

2022-2023 Local Observation Protocol Guidance for Early Childhood Community Network Lead Agencies

The Louisiana [Early Childhood Education Act \(Act 3\)](#) of the 2012 Legislative session requires that the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) establishes and carries out a statewide accountability system used to measure the quality of all publicly-funded early childhood programs. To achieve that statutory requirement, [Bulletin 140 §503](#) requires community network lead agencies to develop a plan and process to coordinate and conduct local observations reliably and without conflict of interest. The Department requires all community network lead agencies to adopt a written local observation protocol that meets the minimum requirements included in this document.

Community network lead agencies must develop a Coordinated Observation Plan by **September 30, 2022** and have a schedule for completing local observations for each observation period. A [template](#) for this plan has been developed to assist community network lead agencies as they develop observation protocols for the 2022-2023 year. Per the [Ready to Achieve! 2022-2023 School Operational Guidelines](#) approved by the Office of Public Health, essential visitors are allowed to enter early learning sites to carry out essential functions that support the implementation of state/federal law or BESE policy. If you have questions or need assistance, contact robert.jones4@la.gov.

Essential visitors are individuals who must enter schools or early learning sites in order to conduct visits in accordance with Louisiana law or policy. Essential visitors include, but are not limited to, individuals who:

- conduct CLASS® observations
- observe teacher candidates as part of the teacher preparation quality rating system
- provide essential support and services including, but not limited to: early intervention services, special education services, individual teacher or director coaching, small group teacher collaboration coaching, field support consultants, technical assistance, or mental health consultation.

Table of Contents

COVID-19 Considerations	3
Observer Safety Protocols	3
Impacts of COVID-19 on Classroom Interactions	3
Observation Protocol Updates	4
Conducting 2022-2023 Observations	4
Before the Observation Begins	4
Minimum Observer Qualifications	4
Scheduling Observations	4
Observer Schedules	6
Site Notification	6
Rescheduling Observations	6
The Day of the Observation	7
Observer Demeanor, Attire, and Conduct	7
Observer Arrival at Site	7
Observer Classroom Entry	8
Teacher and Child Attendance	9
Observer Interactions	10
Scoring Cycles	10
Conducting Observations	11
Extra-Curricular Pull-Out and Special Visiting Teachers	11
Taking Notes	12
Observation Concerns	12
Additional Requirements	13
Providing Observation Feedback	13
Reporting Scores	13
Observer Accuracy and Shadow Scoring	13
Conflict of Interest	14
Record Keeping	14
References & Additional Resources	15

COVID-19 Considerations

The Department recognizes that the ability for early childhood community network lead agencies to conduct in-person observations will be affected by COVID-19 related factors within each community. Community networks lead agencies are encouraged to coordinate with their [local public health unit](#) on decision making as appropriate. In partnership with the Office of Public Health, the Department has established the following criteria that should be used when determining whether in-person observations can safely be conducted by external observers:

	When to Pause In-Person Observations	When to Resume In-Person Observations
Community	Community network lead agencies may use CDC COVID-19 Community Levels and collaborate with local health officials and stakeholders to identify if, and when, to pause in person observations. Virtual observations are strongly encouraged when COVID-19 Community Level is high and/or vaccinated observers are unavailable.	Community network lead agencies may use CDC COVID-19 Community Levels and collaborate with local health officials and stakeholders to identify when to resume in person observations. In-person observations should be conducted in compliance with all health and safety protocols required by state and local health officials and site procedures.
Site	If there are any documented cases of COVID-19 at the site (inclusive of staff, children and parents) or any evidence of community spread within the site, community network lead agencies may decide, in consultation with site leadership and community health officials, that in-person observations at that site should be paused.	Community network lead agencies, site leadership, and community health officials may decide in-person observations at site(s) may resume in keeping with the LDH K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education (ECE) Operational Guidance and Isolation/Quarantine Recommendations .
Observer	If an observer exhibits symptoms of COVID-19, tests positive, or has had close contact (within six feet for 15 minutes or more) with someone who tests positive, they should pause observations.	The observer may resume observations following the guidelines for ending isolation or quarantine outlined by the CDC .

