



COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE :  
ADDRESSING YOUTH DATING VIOLENCE

# Considerations for Moving from In-Person to Online Programming

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Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, your organization may be considering moving current face-to-face programs online. There are many elements to take into consideration when making this decision. We hope you will find helpful tips and recommendations for making this decision below:

## Pros and Cons of Moving Online

### What are the Advantages of Moving Online?

- **Program Delivery**
  - Keeping commitment to school and community partners about delivering the program to their stakeholders
  - Avoiding a gap in programming which would be detrimental to program outcomes
- **Evaluation**
  - Opportunity to evaluate in person versus online programming outcomes, which could provide valuable insight for program planning even after the pandemic
- **Flexibility**
  - Scheduling may be more flexible online
  - Can create new opportunities for youth who could not normally participate because of barriers such as transportation or attendance issues
- **Sustainability**
  - Supporting longevity of program
- **Higher participation from participants**
  - Shy students, or those who might not share otherwise, may feel more comfortable sharing their ideas through the group chat or from the comfort of their home
- **Support youth through the pandemic**
  - The pandemic has caused life-changing and unprecedented challenges for youth, such as moving their schooling completely online and cancelling extracurriculars. The stress caused by these challenges could exacerbate issues that teens would already face without the pandemic (such as bullying, teen dating violence), making programs even more important for their wellbeing.
- **Staff development**
  - Staff learn new skills for content delivery

## What are the Challenges Associated with Moving Online?

### *Program Implementation*

- **It takes time to transition from a face-to-face program to an online program**
  - Need to verify partners' interest in online programming, and get their input
  - Planning of new format
  - Possible re-registration needed when moving online – need to gather contact information of participants/parents, which will take time
  - Modifying the content of the program to ensure it is appropriate and adapted for the online environment.
- **Recruitment to program and engagement in the program may be negatively impacted**
  - Registration, attendance and retention can be significantly negatively impacted when moving online since it is harder to keep track of youth and contact youth
  - Some participants may thrive in this environment, but it is easy to be distracted
  - Difficult to engage and form relationships, if participants do not turn video on or if students use multiple devices
- **Communication with partners/parents/youth**
  - More difficult and time-consuming virtually
- **Concerns when delivering online**
  - If participants do not have headphones or a private room to themselves, confidentiality and privacy are at risk
  - Exploration of difficult content requires trust and privacy
  - Difficult to read participants' faces and body language virtually (particularly when an entire class is shown using one camera) or if they do not have cameras on
  - If there is a physical aspect to the program, physical instruction requires space free of physical obstacles and may require constant safety monitoring depending on activity



- **Online group dynamics are different from face-to-face dynamics**
  - Expectations from participants as well as facilitators are different when online and everyone needs to adjust and manage
  - Can be impacted by perceived economic disparity. For example, some youth may not have good internet or access to computers or tablets or have a private space to participate
  - Difficult for participants to create the bonds and community that they would normally be able to foster in person
- **Lateness and Absences**
  - Online participants tend to be more likely to arrive late and miss more sessions so it is difficult to have continuity in the program
- **Zoom/Virtual Fatigue**
  - In the pandemic, often everything else youth are doing is also online so they may have zoom fatigue and participate less

## Content Delivery

- **Online programs require access to reliable technology and facilitator knowledge of technology challenges**
  - Accessibility Barriers
    - Some do not have access to computers at all, or at certain times of day
    - Internet connection strength may vary
  - Technical issues related issues can take time to troubleshoot
  - Sharing a PowerPoint or Kahoot can make it difficult for facilitators to know who is talking and also makes it more challenging to see all participants and check in with them
- **Curriculum Fidelity**
  - Takes longer to deliver the same content in a virtual format
  - Extending sessions can be exhausting/difficult for both the participants and the facilitators
- **Physical Needs**
  - Does your program include a physical component, such as self-defence classes?
  - If so, switching to online may be difficult – need to consider privacy, safety, available physical space for different participants

# Now That You Have Made the Decision to Move Online, Things to Consider:

## Program Preparation

- **Consult with your partners**
  - Before planning program session times, discuss with partners to avoid scheduling conflicts
  - Gather contact information (parent/child emails) from partners to communicate directly with the youth and their families
  - Review activities with partners and decide which can be delivered virtually, and which should be left out altogether
  - Avoid content that youth are unlikely to be experiencing in their everyday lives
- Consider **piloting** programs to gauge feasibility
- Consider using **synchronous AND asynchronous learning** to make sure all content is covered and maintain engagement
  - **Asynchronous learning example:** Youth could be provided with resources they can consult on their own through the week to complement the sessions
  - **Synchronous learning example:** Having group chats and the use of breakout rooms can be successful
  - Doing both types of learning will allow for maintaining more of the program content and thereby increasing the curriculum fidelity
- **Discuss rules for sessions**
  - Video on/off
  - Nicknames / real names
  - Mute if not talking
  - Avoid multitasking



