

ONLINE SAFETY

- A leader in online safety, icouldbe.org fully complies with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act. Safety is the single most important element of one-to-one relationship facilitation on the icouldbe.org platform. Connecting adult volunteers with young people in a safe, respectful environment feeds the community and encourages it to thrive.
- The security of icouldbe.org's online community is paramount, and the first principle behind any and all upgrades to the system. To ensure safe, anonymous and accountable communications between student mentees and adult mentors, icouldbe.org uses proprietary algorithms to monitor all communications. A rigorous content filter flags potentially inappropriate content and messages, such as email or physical addresses, phone numbers, last names or profanity, for personal review by icouldbe.org staff members. Although security and safety issues are uncommon, protocols for disciplinary action for both mentors and mentees are in place, should the situation require.
- Mentors on the icouldbe.org platform undergo identity verification and criminal and sex-offender background checks before they are accepted into the program. All communications between mentors and mentees occur internally within the icouldbe.org system and are subject to filters and monitored by program staff. Mentors and mentees utilize user names to protect their identities and do not communicate via their personal email addresses or identify the user's name or place of residence. A dynamic filter catches potentially inappropriate communications, which are then checked by program staff and followed up with mentees and their teachers.
- Mentors and mentees are also required to notify icouldbe.org of any inappropriate or worrisome communications. If a mentee confides that he or she is the victim of sexual, emotional or physical abuse the mentor is required to notify icouldbe.org immediately so icouldbe.org can contact the proper authorities. The same protocol applies if a mentee tells the mentor of their involvement in any illegal activity.
- icouldbe.org's filtering and monitoring system works as a series of safety nets. If there is an incident, a mentor emails the classroom teacher and program staff while a filter simultaneously flags inappropriate content in the system. Program staff speak with the teacher and school principal to prompt an immediate school-based intervention. In many cases, young people experiencing stress and violence have no one to turn to but their mentors, and icouldbe.org's programs have been a vital part of getting them the help that they need. The platform provides a safe space for them and functions as an added layer of protection in their lives.
- Icouldbe.org does not disguise the role surveillance plays in its programs. Teachers have access to the front end of the site and can see what their students see, but they also benefit from a customized administrative area that highlights information about their students so they can summarize progress at a glance. This level of monitoring ensures that teachers can supervise their students effectively and observe their progress through the curriculum. The ease with which this information is available enables teachers to participate, manage and evaluate students on all of their online interactions. Teachers give program staff feedback about how much they like this part of the site. It allows them to evaluate their class's progress and monitor individual students' performance without going too deep into the system.