



ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES FOR RURAL GRANTEES AMID COVID-19: HOW TO DELIVER EFFECTIVE VIRTUAL TRAININGS AND MEETINGS

The GHPC COVID Collection

As part of ongoing efforts to support Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) grantees, Georgia Health Policy Center technical assistance providers put together a five-part series of virtual peer learning opportunities. The series provided the space for small group discussions around challenges, early learnings, and potential opportunities around program implementation strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This brief summarizes lessons around adapting approaches to hosting effective trainings and meetings in a virtual environment.

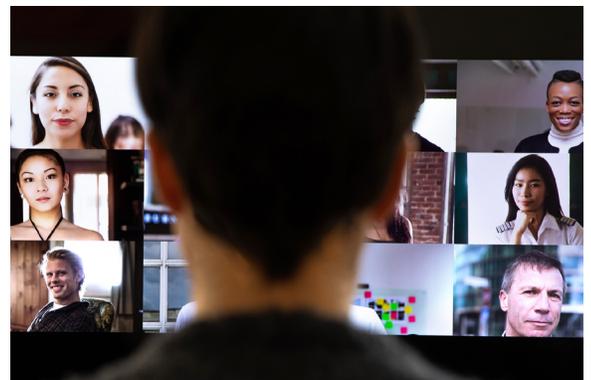
One of the most significant ways the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting grantee organizations is the shift to remote support for patients and online trainings for staff and partners. As a matter of necessity, the use of online and telecommunication technologies has become a substitute for in-person encounters. The number and scale of virtual events has grown significantly as grantee entities practice social distancing to protect their staff and clients.

Grantees are offering individual and group sessions for program participants across a variety of program areas (e.g., chronic disease management, care navigation support, and mental health and substance use). The number and type of virtual events offered by grantees are based on the needs of target populations, capabilities of the hosting organization and its staff, readiness of partner organizations to participate, and availability of resources.

The following describes grantees' experiences in terms of the challenges they are experiencing, the innovations they are testing, the online platforms and applications they are using, and the opportunities they are leveraging.

Online Platforms

Grantees reported using various online platforms. Zoom was cited as the most frequently used platform to deliver trainings to staff and partners. Many grantees also use Zoom to host routine meetings with staff and partners. Ease of use, instant sharing of ideas and documents, videoconferencing and recording capabilities, easy connection for desktops and mobile devices, and the potential for multiple participants to join in secure Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)-



compliant settings were the advantages grantees reported. Some grantees expressed worry about Zoom's security and privacy issues, but others were confident that those issues had been addressed.

Though not used as frequently as Zoom, other popular platforms grantees reported using were GoToMeetings, Microsoft Teams, Facebook Live, Google Duo, and telehealth solutions like Doxy.me. See the resources section of this document for a complete list of online platforms and a description of each tool that grantees shared with their peers.

Broadband and Technology Challenges and Solutions

Reliable broadband is fundamental for the delivery of virtual events — such as telehealth, telecommuting, and online training — as they require high-speed internet connections. However, challenges like lack of internet coverage have been illuminated during the pandemic. Grantees reported instances when connecting to patients, colleagues, and partners remotely through digital technology is often stymied by spotty or nonexistent broadband connections. Others shared the challenges of engaging patients and program participants who do not have access to technology equipment and services, including lack of equipment (e.g., cellular devices and computers), as well as insufficient or no internet or cellular service.



Solutions to these broadband and access challenges include reverting to the use of telephone communication rather than videoconferencing and online newsletters. Some report using snail mail outreach to connect with patients and program participants and to collect data. Grantees report mailing program intake information and surveys to homes, and are experiencing surprisingly good response rates.

Varying Levels of Experience for Hosts and Participants

Some grantees have begun implementing virtual trainings and support (e.g., chronic disease self-management education, community health worker practice courses) while others are gearing up to start. Grantees, whether in the planning or implementation phase, described moderate comfort with hosting online events. However, some staff are less experienced and not as comfortable. This is also true for the target populations they serve. Some patients and program participants are using the selected online platforms and applications for the first time.

Grantees shared training approaches they are testing in order to increase the comfort of both hosts and participants. Suggestions included pairing seasoned staff with those less experienced as often as possible and scheduling a “technology run-through” before online events for users who may need more support.

