
Recovery is Possible!

A
Guide for providing
Virtual
Peer Support





Montana's Peer Network is a peer run 501c3 non-profit organization with a mission to lead the expansion and development of recovery-oriented behavioral health services in Montana.

With over 1,400+ members across Montana in more than 78 communities we advocate to improve treatment systems, provide educational presentations on wellness and recovery, and host trainings on peer support and wellness tools through workshops, webinars, social media and peer groups.

Peer Supporter Training

Healthy Minds Healthy Bodies Workbook

Peer Support Demonstration Projects

Podcasts & Webinars

Online Resources

Annual Recovery Conference

Recovery Programming Consultation

Advocacy

Leading the Recovery Movement in Montana since 2011

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and follow us on social media**



NOTES

A Guide for providing Virtual Peer Support

By
Montana's Peer Network
Staff

Additional guides at can be found
at

www.mtpeernetwork.org

Welcome to our guide series. In this guide we will explore how to provide virtual peer support in the digital age. We have all experienced the transformation of information from paper to computer. That has translated in recent times from in person contact to virtual communication through computers, smart phones, and tablets. Though many peers we encounter in our work may be comfortable using online platforms, there will be some that are very uncomfortable using this technology. Like everything in our recovery we learn and adapt our behavior accordingly. This is an area that may be very new and daunting to the peer support world we are used to. Our resilience as peer supporters can shine here as well. We can encourage our peers in many different ways to start using these online platforms to get support. We as peer supporters can provide support outside of the confines of business hours. Crisis and relapse support is not always going to fit in a 9-5 world. Nights and weekends can be the hardest times because there is less available support and the potential to fall into our old patterns. We hope this guide helps you to be able to provide tele-support in this virtual world we all live in.

The Virtual Revolution

NOTES

Are there other platforms I can use to connect with my peers?

There are many other platforms that you can use to connect. Some that provide end-to-end encryption include FaceTime (iOS or macOS only), Jitsi Meet, Signal, and GoToMeeting.



Which video apps should I stay away from?

It is advised for you to stay away from TikTok, Twitch, Houseparty, or Facebook live. These are places where the content might be viewable by other people and are not private. If you are unsure, check the platform website for information about encryption.

It has been hard to keep myself in work mode at home. How do I keep from getting distracted so easily?

It is hard to transition to working remotely. One of the best things you can do is to create and maintain a work schedule and routine. You may have come from a 9-5 job and now you have found out you work best at 11am. If you start your day then, you will be more engaged in your work. Don't forget to include periodic breaks for food, snacks, or recharging. It may help to use an online calendar or write it down on paper. You can even set alarms to remind you when you should be switching from one task to another. There are many productivity apps that can help you create the best schedule for you. Below is an example work

Time	Activity
7:00 am	Wake up stretch, drink coffee/tea
7:30 am	Breakfast
8:15 am	Shower, grooming and dressing
9:00 am	Check emails, return phone calls, review day's activities
10:00 am	Break
10:20 am	Meet with peers and DAP notes
11:30 am	Lunch and a walk
12:30 pm	Meet with co-workers
1:45 pm	Break
2:00 pm	Meet with peers and DAP notes
3:15 pm	Break and snack
3:30 pm	Complete time sensitive projects
5:00 pm	Dinner, self care, family time

schedule that you can adapt to meet your needs.

I am starting to feel disconnected in my new normal way of providing virtual support. How can I feel connected to the work and peers ?

This is a common feeling that a lot of people who work remotely experience.



One way would be to communicate to your organization that you need contact with other staff members to talk about your work. This can be addressed through phone calls with co-workers or routine staff meetings. If you work independently and you feel disconnected, take a break and call one of your supports. Tele-peer support can be enhanced by using webcams so you and the peer can see one another. Of course this is not a substitute for face to face.

Now that I am working from home and providing virtual support, I find it harder to hold boundaries with my peers?

This is something that will differ for each peer supporter and their organization's guidelines. When you are utilizing virtual peer support you may need to have even more defined boundaries with your peers about the hours that you are available. Having a workday schedule and routine

peer sill as well.

How much does Skype cost?

Skype to Skype calls and video chats are free. There are subscriptions for Skype to mobile or landlines phone if the receiving person does not connect through Skype.