- Allow for **flexibility** in sessions if possible
  - Book sessions with an extra 15min to do check-ins and give more time for facilitation
  - Consider incorporating time where youth can socialize, provide a short break in middle of session, and plan shorter activities
- **Homework Activities**
  - May be beneficial, but there have been mixed results with implementation
- **Engage smaller group sizes**
  - Consider hosting multiple sessions with 10 or fewer youths each to individualize attention and enhance engagement

## Program Delivery

- **Accessibility**
  - Provide options for those that do not have access to technology
    - e.g. Supply headphones or computers
  - Provide pre-recorded videos for those who cannot attend virtual meetings
  - Supply workbooks and other content that can substitute for virtual meetings
  - When individual computers **aren't** an option (i.e., instruction must be given to an entire class using one laptop/camera):
    - Clear expectations of technology requirements must be given to teachers
    - Teachers should be given clear expectations of what facilitators need for classroom management
  - Use software that is compatible with multiple devices
- **Maintaining Attendance and Engagement**
  - Provide more **frequent reminders** to attend the program
  - Have **engaging** content!
    - Try using **culturally relevant** skill-based activities, such as memes related to program content
    - **Gamify** activities using engaging tools such as Kahoot
    - Try short videos, drawings, the whiteboard function on Zoom, etc.
      - Whiteboard tools (e.g., Miro, Jamboard, Whiteboard Fox), polling software (e.g., Poll everywhere, Kahoot, Mentimeter, or Zoom's polling software)
  - **Breakout rooms** foster interaction – can be planned in advance (make sure staff are present in all spaces!)
  - **Spend extra time** on activities that promote self-care, build coping strategies and mindfulness techniques, and promote socialization

- **Zoom fatigue reducers:**
  - 20-20-20: Every 20 minutes have your participants stare at something (other than their computer screen) that is 20 feet away, for 20 seconds.
  - Power Stance: Have your participants stand up and do a pose that makes them feel strong, such as flexing their muscles or standing tall with their hands on their hips.
    - It may be helpful to have them take deep breaths while doing these poses
- **Focus on key takeaways for each session**
  - Avoid overloading youth
  - Remind participants of resources and other supports
- **Support for Collaborators**
  - Co-facilitation
    - Having at least two facilitators. One facilitator can manage the technical components of Zoom (e.g., the chat box, following up with youth who disconnected from the session, letting people back into the meeting) while the other facilitator can focus on the group and the content
    - The facilitators can support one another and further the conversation when participants are hesitant
    - Consider creating pre-recorded videos of the program being facilitated both online and in-person to enhance collaborator training and comfort with content
    - Co-Facilitation also enables a person to focus on who may be being triggered or struggling with the content and then he/she can support that individual
- **Personal Support and Resources**
  - Implement **check-ins**: opportunities to share feelings about content in a more social environment
    - Particularly helpful in situations where one is directing an entire class (rather than individuals)
  - Spend extra time ensuring participants feel comfortable and welcome, especially when online
  - Establish a protocol to provide support to participants who disclose personal hardships
  - Provide **community resources** in case participants are in need of support
  - Be available to meet one-on-one with participants
    - If participants have a negative experience in the program (e.g., using breakout rooms or by meeting after the session is over)

## *Safety and Privacy*

- Make participants' rights explicit in every session
  - Right to participate, have fun, and have their own privacy respected
- Identify a **safe word or signal**: type into chat to let group know they can't share information for some reason
  - Could also be a visual signal that lets others know they feel unsafe, or they can't speak at that moment
  - An example of a hand signal and how to use it can be found through the following link:
    - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFLZEQFlm7k&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFLZEQFlm7k&feature=emb_logo)
- Use of headphones helps to maintain privacy
  - Have students let facilitators know if they don't have headphones
- Protect the privacy of online video conference sessions by creating a password and sharing it privately with participants through texts, email, or private message on social media. Never share this password publicly
- Limit use of software features such as ability to chat privately, or features that allow participants to take photos or videos during the session
- Make sure staff are present in all online sessions

## *Feedback and Evaluation*

- Get youth feedback and input as you move forward
  - Importance of significant upfront discussion and problem-solving for hypothetical solutions
- Evaluate outcomes during and after completion of program



## Links to Canada-Wide Resources for Internet and Computer Access

Electronic Recycling Association's Lending Laptop's Plus program:

<https://www.electronicrecyclingassociation.ca/lending-a-lifeline-by-lending-laptops/>

Government of Canada's Computers for School Plus program:

<https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cfs-ope.nsf/eng/home>

Cross-Canada Connecting Families initiative:

<https://www.connecting-families.ca/welcome>

Telus Internet for Good (British Columbia and Alberta only):

[https://www.telus.com/en/about/company-overview/community-investment/how-we-give/cause-campaigns/internet-for-good/?INTCMP=VAN\\_internetforgood](https://www.telus.com/en/about/company-overview/community-investment/how-we-give/cause-campaigns/internet-for-good/?INTCMP=VAN_internetforgood)



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