Observer Safety Protocols

Community network lead agencies should develop protocols to ensure that observers are aware of and follow COVID-19 health and safety protocols and procedures. Observers should request and comply with the health and safety procedures required by each site, inclusive of: participating in any required health screenings that the site conducts upon entry to the facility prior to each observation visit, completing a self-health check the morning of the observation and canceling if the observer has symptoms of illness (fever, cough, shortness of breath, etc.), handwashing upon arrival and as needed throughout the visit, and maintaining appropriate social distancing throughout the visit.

Observers should be familiar with the recommendations from the Louisiana Department of Health for the use of vaccinations to reduce spread of COVID-19.

Impacts of COVID-19 on Classroom Interactions

Community network lead agencies should follow guidance that Teachstone (2020) has provided, which outlines how changes in classroom environments due to COVID-19 may impact indicator-level evidence for each CLASS® dimension. Observers should review Teachstone’s [guidance on conducting CLASS® observations of in-person teaching during COVID-19](#), as well as guidance specifying how COVID-19 could impact [CLASS®](#) indicators for the [Infant](#), [Toddler](#), and [Pre-K](#) tool.

Observation Protocol Updates

In addition to these considerations for whether in-person observations can be conducted safely, the Department has also provided additional COVID-19 minimum requirements and protocols that lead agencies and observers should implement when conducting in-person observations (pages 4-5).

Lead agencies also have the option to conduct teleconference or videotaped observations (guidance provided in Column B). Lead agencies should consider the minimum requirements and protocols in all columns below when conducting observation visits of any type during the Fall 2022 observation period. For live video conference (e.g. Zoom or another live video conferencing platform) or recorded video observations, lead agencies should refer to all applicable protocols in Column A: Local Protocol Requirements and Column B: Additional Live Video Conference & Recorded Video Protocol Requirements.

Community network lead agencies should prioritize in-person observations whenever possible. If the community network lead agency cannot observe the site in-person, virtual observations can be used to ensure all publicly-funded classrooms are observed each semester. Virtual observations should be used as a last resort to ensure observation capacity or in extreme circumstances where in-person observations may not be possible. Community network lead agencies should ensure that early learning sites are prepared for in-person observers to visit the site or can articulate a clear justification for why in-person observations are not possible.

Conducting 2022-2023 Observations Before the Observation Begins

	Column A Local Protocol Requirements	Column B Additional Live Video Conference & Recorded Video Protocol Requirements
Minimum Observer Qualifications	<p>Local observers must meet the following minimum qualifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Be certified by Teachstone as a reliable observer for every age group that will be observed by that observer in the 2022-2023 school year (certificate on file with community network lead agency); ● Participate in on-going calibration exercises at least once per observation period; and ● Have a valid Child Care Criminal Background Check (CCCBC) that is on file with the community network lead agency (for early learning center observers only) 	<p>Teachstone (2020) recommends that a “neutral individual”, e.g. administrator, film the classroom to ensure capture of footage during transitions and movement throughout the classroom.” Live video conference observers and recorded video observers (also known as coders) must meet all of the same minimum qualifications as local observers.</p>
Scheduling Observations	<p>Community network lead agencies must develop a written plan to ensure they have all sites and the classrooms for each site, with correct age types, entered in the CLASS® Portal by September 30 and have a schedule for completing local observations for each</p>	<p>If utilizing live video conference (e.g. Zoom) or recorded video observations, the written plan should also include protocols outlining how the community network lead agency will schedule observations. These protocols should include how the community</p>

