



Using Technology for Remote Services: A Guide for People with Disabilities

By David Hoff and Lara Enein

You may be used to your employment support and other staff meeting with you in person. During COVID-19, in-person meetings may be more limited to protect everyone's health. However, you can still receive services and get help from your staff without meeting with them in person. This is called getting services "remotely." You can get services remotely by using a phone, computer, and similar devices. This publication can help you use technology to get the help and services you need.

What do we mean by technology?

We are talking about devices that a lot of people have, such as telephones, cellphones, smartphones, tablets, and computers.

What can technology be used for in service delivery?

- ▶ For you and your staff to communicate.
- ▶ For staff to provide help with tasks, such as when you are at your job.
- ▶ To look up information on the internet about employment and community activities.
- ▶ For you and staff to share and review documents, pictures, and video with each other.

Getting used to technology takes time.

- ▶ Using technology to receive services may be new for both you and staff.
- ▶ This will be an ongoing learning experience. It will take time to get used to receiving services remotely.
- ▶ If the way you are getting remote services isn't working, talk about it with staff and try another way.
- ▶ As you get used to using technology, you will find different and better ways to use it over time.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on people with disabilities and the services they receive. This brief is one in a series for individuals to help guide them as continue to work, seek employment, or participate in community-based day supports. We welcome your feedback and ideas as we all work together so that individuals can work towards their goals while staying safe and healthy.

ICI COVID-19 RESOURCES:
covid19.communityinclusion.org

Staying Safe on the Internet

The internet has lots of information and can be a great way to learn and connect with people. However, you need to be careful when you're online.

- ▶ Be careful of scams (something dishonest) or fake websites (websites that aren't what they seem). Also, be careful of fake emails (called "phishing"). They can steal important information from you.
- ▶ If you are chatting with people online, such as on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or LinkedIn, do not give anyone your personal information. No one needs to know your address, phone number, bank information, etc. If anyone asks you for personal information you should tell a family member, residential staff, or program staff so they can help you respond.
- ▶ Do not send money or other items to anyone you chat with online. No one should be sending people they chat with online any money or gifts.
- ▶ Do not click on links in emails or that pop-up on your screen, unless you know the link is safe.
- ▶ If you have concerns about anything you see on the internet, ask someone for help.

TECHNOLOGY CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to help figure out what technology to use and how best to use it.

Equipment

- What devices are available for you to use?** This may include a telephone, cellphone, smartphone, tablet, or computer. If you don't own a device, you may be able to borrow one from someone you live with or your program.
- What technology do you know how to use?** List the devices you are comfortable using.
- What is your communication preference?** Decide how you want to communicate using technology. Some people like video calls and other people prefer just to talk on the phone.
- What technology accessories do you need?** Headphones, earbuds, speakers, a carrying case, or a stand for a smartphone are examples of things you may need.

Internet

- Do you have internet access?** Internet access is important for receiving services remotely. Find out if you have internet available, and if it's strong enough. If you will need internet at your job, talk to your supervisor. If you'll need it for a community activity, talk to the activity director.
- Do you have any internet restrictions?** If you are not allowed to use the internet, and feel it would be helpful to receive services, discuss this with whoever has made that decision (family, guardian, staff). Advocate for how you can use the internet safely. This might mean being supervised when using the internet, only using the internet when receiving services, or being trained on internet safety.

Additional Technology

- Would additional technology be helpful?** If so, talk to your staff or family about getting additional technology, like a smartphone, tablet, or computer, or getting internet service. There are programs and services that may help you pay for technology or get it at low cost. See the list of resources at the end of this publication.

Support Using Technology

- Will you need help using technology?** If so, find someone in your home, at your job, or at your community activity who can help you.
- Do you need training on using technology?** Training may help you use technology better and more independently. If you need help finding training, ask your staff and check out the resources at the end of this publication.

Permission

- Are you allowed to use technology at your job or community setting?** If you will be using technology on a job or at a community activity, make sure it's okay with your supervisor or the person in charge. Staff may be able to help you in solving any concerns. As a person with a disability, you may be entitled to use the technology as a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Space for Using Technology

The place you use technology is important. You'll need to think about some things:

- Availability of internet**
- Access to electrical outlets**
- Quiet space** - If you are receiving services at home, you may want a space that's quiet.
- Private space at home** - You want to have a place where you can speak privately with your staff person. This might mean moving a laptop or phone into your bedroom for your meetings.
- Private space at job or in community** - If you are at your job or a community activity, make sure private conversations happen in places that are private.

Pre-Meeting Checklist

Before each remote meeting with staff, be sure to take care of the following items:

- Battery charged** - If your technology runs off a battery, make sure it is fully charged.
- Device passwords** - Technology devices usually have passwords so other people can't use them. Make sure you have passwords set and know what they are. You can sometimes also use your fingerprint to access devices.
- Meeting links and passwords** - Meeting online often requires a link and password. Be sure you have these before a meeting.
- Device turned on** - Have your technology turned on and be logged in when it is time to meet with staff.
- Help available** - If someone will be helping you with using technology at home, at work, or at a community activity, be sure they are there when you need them.
- Information and supplies for meeting** - Just like if you are meeting in person, be ready with any information and supplies you will need.
- Keep your technology safe** - If you are using a device at work or in the community, make sure it stays with you or is locked up. Do not let anyone use the technology who is not supposed to.

