**Student Engagement Guide**

**During Job Corps’ Spring Break & Distance**

**Learning Status**

**Objective:** To provide guidance to Centers for engaging students while they are in remote status. All available research indicates that staying connected with students during an extended break, especially one that happens as a result of any emergency situation, in an on-going and structured manner, is essential to student retention, productivity and mental health. Whether students are in a Spring Break or Distance Learning status, their physical remoteness requires changes or enhancements to the way we engage with them. It is critical that staff be provided either training or written scripts on displaying empathy and listening skills during all interactions with students while they are in a remote status. This guide offers tips and resources to help staff engage with students remotely and to keep students motivated and interested in returning once students return to the Center.

**Staff Assignments & Teams:**

Staff teams can be established to work with groups of students. These team can be responsible for the following:

* Acquiring and updating the latest contact information from individual students. Include at least 3 contact numbers for every student.
* Verify that contact information, email and phone numbers are active. If three numbers are not available, call one of the numbers and ask for closest relative contact.
* In addition to phone contact information get social media information if applicable *(send a positive message)*
* Address any critical problems/barriers students may experience
* Contacting students to remind them of their return dates
* Reiterate the return travel details during each call *(i.e. pick up times, locations, etc.)*
* Identify students who are an UA/DID risk and case manage to be either orderly separation upon return
* Counselors must develop solid case management plans for students identified during student meetings and follow-up
* Student Review – reviewed high risk (UA/DID) students identified and case managed
* Initiate a Staff/Student Buddy System – Assign 2-3 students to each staff member. Create staff challenges and competitions on who can engage their students the best remotely.
* Discuss/Review/Update student goals…reinforce career pathway plans & student progress toward completion. Encourage ongoing engagement and participation in the Job Corps program, both while in remote status and when physically return to Center, emphasizing self-sufficiency.

**Phone Calls:**

During remote status, each student should receive at least one phone call a week from a Center staff member. Staff should be provided a call script to guide the conversation. It is important for staff to realize that these calls can feel redundant to the student. Therefore, each staff member assigned with making the call should tailor their call to the specific student and utilize their existing working relationship to provide support. This is also an opportunity to prepare the student for distance learning and some of the changes that they can expect when they return to the Center.

When calling students, staff should log the information received in a CIS case notes and, if desired, the information can be shared with other staff via email. Also, case notes can be entered into OASIS or CTS for applicants and separated students. The following are two examples of calls that can be made to students:

**Weekly Student Calls –** The call script should focus on positive reminders regarding the student’s accomplishments and the great things the student can accomplish upon return to the Center. This script is focused on student achievement and progress in their trade and/or academic programs (e.g. TABE, HSD/HSE). If possible, the parents/guardians of minors are invited to join the phone call to hear about their student’s progress.

**Student Safety Calls –** These are calls to students to ensure they are safe and secure. The call script should focus on questions such as, “How are you doing?” “Are you feeling OK?” “Are you having any problems at home?” “Do you feel safe and comfortable where you are at?”

**Student Call Protocol –** Contacting students while they are in a remote status works best under the following circumstances:

1. The call time is arranged in advance; an appointment should be made by text or email at a time of the student’s convenience, not just the staff member’s convenience.
2. The call allows time for the student to talk and staff to listen; not just staff doing the talking.
3. The call is tailored to the student, with a clear indication that the staff knows the student and their needs.
4. The call is supportive and has a focus of checking on the student’s well-being. Remember: Many of our students living situations can be very challenging.
5. The staff members making the calls have pre-established, positive working relationships with the students they are calling.

**Mail and Email:**

The Center Director can send a weekly or bi-weekly letter to students and parents/guardians updating them on program status and developments. The following is a non-exhaustive list of things to consider including in this letter:

* New Safety Measures
* Advertise Student Return Celebrations
* Birthday Shout-Outs
* Facility Improvements
* Curriculum Development
* Industry Specific Information
* Positive and Motivational Quotes
* Distance Learning Information
* Center Newsletters
* Student Placement Success
* Implement Refer-a Friend Program

When sending e-mails to students, it is recommended that staff use students’ official jobcorps.gov e-mail addresses.

Students can be sent digital materials to print off at home, such as a motivational quote card or goals flyer, that they can keep for themselves and share on social media.

**Technology/Social Media:**

Our Job Corps students are technologically savvy. The use of technology and social media are often the best avenues of access to connect and stay in touch with a student. There are many virtual communication platforms that are available to connect with students individually or in groups. These include resources such as Skype, ZOOM, Chat Rooms, Google Classrooms, etc.

Centers can also consider the utilization of social media as a student communication tool. All electronic/social media connections should be positive, encouraging and engaging.

It is important to establish clear expectations with staff that all communication with students via technology/social media must be professional and business related.

**Programming & Counseling (Individual & Group):**

Center staff should facilitate weekly group and individual programming and counseling sessions using a virtual communication platform such as Skype, ZOOM, Chat Rooms, Google Classrooms, etc. The programming and counseling sessions should cover a variety of topics to include, but not limited to, the following:

* Dealing with Stress
* Time Management
* Healthy Eating
* Benefits of Exercise
* Tutor Support
* Drug Prevention
* Anger Management
* Sexual Education
* Independent Living Skills
* Mock Interviews
* CTR Panels

If possible, it would be good to conduct remote Evaluation of Student Progress Panels through a remote communication platform. Counselors should also be prepared to provide remote counseling to students and their parents/guardians. It is important to educate and work with the people caring for our students. Relationships with parents of minors are especially important during this time of crisis and will go a long way toward supporting student retention.

**Creative Engagement:**

There are many additional ways to connect with students while they are in a remote status. The following is a list of additional ways to creatively engage students.

**Care Packages–** Students can be sent Care Packages containing basic materials such as:

* Toilet Paper
* Hygiene products
* Laundry Pods
* Cosmetics
* Food/Snacks
* School Materials (e.g. paper, pencils)
* TABE Worksheets
* Trade Student Material
* Study Materials

**Lunch Delivery –** Students who are local to the Center can have sack lunches delivered to their door multiple times each week.

**Remote Games & Contests –** Create online or remote challenges and contests with prizes (e.g. 1st Place Certificate). The winning students can be sent their prize.

* Spelling Bee’s
* Math Quizzes
* Poetry Writing
* Chess
* Book Club
* Crossword puzzles
* Remote board games
* Remote online video game leagues
* Recreation work-outs and challenges

**Distance Learning Participation –** Find creative ways to incentivize distance learning participation, such as:

* Positive Social Media Post
* Letter From the CD to Parents/Guardians
* Lunch With the CD
* Recreation Activity Priority Pass
* Cafeteria Line Skip Pass
* Newsletter Shout-Outs

**Additional Programming Ideas:**

* Develop and Implement – Remote Social Development curriculum and activities
  + Recreation
  + Student Leadership
  + Community Living
* Drive incentives and programming (*via Student Portal Accounts)* by sending weekly challenges to students and acknowledge/reward winners – mail the prizes
* Centers should create a calendar of events to attract student return
* Have Center Standards Officers conduct virtual classroom observations – provide classroom observation incentives for consistent classroom participation
* Remote (virtual) cooking and baking classes
* Remote (virtual) boxing lessons with recreation staff
* Remote (virtual) make-up tutorials
* Remote (virtual) home work-out groups
* Wellness – Mental Health video conference
* Remote (virtual) sanitation class – How to wash hands correctly
* Tie Etiquette – How to tie a tie
* Zoom – Sports talk groups
* Zoom – Music talk groups
* Remote SGA General assemblies
* Remote customer service training
* Drivers education studies
* Staff homework/tutor support