Energizing and Sustaining Engagement During Virtual Events

Grantees reflected on engagement strategies employed during some of the best virtual events they have attended. These strategies included:

- Icebreaker — Something light, fun to start the meeting
- Polls — A simple one-question poll is an effective way to get a break from the presentation and give the audience a chance to interact



- Breakout rooms — Allow for multiple, simultaneous, small group conversations
- Sticky notes/Whiteboards — Videoconference tools can be used for brainstorming and notetaking for real-time collaboration

Considerations for Large-scale Events

These meeting design techniques are applicable to virtual conferences, longer meetings, and large audiences and include prerecorded sessions, the use of breakout rooms, and delegation of specific roles for staff (e.g., facilitator, tech support, chat minder).

RESOURCES SHARED

Online Platforms

- [Google Duo](#) — A free and simple video calling application for mobile devices. Group call with up to 12 people. It is also available to use via Google's Chrome web browser and on desktop and laptop computers. Currently the app supports 12-person video calls, and Google has announced plans to increase the limit to 32 callers in the future.
- [GoToMeeting](#) — A web-hosted service created and marketed by LogMeIn. It is an online meeting, desktop sharing, and video conferencing software package that enables the user to meet with other computer users, customers, clients, or colleagues via the internet in real time.
- [Loom](#) — A video recording tool that helps you get your message across through instantly shareable videos. With Loom, you can record your camera, microphone, and desktop simultaneously. Your video is then instantly available to share through Loom's patented technology.
- [Microsoft Teams](#) — A communication tool within Office 365 that gives organizations a workspace for collaboration and communication. The platform combines workplace chat, video meetings, file storage, application integration, and more.
- [Slack](#) — A collaboration hub that can replace email to help you and your team work together seamlessly. It's designed to support the way people naturally work together so you can collaborate with people online as efficiently as you do face to face.
- [Zoom](#) — A cloud-based video conferencing service used to virtually meet with others — either by video or audio-only or both — all while conducting live chats. It lets you record those sessions to view later.

Online Engagement Tools

- [Mentimeter](#) and [Polleverywhere](#) — Polling software that allows real-time audience feedback with the immediate availability of results. Create word clouds based on your audience's impressions, ask a quick multiple-choice question to let your audience vote, or energize the entire room with a quiz competition!
- [Miro](#) — Miro is the online collaborative whiteboard platform used for brainstorming and notetaking that can be used by remote team members.
- [Pexels](#) and [Unsplash](#) — These sites allow users to download free, high-resolution stock images to use for presentations or virtual backgrounds for online meetings. This feature works best with a solid or green screen and uniform lighting to allow Zoom to detect the difference between you and your background.
- [Storm Board](#) — An online virtual whiteboard that allows remotely located participants to collaborate in real time or asynchronously. Just like putting Post-it Notes on a whiteboard, meeting participants can create "stickies," which can be text, images, links to YouTube videos, or comments.

Telehealth Platforms and Resources

- [Center for Connected Health Policy](#) — A nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to maximize telehealth's ability to improve health outcomes, care delivery, and cost-effectiveness. CCHP helps you stay informed about telehealth-related laws, regulations, and Medicaid programs. On their site, you can view current state laws and policies or pending legislation and regulations. Interactive maps include a search tool allowing you to easily identify the policies in your state.
- [Doxy.me](#) — A free virtual care platform for providers and clinics that is secure (HIPAA-, GDPR-, and HITECH-compliant). For more robust reporting and integration capabilities, an upgraded account can be purchased.
- [Global Partnership for Telehealth](#) — A web-based telehealth platform that includes numerous benefits for telehealth providers and presenters: virtual waiting room, enter patient information into an easily printable consult summary for record-keeping, edit patient information in real-time, switch between webcam and peripheral scopes with a single click, and easily switch between Pathways and TeleSensi, their Tele-Auscultation platform.

Virtual Events (virtual conferences, longer meetings, and large audiences)

- [Bigmarker](#) and [Vidyard](#) — These sites allow the creation, promotion, and delivery, of multisession, video-based series, courses, or conferences. You can sign up for free with Vidyard. However, a paid subscription is required to use Bigmarker.

Others Resources and Tools

- [Free Conference call.com](#) — A recognized conferencing brand with users in more than 800,000 businesses. Service offerings around the globe with unlimited use include high-quality HD audio conferencing, screen sharing, video conferencing, audio and visual recordings, customized greetings, security features, calendar integrations, and mobile applications.
- [Online Newsletter](#) — Create online newsletters free of charge. Newsletters can be instantly sent to your mailing list. You can also see who's read the email and who hasn't.

For more information:

Georgia Health Policy Center

404-413-0314

chsdteam@gsu.edu

ghpc.gsu.edu