Do I have to download any software to use Skype?

You do need to download Skype software although many operating systems automatically include Skype.

What kind of equipment do I need for Skype?

If you want to Skype using your PC or Mac desktop or laptop computer, your machine will need the latest version of its operating system: Windows, Linux or Mac OS. You can also use Skype on your cell phone or TV, depending on the model. Apple products like iPhones, iPads and iTouches all have the ability to run Skype. Skype is also available through Alexa devices and Xbox.

How do I connect with someone on Skype?

You will create contact lists in Skype that will help you connect to people. Generally you need to know the person's email address or Skype username to connect with them.

For more information about Skype, visit [skype.com](https://www.skype.com).

smart phone to access WhatsApp. The web interface, Windows version, and Mac version require you have a mobile account set. WhatsApp will sync your messages from one platform to another.

What kind of equipment do I need for WhatsApp?

You must have a smart phone to use WhatsApp. Some older operating systems may not allow you to make video calls. The web interface does not allow video calling.

How do I connect with someone on WhatsApp?

WhatsApp will access your contacts and show you who is using WhatsApp. Be sure to review the settings for who can see your online status and contact you.

For more information about WhatsApp, visit [WhatsApp.com](https://www.whatsapp.com).

Skype Information



Is Skype HIPAA compliant?

Skype does provide end-to-end encryption but to be HIPAA compliant there must be a Business Associate Agreement (BAA).

Do I need an account to use Skype?

You will need to create an account to use Skype and your

and ensuring that you have some personal time while working from home is just as important for your self-care and wellbeing as leaving an office.

Montana's Peer Network also offers monthly Peer Supporter to Peer Supporter meetings to connect with others working in the field. You can draw strength and guidance from others in your field who may be experiencing the same thing. MPN also offers monthly mentoring meetings to facilitate a mentor/mentee relationship. Be sure to utilize your clinical supervisor for direction.

How do I make sure I am using a private platform for my video support?

If your provider gives you a choice between video apps (Zoom, WhatsApp, or Skype) use the most private option available. If you are not sure ask your provider. Make sure to adjust your privacy settings in the app such as turning on encryption and turning off location services. This also applies for the peer you are working with. Support them in doing the same things on their devices. Most applications will have a help section to assist you in navigating the settings. Check with your organization before using any video chat options.

What if my client does not have their own device and they need to borrow someone else's device to get the support they need?

This is a reality for a lot of the peers you may work with. It is still possible to keep it confidential and private. When you start working with them, ask them if they will be using their own device and if it is okay to send resources to that device. You will need to be familiar with managing settings on devices so you can walk them through how to delete any information on the phone manually. Also you can advise them to set the devices browser to incognito or private browsing mode to prevent it from storing any history.

How do I protect the privacy of my peers on my device?

Always make sure any device that you use to access peer information is password protected. If you are using wireless internet, make sure your wi-fi password is protected and avoid using public wi-fi. If anyone knows your passwords consider changing them since you are now using tele-support services from your devices. Your passwords should not include things that are easy to guess like your name, birthdays, or common words and they should use a combination of capital and lowercase letters, numbers, and symbols. Review any platform you are using for HIPAA compliance before sharing Personal Health Information (PHI). Many platforms will provide HIPAA compliant options.



via email. You can also share the meeting id number and password over the phone or through a text.

For more information about Zoom, visit zoom.us.

WhatsApp information

Is WhatsApp HIPAA compliant?

WhatsApp does have end-to-end encryption but it may not be HIPAA compliant. Check with your organization before sharing any Personal Health Information using WhatsApp.



Do I need an account to use WhatsApp?

When you download WhatsApp an account is created automatically. The app will ask to access your contacts to connect you with people you know.

How much does WhatsApp cost?

WhatsApp is free to use.

Do I have to download any software to use WhatsApp?

WhatsApp is available for Android, iPhone, Mac, Windows, and through a web interface. You must have a

own meetings and send invitations to participants. Having a Zoom account allows you to create your own Instant Meetings or Schedule Meetings. An account also allows you to access your personal settings, where you can update your profile or upgrade your plan at any time.

Where can I create a Zoom account and how much does it cost?

You can sign up for a free Zoom account at zoom.us. Free accounts have limitations on times and number of participants for the person creating the meeting.