	<p>observation period.</p>	<p>network lead agency will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify the technology needed to complete live video conference or recorded video observations - ensuring that this technology is suitable for the site being observed (i.e., considers if staff are available to assist with capturing the interactions, if the site has WiFi, etc.); ● Work with the site to determine the individual responsible for facilitating the live video conference or videotaping of the observation; ● Determine how live video conferencing and videotaping will be conducted in a manner that does not impact the level of supervision and quality of adult-child interactions in the classroom, required ratios and group size, and maximum allowed group size during COVID-19 as outlined in the <i>2022-2023 Local Observation Protocol Guidance for Early Childhood Community Network Lead Agencies</i>; and ● Share protocols with the site that outline methods for ensuring that the web stream of video footage is of good audio and video quality, and adequately captures the visual and auditory information present in classroom interactions from both the teacher and children’s perspectives. <p>Community network lead agencies should establish a process to address the rescheduling of live video conferences or recorded video observations. If an observation needs to be canceled, community network lead agencies should re-evaluate within two weeks to determine if observation(s) can be safely conducted. The community network lead agency will need to work with sites in advance to determine when the video observation will occur, how the recorded footage will align with the classroom daily schedule (if utilizing recorded video), and who will be recording the observation cycles.</p> <p>A second observer can be present during a live video conference observation to shadow score simultaneously. The primary purpose of this shadow score is to ensure inter-rater reliability, which has no reflection of the quality of the site being observed or alters the score. It may also be helpful for a second observer to aid in any technology or connectivity issues that may arise. Shadow scoring</p>
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		should be completed for live video conference observations whenever possible.
Observer Schedules	Community network lead agencies must establish a process to review observer schedules for schedule conflict, conflicts of interest , or other concerns, and make adjustments that are communicated to observers and sites.	Community network lead agencies should develop protocols to determine which observers will be conducting live video conference observations. If applicable, community network lead agencies should also develop protocols that establish a timeline for the capture and review of recorded video observations that includes identifying observers who will be responsible for coding these observations.
Site Notification	Community network lead agencies must establish a process to contact sites to determine the optimal learning time during which to conduct observations. Community network lead agencies must establish a process to require sites to contact the local CLASS® coordinator or the observer with any events that would preclude an observation no later than one week before the scheduled timeframe of the observation. Communication between the community network lead agency, site, and observer must adhere to a local protocol for rescheduling observations.	Community network lead agencies should develop protocols to confirm live video conference and recorded video observations and gather up-to-date site information 24 hours in advance, inclusive of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Verifying the date and time of the live video conference observation; ● Gauging the number of children anticipated to be in attendance during the time of the live video conference observation; and ● Obtaining a list of all adults scheduled to be in their classroom, inclusive of their roles and time employed at the site and in the classroom. Observers will need to contact sites in advance to introduce themselves, request a daily schedule, share the link for the live video conference meeting (if observing via live video conference), and discuss live video conferencing protocols and procedures.
Rescheduling Observations	Communication between the lead agency, site, and observer must adhere to a local protocol for observations. If an observation needs to be canceled, lead agencies should re-evaluate within two weeks to determine if observation(s) can be safely conducted.	

The Day of the Observation

	Column A Local Protocol Requirements	Column B Additional Live Video Conference & Recorded Video Protocol Requirements
<p>Observer Demeanor, Attire, and Conduct</p>	<p>Observers should be professional in demeanor and attire at all times and never let personal preferences influence scoring.</p> <p>Observers will not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ask teachers to change schedules, move rooms, rearrange children or groups; ● Engage in back and forth conversations with children or teachers; ● Use their phone during the observation (time must be kept via a clock, watch, or stopwatch) ● Conduct observations during the 10-minute break time between cycles; ● Conduct more than four cycles of observations; or ● Perform more than one observation in a day <p>At the conclusion of the observation, the observer will confirm with the teacher that the observation is complete.</p>	<p>Live Video Conference: Observers conducting live video conference observations should be professional in demeanor and attire at all times during the live video conference observation. Observers should ensure that they position themselves in an area within their environment that is free from outside distractions and noise when conducting the live video conference observation. Observers should remain on mute during the observation and scoring cycles.</p>
<p>Observer Arrival at Site</p>	<p>Upon arrival at the site/school the observer must report to the administration office and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduce themselves to office staff and site administrator (if available); ● Present identification and sign-in on appropriate site documentation; ● Present a Child Care Criminal Background Check (for licensed centers only); ● Verify classroom information with site administrator/director or designee (e.g., classroom locations by age and correct spelling of the teacher's name); ● Receive an updated daily schedule for the classroom being observed; and ● Request access to a quiet space for four, 10-minute scoring 	<p>Live Video Conference: Community network lead agencies should establish protocols for when the live video conference observation should begin.</p> <p>Shadow scoring and double coding can be utilized for live video conference observations. If a double coder/shadow scorer participates in the live video conference, they must follow the same procedures as the primary observer.</p> <p>Recorded Video: Not applicable.</p>

