

Staying Connected



During this incredibly stressful time, it is understandable to be feeling fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones. There is also concern that individuals receiving care in group settings may be cut off and feeling lonely and isolated. Visits with those social supports are important to provide company, love and a friendly face. While in person visits with friends and family may no longer be possible, there are other ways to stay in touch.

Zoom

A free service that is easy to use and can be installed on a phone or computer. Just go to Zoom's sign up page to get started. You will be prompted to enter a "work email address" although any email address works. You can also create an account by clicking "sign in with Google" or "sign in with Facebook" after which you can download the Zoom desktop app. Zoom will send an email to the address provided where you will be able to activate the account. Once activated, you can invite others to your meetings and you can also invite others to create their own accounts. Zoom may also be accessed via a mobile app, where use your cell phone's app store to download.

<https://zoom.us/>

GoToMeeting

A free version of GoToMeeting includes video chat with up to 3 people. Click on the "Sign Up" button and create an account. Once you create an account you will receive an activation email with instructions on logging in. You will "set up your room" and then be able to create a meeting. You will have the option of scheduling a meeting at the time and date of your choosing, or to start one immediately. Once you schedule the meeting, you can copy the invite and send a link to your meeting to your recipient(s). GoToMeeting may also be accessed via a mobile app, use your cell phone's app store to download. <https://free.gotomeeting.com/>

Skype

A popular free service that allows video and voice calling. Download Skype, and create a free account and sign in. You will then be able to select your call type and which parties to call. Skype can also be accessed via the web on Skype on-line. <https://www.skype.com/en/>

Whatsapp

This app is used across the globe and features chat, phone calls and video sessions. To get started, download the app onto your device via the app store. Set up your account, and then click on the "Calls" button to make a voice or video call. It may also be accessed via the web after the app is installed. <https://www.whatsapp.com/>

Google Hangouts

A free service in the US and Canada that can be used by anyone with a Google account for text, chatting, or video chatting. Simply log into your Google account, and type in "hangouts.google.com" into your browser bar at the top of your screen. Click through the intro screen until you arrive at the hangouts home page where you will find three options: video call, phone call, and message. Click the option and then type the phone number to call or the contact that pops up of who you want to connect with. Hangouts may be accessed from the website or an app. <https://hangouts.google.com/>

Other services such as Facetime and Facebook Messenger can be used to stay in touch via video calling. These scenarios are not supported on the Chromebooks at the programs.

You can set up a standing date, such as every Wednesday morning or every other Saturday to catch up. Ask staff to help facilitate the use of technology and make it even easier to remain connected. Family and friends could also send short video greetings that a person could watch any time.



Brainstorm ideas to maintain regular activities while isolating, like playing bingo or conducting an exercise class via video chat.



Send some snail mail, artwork or a greeting card: Who doesn't love getting a letter or a handwritten greeting card in the mail?

Read together: You may not be able to visit face to face, but you can pick a book to read together or read to your loved one over the phone or through video chatting.

Pick up the phone: No fancy service needed. Just hearing someone's voice can be a powerful expression, and provide comfort.

Every one of us can make a difference to slow the spread of COVID-19. By doing your part to practice social distancing when possible, while still remaining in touch, you can make a huge difference to your own health, the health and wellbeing of your loved ones, the people we serve, and the communities in which we live and work.