Administration for Community Living Office of Healthcare Information and Counseling

Managing Through COVID-19 Work grouP - September 2020

Online Event Etiquette and Preparation Checklist

Preparing for Remote Medicare Open Enrollment Toolkit

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## Introduction

The COVID-19 public health emergency has posed multiple challenges to ACL grantees. Technologies, including virtual platforms to host meetings, provide training, and counsel beneficiaries, have become important tools to mitigate program challenges. To be effective virtually, it is important to consider best practices when communicating with colleagues and clients via email or other virtual modes of communication.

How, then, should we communicate online and on camera about our work? How do we best represent our programs virtually? The DOs and DON’Ts in this tip sheet provide guidance to help you remain professional while conducting your work with the help of cameras and other technology available within virtual platforms.

# Presenter Talking Points: Housekeeping with Attendees

Here are talking points for the beginning of events.

* “Welcome! Thanks for coming today and joining on time. Let’s take a quick moment for housekeeping before we get started.”
  + “Everyone has been muted to ensure a good sound quality.”
    - OR
  + “Please mute your microphone when you’re not speaking to help minimize disruptive sounds, such as interruptions from your barking dog 😊.”
    - Remember to keep it light. Your audience will be in their home environments.
* “When the presenter is talking or sharing their screen, please write in the chat box if you can’t see or hear.”
* “When it’s time for questions, raise your hand and we will unmute you (or the presenter will inform you to unmute yourself).”
  + Explain how to find and use the hand icon in your platform of choice
* “You are welcome to chat your question if your device does not have a microphone or if the microphone is not working.”
* “Please be respectful to the presenter and other attendees.”

Presenter DOs – Preparation and Public Speaking

* Do plan ahead and be prepared
* Do be early
* Do check your equipment and internet connection at least 45 minutes before the start of the presentation.
* Do stay focused
* Do introductions at the beginning of the presentation so those attending know who you are and the agency and program you are representing. You can also have the attendees introduce themselves, if time permits.
* Do break for questions.
* Do provide contact information for those who need to reach out for further assistance.
* Do have all materials needed for the event within arms’ reach.
* Do use the mute function during virtual meetings or when you call in to minimize background noise. *Tip: Mute buttons can be found on keyboards and keypads.*
* Do spend time with a prospective participant prior to meeting to ensure familiarity with the fundamentals of technology used, in order to minimize disruptions with a larger group.

Presenter DOs –Etiquette

* Do look presentable and professional
* Do dress in business casual attire when using a camera.
* Do maintain alert body language if using a camera in a virtual meeting. Look into the camera as much as possible.
* Don’t lay down or slump over while on camera.
* Do behave in virtual meetings as you would if you were in-person.
* Do listen let the attendees finish their thought before speaking and avoid speaking over them.
* Do be aware of your surroundings. Eliminate distractions.
* Do put a sign on your door so that others in your home or office will know not to interrupt you.
* Do use a neutral background that is not distracting and allows for your clear visibility.
* Do use the camera when you are in a private room or when others are aware that your camera is on.
* Do help attendees maintain a professional and appropriate atmosphere, such as by asking them to mute their computer or phone if they aren’t talking and/or turn off their camera if their background is distracting.
* Do mute individual attendees who are not muting themselves, if necessary (i.e. engaging in side-conversations, have a barking dog, are have other types of disruptive background noise).
* Do turn off the camera of attendees if their camera is displaying inappropriate backgrounds or behaviors.

Presenter DON’Ts – Preparation and Public Speaking

* Don’t position your camera too close to your face or at strange angles. Find a flat surface and adjust your laptop, monitor or other recording equipment so it is 12 to 18 inches away. Adjust your work so you face a window or have plenty of light to be seen well
* Don’t read word by word from your script. You will sound like a robot and you may lose your audience’s attention.
* Don’t talk too fast and try to cram a 45-minute presentation into a 30-minute time slot.
* Don’t use acronyms without spelling them out and explaining what they mean. Not everyone is familiar with Medicare and programmatic abbreviations.
* Don’t let your animals be nearby if they are disruptive with noise and/or activity.

Presenter DON’Ts - Etiquette

* Don’t use hard-to-read fonts or garish backgrounds in your presentation materials.
* Don’t use cute or unusual photos that are not illustrating what you are talking about. It distracts the audience and they might not pay attention to what you are saying.
* Don’t eat, pick your teeth, groom yourself, etc. during call. Remember that people can see your every move.
* Don’t sit or stand in front of inappropriate background imagery (e.g., politically charged posters or background imagery with potentially offensive content).
* Don’t sit or stand in front of a very bright light or a window with a lot of light behind it; this can cause discomfort for other participants and make it hard to see you.
* Don’t play music, keep the TV on, or engage in other conversations while on virtual meetings.