	<p>cycles</p> <p>Based upon site reported optimal learning times, the CLASS® observation typically starts at the beginning of the school day and continues throughout the morning for at least 2 hours. The total time the observer is present at the site is dependent upon the daily schedule and extracurricular activities.</p> <p>For infant classrooms - While it is important that observers know the daily schedule of the infant classrooms that they observe, there is more flexibility in scheduling Infant CLASS® observations. Observers should start Infant CLASS® observations at the same time as they would start toddler and pre-K observations as much as possible. However, infant classroom observations may be conducted at different times of the day as appropriate.</p> <p>For mixed infant and toddler classrooms, the Toddler CLASS® tool will be used if the majority or at least half of the children are 15 months or older. The Infant CLASS® tool will be used if half or more of the children are younger than 15 months of age.</p> <p>For mixed toddler and pre-K classrooms, the Pre-K CLASS® tool will be used if the majority or at least half of the children are 36 months or older. The Toddler CLASS® will be used if half or more of the children are 15 months up to 36 months of age.</p> <p><i>Note: Use the age of the children on September 30, 2022 to determine the classroom configuration for the school year.</i></p>	
<p>Observer Classroom Entry</p>	<p>Upon entering the classroom, the observer will introduce themselves and request a daily schedule if they have not received one from the office. Based on the daily schedule, the observer will plan for the observation/scoring.</p> <p>The observer may be accompanied by a second observer to shadow score simultaneously. The primary purpose of this shadow score is to ensure inter-rater reliability, which has no reflection of the quality of the site being observed or alters the score.</p>	<p>Live Video Conference: Observers will need to contact sites in advance to introduce themselves, request a daily schedule, share the link for the live video conference meeting, and discuss live video conferencing protocols and procedures.</p> <p>A second observer can be present during a live video conference observation to shadow score simultaneously. The primary purpose of this shadow score is to ensure inter-rater reliability, which has no</p>

	<p>If the classroom is not available or the observer is unable to complete the observation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If it is practical (close enough/time available) and the classroom is likely to become available for observation, the observer should wait until the observation can begin. ● If the site/school has multiple classrooms with children of the same age as the originally assigned classroom, the observer should contact the community network lead agency for reassignment. ● If the site/school has mixed classes with infants and toddlers or toddlers and preschoolers, contact the community network lead agency to determine which age type the classroom is classified as in the Early Childhood portal. 	<p>reflection of the quality of the site being observed or alters the score. It may also be helpful for a second observer to aid in any technology or connectivity issues that may arise.</p> <p>Recorded Video: The community network lead agency will need to work with sites in advance to determine when the video observation will occur, how the recorded footage will align with the classroom daily schedule, and who will be videoing the observation cycles.</p> <p>Community network lead agencies should share Teachstone’s Video Capture Considerations with the site and individual capturing the footage. This can be found in Teachstone’s CLASS Video Observation Guidelines and recommendations for obtaining high-quality video recordings located in Chapter 2 of the CLASS Manual, Toddler and Pre-K when developing protocols for recorded video observations.</p>
<p>Teacher and Child Attendance</p>	<p>A classroom must have the regularly assigned lead teacher, who has been employed at least 10 work days, present during the observation. Lead substitute teachers are eligible for a CLASS® observation if they have been in the classroom for at least 10 consecutive days. Paraprofessionals or classroom aides who have taken on responsibility for primary instruction may be observed if they have been in the classroom for at least 10 work days and if children typically receive instruction from this adult.</p> <p>If the teacher scheduled is no longer employed by the site or the teacher is in a classroom with a different age type, the observer should contact the community network lead agency for assistance. If observers are unsure whether a classroom has been observed by another local observer, they should contact the community network lead agency before they begin observing.</p> <p>At least 50% of children on the classroom roster must be present. If less than 50% of children are present, contact the community network lead agency for assistance.</p>	<p>Teacher and child attendance may continue to fluctuate more than usual due to ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks. When scheduling and conducting observations, community network lead agencies should follow the typical teacher and child attendance requirements. In cases where some children attend class virtually while others attend in person, at least 50% of children on the classroom roster must be present. Community network lead agencies should document attempted observations that were not able to occur based on frequent teacher turnover or low child attendance.</p>

