



ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES FOR RURAL GRANTEES AMID COVID-19: STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING COMMUNITY BY MAINTAINING WORK WITH SCHOOLS

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 school-based program strategies during COVID-19.

Following state-mandated closing of schools across the country, many grantees using schools as their target population quickly transitioned to virtual options, fundamentally changing the way they deliver services. Several main themes were discussed, including preferred virtual platforms, adapting and modifying work to accommodate social distancing, and the use of telehealth. Grantees also discussed flexibility and dedication to continuing to provide program services to the schools and students they serve. They shared innovative activities such as live streaming on social media platforms and solutions to Wi-Fi access and lack of adequate technology.

Online Platforms

The Zoom platform was mentioned the most. Although other platforms are used, Zoom offers more of what is desired in terms of training, telehealth use, and meeting with one another. The use of Fuze and Microsoft Teams was discussed for internal meetings. Doxy.me and Vsee are telehealth platforms that also were mentioned and which meet Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) guidelines. Many school mental health providers are still exploring options. Given the relaxing of enforcement of HIPAA regulations, participants report using applications like Google Duo and even Facetime for virtual consultations.



Modifying Programmatic Activities

Grantees that were providing therapeutic services in the school setting discussed a successful transition into providing telehealth, especially for those that had access to electronic health records. There were some mental health providers only able to use telephones to reach their clients because of client lack of connectivity.

Other grantees were either in the planning phase of hosting virtual trainings and events for their schools or were providing resources by mail. The Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes model was mentioned as a strategy for training on evidenced-based programs virtually. Though not intended for this, the mentoring portion of the model may work well with providing training around prevention education, social and emotional learning curriculums, and Youth Mental Health First Aid.

Several grantees were working to transition their activities to align with the virtual platforms used by schools to connect with their students. For instance, schools using Google Classroom would send resources like OPEN, an online physical education curriculum, to use with their students. Since there was variance from school to school, grantees also mentioned using Facebook and Facebook Live to connect and electronic newsletters, like Smores, to outreach to their schools.

Overcoming Challenges

The variations between schools during the school closures has been challenging to accommodate. Grantees have partnered with groups delivering school meals to stay in contact and align their programmatic activities. Other groups are riding the bus routes to deliver Wi-Fi access in order to continue to provide services. Collaborating with others providing school supports during COVID-19 helps them stay relevant, as many feel there are simultaneous competing demands for schools. Some grantees are planning to survey their school partners to better understand their needs and adjust accordingly.

Wi-Fi and access to technology have been a challenge, but offering free Wi-Fi from hospital parking lots and other community locations, like the library, has been a viable option. Some schools are providing equipment and are able to rent hotspots for free. Additionally, all grantees were interested in supporting schools with funding opportunities for technology.



RESOURCES SHARED

- [PA Resources](#) during COVID for FORHP Peer Call Series Supporting Schools
- [Telehealth Resources](#) — FORHP Peer Calls
- [Other school support resources](#)

Resources shared during the call:

Online Platforms

- [Facebook Live](#) — Livestream events, performances, and gatherings on Facebook. Viewers can watch from a phone, computer, or connected TV. Reactions, shares, comments, and other interactive features enable you to engage with your audience.
- [Fuze](#) — All-in-one platform enables a seamless transition between calling, meeting, chatting, and sharing, powered by the industry-leading intelligent cloud architecture. It modernizes the communications experience and empowers the digital and distributed workforce to communicate anywhere, anytime, and across any device.
- [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.
- [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 — and it lets you record those sessions to view later.
 - [Zoom HIPAA Compliant](#)

Telehealth Platform

- [Doxy.me](#) — Provides 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.
- [Vsee](#) — HIPAA-compliant telehealth platform.

Other Resources

- [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

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