Getting Services Remotely

What should you expect from remote meetings and services?

- ▶ **Your ideas should be respected.** Talk to your staff about whether you want to meet just over the phone or by video. This includes how long you want to meet. Some people don't mind being on the phone or online for a long time. For other people, short periods of time work better. Sometimes a few short meetings during the day, with you working on things between meetings, can work well.
- ▶ **Everyone should be professional and respectful.** Meeting by phone or computer can sometimes make conversations tricky. Always ask questions if you are not sure what is being said. Staff will not always be able to tell your feelings as easily as if you were in person, so tell them if you are feeling frustrated or confused.
- ▶ **You should have a schedule ahead of time.** Meetings should not be set up at the last minute. You should have a schedule ahead of time, so that you have the necessary technology available and help if needed.
- ▶ **Staff should be on time for each of these meetings or contact you if they are running late or need to reschedule.** Just because you are at home does not mean it's OK for you to be left sitting by the phone or computer wondering where the person is. At work or a community activity, you also should know when to expect a call or contact.
- ▶ **Meetings should be well organized.** You should know ahead of time what you will be doing at the next meeting so you can be ready. Have any supplies ready to use, such as a notepad and pen or a note-taking app on your phone. Make sure you have any websites you'll need open on your device.
- ▶ **You should have the chance to actively participate.** Meetings should not be just staff talking. You should be having conversations with them. There should be activities that you can work on together. At a job or community activity, you can possibly perform tasks on video and staff can provide guidance.
- ▶ **Staff should offer to involve other team members when it is appropriate.** You should be able to invite others to some meetings if you want to.

- ▶ **Staff should check in with you each time you talk to see how you are doing.** They should ask how you are feeling about the online meetings and other work you are doing together. You have a right to be part of deciding what you do regarding employment and community activities, even when you are doing these things remotely.
- ▶ **Confidentiality must be respected.** You have the right to meet privately with your staff person. Both you and the staff should be in places where private conversations cannot be overheard.

Group Meeting Tips

Sometimes you may be meeting with staff in a group or participating in an online event with others. Here are a few tips to help:

1. Be sure you are in a quiet area.
2. It's helpful to mute when you aren't speaking.
3. Most platforms have a "chat" area. You can write comments in the chat without speaking out loud.
4. Do not talk when other people are talking.
5. Help set some rules for when you want to speak: raising your hand, holding up a sign, or putting a note in the chat box.

Getting Help with Technology

You may need help from someone around you to use technology. If so:

- ▶ Make sure they understand that they only need to help you use technology. They should not speak for you.
- ▶ They should help you and sit with you as much as needed. For example, you may just need help turning on a computer and logging into a meeting. They should give additional help as needed.

"I'm very grateful for technology. Technology has continued to open my mind. Also, remember, that using technology itself is a process. We're all not going to know things off the bat."

*—Kamisha Heriveaux,
Self-Advocate and MASS staff member*

RESOURCES

Computer Training

You can take the training below on your own or with help from your staff.

- ▶ [GCF Learn Free](#) has online training on technology. Topics include computers, smartphones and tablets, and staying safe on the internet.
- ▶ [NorthStar Digital Literacy](#) has online training on technology. It also has assessments to see what you know about technology and links to other training resources.

Staying Safe Online

- ▶ [Internet and Mobile Device Safety Tips](#) (Youth Organizing! Disabled & Proud)
- ▶ [Online Safety and Social Media](#) – Includes video on internet safety (ConnectAbility Canada)
- ▶ [Staying Safe on Social Media and Online](#) – Guide for download (Mental Health Foundation)
- ▶ [A Beginner's Guide to Scams](#) (The Money Advice Service)

Help in Getting Low-Cost Technology

- ▶ [Everyone On](#) – Information on getting low-cost computers and internet, and other help with technology. –
- ▶ [Guide to low-income internet options and affordable internet plans \(AllConnect\)](#)
- ▶ [Tech Goes Home](#) – Information on getting low-cost technology, and lots of other information on using technology.
- ▶ The funding source for your services (such as one of your state vocational rehabilitation agency or state intellectual and developmental disability agency), or your disability service provider, may be able to pay for or supply technology.
- ▶ If you are on Social Security, there are [work incentives](#) like PASS plans that can help pay for technology.
- ▶ Your [State Assistive Technology Program](#) may have ideas on how to get and pay for technology.

Zoom Directions

- ▶ [This was created for students by Techie Teacher](#). Adults may also find it useful.

COVID-19 Day & Employment Services Resource List

- ▶ [This resource list has lots of resources for additional help.](#)

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