<p>Observer Interactions</p>	<p>Observers will not interact with teachers beyond requesting a daily schedule, and will do their best to refrain from and minimize any communications, distractions, or intrusions into the classroom. Observers will not ignore children’s bids for attention or greeting; they will simply state their purpose of being in the classroom (to do their work) and kindly re-direct the children to their activities.</p>	<p>Live Video Conference: Observers conducting live video conference observations will need to work with sites and teachers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Place the device in an area of the classroom where the observer can see the interactions/actions of both the teacher(s) and the children; ● Determine the best way to signal that the observation cycle has started and when it has ended; and, ● Determine the best way to signal if the device being used to conduct the live video conference needs to be moved to capture the best audio and video quality possible during the observation. <p>Observers should provide the site/teacher with information on how to contact the observer directly at any point during the observation should technical issues occur.</p> <p>Recorded Video: When capturing recordings, observers should work with sites and teachers to ensure that the device does not intrude on typical classroom activities and confirm that video and audio quality is sufficient.</p>
<p>Scoring Cycles</p>	<p>The observation will consist of four 20-minute observation cycles each followed by 10-minute scoring cycles (120 minutes total time) for pre-K and toddler observations, and four 15-minute observation cycles followed by 10-minute scoring cycles (100 minutes total time) for infant observations.</p> <p>In pre-K classes, when possible the observer will leave the classroom to complete each 10 minute scoring cycle; however, in order to minimize distraction in infant and toddler classrooms, Teachstone recommends observers remain in the classroom when scoring. In the event that observers remain in the classroom, they should turn their back on the class and quietly complete the scoring.</p>	<p>Live Video Conference: Observers should mute the microphone and remain visible in the camera on the device used for live video conferencing throughout each observation cycle.</p> <p>Observers should turn off their camera while scoring each cycle. They should inform sites/teachers that they will be doing this beforehand so they are aware and do not think that any technical issues are occurring.</p> <p>The general procedures for live coding also apply to coding during live video conferences.</p> <p>Recorded Video: Community network lead agencies should work sites to ensure the length of the video they are capturing meets the length needed for</p>

		<p>the number of cycles required. At minimum this should be a 10 minute minimum for 20-minute cycles and an 8 minute minimum for 15 minute cycles (Teachstone, 2020).</p> <p>The general procedures for live coding also apply to coding videotape.</p> <p>Teachstone (2020) provides the following best practices for coding recorded video observations.</p> <p>Observers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use headphones to improve audio quality ● Only code what they can see on the video; ● Not factor interactions happening off-screen into their scoring ● Limit the number of cycles that are coded in one sitting to prevent coder fatigue (It is recommended that coders break after viewing and coding 4 cycles and limit daily coding to 6-8 cycles); and, ● Ensure that they have the technology needed to view recordings without interruptions within the video.
<p>Conducting Observations</p>	<p>Observers should follow the recommended procedures for using the CLASS® tool located within the CLASS® Manual.</p> <p>Infant teachers are required to spend time keeping records related to feeding, diapering, etc., which constitutes observable time. How the teacher interacts with the children during those periods of recordkeeping will impact the CLASS® score.</p>	<p>Live Video Conference and Recorded Video:</p> <p>Lead agencies should follow guidance that Teachstone (2020) has provided which outlines how changes in classroom environments due to COVID-19 may impact the evidence at the indicator level for each CLASS® dimension. This can be found on Teachstone’s website or on page 5 of this guidance document.</p>
<p>Extra-Curricular Pull-Out and Special Visiting Teachers</p>	<p>The following sessions conducted by extra-curricular pull-out teachers and/or special visiting teachers will not be observed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Physical Education ● Music ● Computer ● Library ● Art <p>Cafeteria-based meals and pre-K toileting will not be observed.</p>	<p>Live Video Conference:</p> <p>Live video conference observations will only be conducted in the classroom being observed and will not include activities outside of the classroom.</p> <p>Recorded Video:</p> <p>Recorded video observations also have the option of being conducted only in the classroom being observed. However, if the person capturing the video is able to capture observations of</p>

	<p>Diapering in infant and toddler classrooms is an observable time.</p> <p>Outdoor recess is not included in pre-K observations but is included in toddler and infant observations. However, if pre-k teachers are leading instructional or interactional activities outside, these interactions can be observed. <i>Note: When a quiet space is not available at the site, observers may sit outdoors to complete scoring. This is not an opportunity to collect additional data for pre-K observations.</i></p>	<p>outdoor recess for toddler and infant classrooms, they should do so. This also includes outdoor observations of pre-K teachers if they are leading instructional or interactional activities outside.</p>
Taking Notes	<p>Notes must be detailed and must provide concrete examples of observations from the classroom. Summary statements for each dimension should address each indicator noting the presence/absence of particular behaviors.</p>	
Observation Concerns	<p>In the unusual circumstance of any suspected abuse or neglect observed at the time of the observation, the observer must report the observed behaviors as mandated by law.</p>	<p>Live Video Conference: In the event that technical difficulties persist during a live video conference observation to the point that the observer cannot conduct an adequate observation, the observation can be canceled and rescheduled for a later date.</p> <p>Recorded Video: In the event that the video footage captured is not suitable for coding, the community network lead agency will need to work with the site to reschedule a time for the observation to be re-recorded.</p>

