennsylvania@kooth.com.

Why do you encourage users to not share their username and password with others?

We encourage all Kooth users to ensure that their log in details are private. This is to protect their confidentiality and give them a sense of ownership and control over the information that they share with us. We know that young people may not disclose things if they are concerned that their family or friends are able to see that information. However, a lot of our work includes encouraging our young people to speak to their friends and family about their difficulties, and to seek support from them. If we are concerned about risk, we will contact school personnel and inform them of any safety concerns.

How can I be confident that content posted on the site is safe?

Everything that is submitted to the Kooth platform is checked before it is published. This is conducted by our team of highly-skilled moderators, who have completed our custom moderation training. Our moderators review all submissions to ensure that they meet our community boundaries and age ratings guidance. If a submission contains information that suggests a young person is at risk, from themselves or others, we would reach out to them with a message and escalate our processes appropriately,

including making contact with the relevant services/adults outside the platform. Some submissions may be edited or not published, if they do not meet our boundaries and guidelines.

What if children befriend each other and give well-meaning but unhelpful advice, or actively seek to bully one another?

As above, everything that is posted on the site is pre-moderated. On the Kooth platform, we are able to link your child's username with their identity. On the site itself, they will be "anonymous," in that other young people will not be able to identify them. If your child reveals their identity within a post, this would not be made public, in order to protect them. Of course, if our team identified a submission deemed inappropriate for publication, we would always reach out to the user directly, to explain why we have not published it and to offer them guidance and support.

What if my child asks for counseling, but they are not ready for it?

One of the things we always consider and assess is whether a young person has the mental capacity and understanding to consent to counseling. If someone does not have the capacity to consent to counseling, we would adjust the way in which we work with them, offering more of an information and resource style of support.

Why can't I be informed of what my child is discussing/sharing regarding their health and well-being?

We know that, as a parent or caregiver, you want to be aware of any important aspects of your child's life, including their mental health. We also know that, for all of us, it's important to have spaces that feel safe, and where we can share some of our thoughts and feelings, without worrying about the impact on the person that we're talking to. There are a lot of reasons as to why people may not feel able to share their difficulties with friends and family. Be assured that we would encourage individuals to speak to their support network about what they were experiencing, and that, if we identify significant risk to your child or anyone else, we will ensure that key figures - such as schools and parents/caregivers - are aware of those risks and difficulties.

What should I say to my child, if they say they are using Kooth?

If your child tells you that they're using Kooth, we understand that you might want to ask questions about "why" and "what for." We'd encourage you to thank them for telling you, and to ask more open-ended questions, such as "Are you finding it helpful?", "Is there anything you'd like to share with me about it?", or similar. You can also reassure them that they can talk to you at any time. You could say something like, "If you ever want to tell me anything about how you're thinking and feeling, I'm happy to listen." Kooth's suggestion is to focus more on validation and encouragement about your child seeking support autonomously, rather than seeking answers as to what they're seeking support for.

How can I trust Kooth as a service that works?

Kooth was established in the United Kingdom over 20 years ago and is the largest digital provider of mental services for children and young people in the UK. It is commissioned primarily by the National Health Service and is the only digital service of its kind to be accredited by the British Association of Counseling and Psychotherapy. There is a wealth of evidence demonstrating its impact for children and young people in the UK. Our approach is tried and tested, and it always takes our "user voice" into consideration. In other words, Kooth has been built for young people, WITH young people, and we will be modeling this same approach in the USA.

Please contact us if you would like to see some of our publications that demonstrate our reach and impact in the UK.

What qualifications and experience do the counselors have at Kooth?

Counselors at Kooth all possess a minimum of a master's degree in a behavioral health field and are licensed by the state in which they operate. All counselors have been trained by Kooth and are supervised by an experienced team of qualified clinical specialists, and their work is governed and audited internally through an industry standard best practice. In addition, we have a team of experienced mental health support practitioners who possess a minimum of a bachelor's degree in a relevant field (e.g., social work, psychology).

Why is my child using Kooth instead of accessing face-to-face support?

There are many face-to-face services that can provide effective support for people. However, there may also be some barriers to these services, including their geographical location, waiting lists, and thresholds for accessing them. We've found that some young people prefer to use a service like Kooth, which they can access outside of traditional hours and from wherever they are. We do not have a waiting list or thresholds for access, so Kooth can also be helpful for people who want to access support in the present moment, before things may worsen with their mental health. Some young people also feel there is some shame and stigma attached with attending face-to-face mental health services, especially if their peers may see them (e.g. at school). The digital nature of our service can support individuals to access support in a way that remains confidential from those around them. In addition, young people who have additional needs or disabilities that make traditional services inaccessible or difficult to navigate may find Kooth a more manageable way to access support.

How can I help my child if they are experiencing mental health difficulties?

It can be hard to know how best to support someone you care about when they're experiencing mental health difficulties - particularly so when that person is your child. There are some great support spaces for parents and caregivers, such as [Learning to Help Your Child and Your Family](#). We recognize that, as a guardian, you may feel frustrated or helpless, at times, in regards to your child's mental health. We want to reassure you that those feelings are normal and appropriate, and we're here to help. Sometimes, it can be helpful to ask what your child needs, rather than giving advice or telling them what to do. Of course, at times you may, as a parent, need to be more assertive around ensuring that they access support, or seeking medical treatment when required, and we would encourage you to discuss any of those concerns with their pediatrician or with mental health professionals.

Will I be billed for Kooth services?

No. All Kooth services are provided free of charge to you and your student and are paid for through other means, such as the school or state.

Who will my child's data be shared with?

Kooth maintains a standard of following the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. Your child's data will not be shared with anyone outside of the Kooth team. Details of the students' services will remain confidential at all times. If there is an imminent risk identified, appropriate external authorities will be notified of the risk alone, at that time (e.g. the school). If you have questions regarding HIPAA, feel free to read more here: [CDC-HIPAA](#).

What if I don't want my child using Kooth services?

If you do not consent for your child to utilize Kooth's mental health services, Kooth will not directly engage or interact with the child for any reason if they are under the age of 13. However, please understand that Kooth's website is public and does provide resources and information regarding mental health support. If you have concerns regarding this, please contact pennsylvania@kooth.com.