Do I have to download any software to use Zoom?

You can use Zoom's web interface without downloading the desktop client but some of the features are not available in the web platform.

What kind of equipment do I need for Zoom meetings?

Most Zoom meetings have the option of using computer audio (microphone and speakers connect to or built into your computer) or using a phone. You can use wired and wireless headsets but test them before the meeting to make sure they work. It is also helpful to have a webcam so that your peers can see you but it isn't required. You can join in audio only.

How do I connect with others on Zoom?


You can create a meeting and send an invitation to others

How do I prepare for a tele-support/video support interaction with my peer?

Be aware of your surroundings. Think about the privacy of your peers. Make sure no one has the opportunity to listen in on your conversation-either side of it.


Communicate to your family, friends, or roommates that you will be unavailable and working in this space to avoid any interruptions in your session. Use headphones when using your devices so that the conversation is quiet and confidential. Be mindful with your background. Is it visually pleasing and not chaotic? Is your lighting good? Are there things hanging on your walls that others may find triggering or offensive? Once you have addressed all of these concerns you are prepared to meet your peer where they are at.

What is the best practice for setting up my devices to use video support platforms?

One thing to make sure is that you have a webcam and know how to use it on whatever device you are choosing to use for the meeting. Most platforms will have an icon that looks like a video camera.  This is where you share your webcam. It's best to check out your equipment before you start using it, such as making sure your volume is on, the audio is clear, and your microphone is working. Your device will have an icon that looks like a speaker where you can adjust the volume.

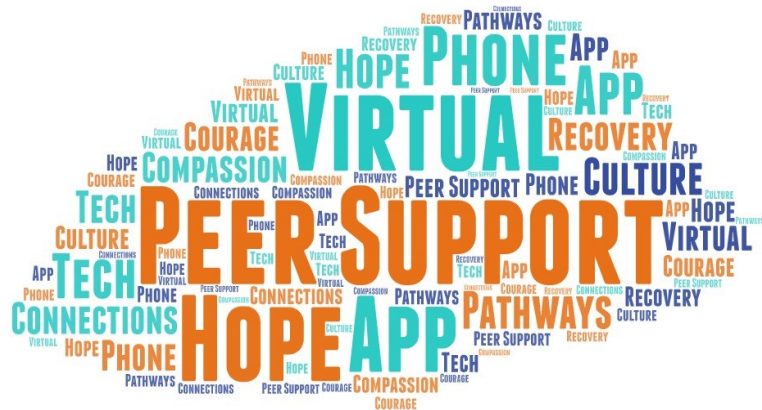


Most platforms will have the same icon to adjust

audio controls there. You should do a quick check each time you start your workday as part of your routine. When setting up your web cam make sure it is at eye-level, if you are using your phone make sure it is stationary and at eye-level as well. Make sure your devices are plugged in so there is no possibility of you losing power in the middle of a meeting. If you are going to be sharing resources, explore the virtual meeting platform to find out how to share your screen. Most platforms will have an icon that looks like a screen  or you can find that in the settings drop downs. Do not be afraid to play within the virtual meeting platform before you meet your peers.

How do I make the virtual visit feel more personal?

Just like you do when you meet someone for the first time in person you should be work on building rapport and letting the peer direct the conversation. Make eye contact with your webcam so they know you are engaged in the



process. If you have to gather any data for your visit, try doing that at the very end. If you as the peer supporter are struggling with using video meetings, address that with your peer. Talk about it together.



Zoom Information

Is Zoom Video HIPAA compliant?

Zoom is a HIPAA compliant web and video conferencing platform that is suitable for use in healthcare, provided a HIPAA covered entity enters into a business associate agreement with Zoom prior to using the platform and uses the platform compliantly (i.e. adhering to the HIPAA Minimum Necessary Standard). Free accounts may not be HIPAA compliant. Check with your organization before using Zoom for meetings that fall under HIPAA regulations.

Do I need an account to use Zoom?

A Zoom account is not required if you are strictly joining Zoom Meetings as a participant. If someone invites you to their meeting, you can join as a participant without creating an account. Just follow the directions in the invitation. However, if the host has restricted joining meetings using authentication profiles, then the participant will need a Zoom account to access the meeting.

A Zoom account is required if you need to create your