Additional Requirements

	Column A Local Protocol Requirements	Column B Additional Live Video Conference & Recorded Video Protocol Requirements
<p>Providing Observation Feedback</p>	<p>Community network lead agencies must establish and implement a protocol to ensure that written results and feedback from each local observation are reported to sites within ten business days. Observers should provide high-quality supportive feedback that recognizes teachers’ high-quality practices while focusing on opportunities for growth and skill development.</p>	<p>Teachstone (2020) recommends the continued use of CLASS® to understand the quality of classroom interactions and to support educators in their professional development during the pandemic — stating that teachers will especially benefit from supportive feedback related to high-quality teacher-child interactions during this time.</p> <p>Therefore, community network lead agencies should establish and implement a protocol to ensure that written results and feedback from each local observation are reported to sites within ten business days. Observers should continue to provide high-quality supportive feedback that recognizes teachers’ high-quality practices while focusing on opportunities for growth and skill development.</p>
<p>Reporting Scores</p>	<p>CLASS® scores must be entered in the portal within ten days of conducting the observation, or by the end of the observation period, whichever is first. Community network lead agencies are responsible for ensuring that all local observers submit their score sheets in a timely manner, and that they retain these score sheets on file for a period of three years.</p> <p>Request corrections for the observation data in the Early Childhood Portal in accordance with the procedures and timelines established by the state.</p>	
<p>Observer Accuracy and Shadow Scoring</p>	<p>Community network lead agencies should ensure that all local observations entered into the CLASS® System are conducted according to Teachstone’s standardized procedures. Develop and implement a written process to monitor and compare the results of all local observers for the purpose of ensuring accurate observations. Identify a process to address concerns regarding reliability of local observers to ensure they can continue to observe for the accountability system. For local observation scores, high scores, low scores, and concerning patterns will trigger additional third party observations to ensure accuracy. Bulletin 140 §503 requires the state to take action when observers are demonstrably unreliable.</p>	<p>Live Video Conference: The use of shadow scoring is encouraged during live video conference observations. Both observers will need to develop a system to ensure that they start and stop the live video conference observation for each scoring cycle at the same time.</p> <p>Recorded Video: The use of shadow scoring is encouraged for recorded video observations. Both observers will need to ensure that they are watching and coding the same footage for each cycle.</p>

	<p>The community network lead agency should conduct a minimum of one observation calibration activity each semester and ensure that all observers participate in at least one observation calibration activity each semester. They must also shadow score each observer at least once, at least 10% of all observations each observation period, and at least one observation in each age group.</p>	
<p>Conflict of Interest</p>	<p>Collaborate with all program partners to establish and implement written procedures that minimize potential observer conflict of interest as described in Bulletin 140 and in guidance published by the Department.</p>	
<p>Record Keeping</p>	<p>Community network lead agencies must collect and maintain copies of current certification documents for all observers, copies of the background checks necessary to enter sites for all observers, and original or complete copies of all observation scoring forms from the school year. These records must be maintained and available upon Department request for 3 years.</p>	<p>Live Video Conference: It may be helpful to develop a protocol for observers to document attempted live video observations, internet connectivity issues, or other audio or video challenges.</p> <p>Recorded Video: In accordance with local policies around video storage, community network lead agencies should develop protocols for the safe storage and disposal of recorded video footage. Community network lead agencies should refer to Louisiana’s Data Governance and Student Privacy Handbook for additional information related to child and data privacy. Teachstone also provides recommendations for video security in this guidance.</p> <p>General recommendations for video security include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure that only necessary individuals have access to video for observing ● Consider a solution that avoids video being stored on the capture devices where possible ● Keep all footage protected by username and password ● Ensure video settings do not allow for recorded video to be shared or downloaded. ● Ensure Observers have access to a private space for viewing and coding videos and/or that the video is labeled using teacher ID rather than names to ensure anonymity

References & Additional Resources

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