

# Tips for Taking CIL Services Online

## **Before you Begin**

Before diving into these changes, be sure to practice self-care. Remember, all you can do is the best you can; you can't fix everyone's problems, but you can be there for them and listen.

## **Getting Started**

### **Assess your available resources**

Take both an inventory of what tools and resources you have available to you and where you find gaps to help determine what steps you can and may need for taking CIL services online.

Internet:

- What is your internet connection?
  - Hardwire cable plug in
  - Wi-fi
  - Cell phone hot spot
  - Jet Pack

Equipment:

- What kind of equipment are you working with?
  - Laptop
  - Tablet (e.g., iPad, Fire)
  - Desktop computer
  - Cell phone
  - Microphone
  - Speakers
  - Webcam

Email:

- Work with your CIL to figure out if and how to access email from home.

Audio and Texting:

- Do you have a website you can text from if people are using cell phones?
- Can you text from your work cell phone?
- Find out if your CIL has a 1-800 number. If yes, find out if it can be integrated into your calls. Find out if consumers have long distance, if not consider whether or not as a CIL you will get a 1-800 number to integrate for your calls. Some creative hacks some have tried is to call in on your cell phone and then call the consumer and merge them.

Online software options:

- What platforms do you have available to you at your CIL?
  - Zoom <https://zoom.us/>
  - WebEx <https://www.webex.com/>
  - Go To Meeting <https://www.gotomeeting.com/>
  - Google Meet <https://gsuite.google.com/products/meet/>
  - Amazon Chime <https://aws.amazon.com/chime/>
  - House Party <https://houseparty.com/>

- Cost
  - Be sure to look into the cost of various platforms. Some may have free to discounted rates right now.
  - Consider a Tech Soup Account if you don't already have one.
  - Some platforms have free versions, consider whether or not they would work for your CIL's Purposes
- Accessibility
  - Research the systems you have or want to use for accessibility.
  - Rooted in Rights has tips for [how to make your virtual meetings and events accessible](#).
  - Consider how accessible your platform is for folks who may use screen readers,
    - Zoom is very accessible for screen readers.
  - Accommodation considerations:
    - Google Meet will auto-caption your events.
    - Zoom has captioning as an option but you must hire an outside captioning company such as ACS Captioning.
    - Audio describe what is on your screen. Get tips [here!](#)
  - Audio options:
    - Choose a platform with has a telephone dial-in option. Toll free is ideal, as some numbers are long distance for users.

### Online Event or Class Preparation and Planning Tips

The basics:

- Record email addresses and phone numbers of people you work with to do check-ins or to send them electronic information
- Consider what phone number you will use while working from home.
  - Do you have a work cell?
  - Do you need to [set up a free Google number?](#)
  - Can you forward calls from your office phone to your cell phone?
- Get your remote workspace set up with all of the equipment and software you need.

Get organized:

- Practice using the platform you choose ahead of times so you feel comfortable with it. Ask a co-worker to connect and practice with you.
- Test how well it works with the material you want to present.
- Know your tools for facilitating such as breakout rooms, chat, polls, etc.
- Practice audio describing what is on your screen. <https://dev.accessibilityonline.org/ADA-Audio/archives/110484>

Give clear instructions and guidance:

- Set a time-frame for your event or class that can be routine and continuous and offer them some consistency. (e.g., Tuesday from 10-11am)
- Email, call, or text the participants in your online event the **day before** it begins. More contact and encouragement will help them feel more confident about attending this new way of working together online. Take this time to do a quick well-check and see how they are doing and what they need outside of your event or group.
  - An example of some questions from [Atlantis Community](#)
- Explain to people that they don't have to have a computer to participate. They can still participate by calling into the event using their phone. They just won't be able to see other people.

- Provide tips to set consumers up for success. Where is the best space for them to set up for an online event or class where they are comfortable, have little to no distraction, and their preferred privacy.
- Provide guidance on what type of materials might be handy for them to have available for the online event or class. (e.g., paper and writing utensil)
- Be available to provide one-on-one Zoom or other virtual meeting platform tutorials or to help participants feel confident before the group meets.

### Logistics for Running the class or event:

- Login to your online platform 15-30 minutes early for each class to get set up, prepared and comfortable.
- Test the audio and video settings you wish to have in place. Ask a co-worker or friend to test it out with you.
- Have a co-facilitator to run the event with you to help trouble shoot technology issues and manage incoming questions from attendees.
- If you can have two facilitators, it is helpful to have one to screen share and work with the group while the other manages the muting and unmuting of audio. Or, you might split up facilitation of different breakout rooms.
- Breakout rooms could be a way to give immediate attention to a consumer if it is needed in the moment. Such as a consumer having a particularly difficult time and wanting some one-on-one support.
- If you are comfortable with it, share your personal numbers with your co-facilitators so you can text each other to have side conversations to help make notes about consumer group dynamics or other observances to follow up on later. You can also use the private chat to directly communicate with a co-facilitator outside of the larger group.
- Continue to practice healthy facilitator/employee activities like you would if doing in person work such as allowing time to prepare and time to debrief with your facilitators and to follow up afterwards with consumers to talk about what you can do different with the class in the future or who will follow up on what pieces.

### Facilitating the class or event:

**\*\*Don't expect consumers to jump right into content if you are continuing with an existing group that had previously been meeting in person. Give them support and time to adjust\*\***

- Leave space for people to ask questions about COVID-19, how to find good information, etc. Use your best judgement and make space for it within reason and avoid going down a huge rabbit hole. Try to keep it positive if you can. If you can, share a handout or some good information that may be helpful to them.
  - A good resource might be the <https://selfadvocacyinfo.org/>
- Ask what the level of comfort is among participants with exchanging contact information within the group for outside communication. Discuss this as a group when you get together. What is their preferred methods of communication? What does peer network respect look like?
- Provide time in the beginning and at the end of the event to socialize to give them time to connect.
- Use an icebreaker to make it fun if folks are still getting to know each other. For example: <https://conversationstartersworld.com/icebreaker-questions/>
- Start with acknowledging the technology and virtual meetings. Talk about how to operate the online platform you are using. Leave space to ask questions and make sure everyone feels comfortable and confident.
- Ask participants to practice muting, unmuting, sharing video, or testing out other available features within the platform (e.g., chat box to group, individuals, changing virtual backgrounds)
- Come up with group guidelines that also take into account technology. For example:
  - Please mute yourself if you are not the one talking.
  - Please state your name before you start talking for the folks on the phone.
  - Try only to talk one at a time. If you are having trouble with folks talking on top of each other, consider asking people to say, "end thought," when they are done speaking.
- Remember to explain what you are presenting in the online platform if you have participants without video.

- Thoroughly describe all activities so they can participate at home.
- Remember that you are still a facilitator; you're just now doing it online. Your group will ebb and flow, you may have to reel your class in and bring them back to the topic if needed. You might need to use your skills to help allow all to have a chance to talk, such as asking someone who likes to share a lot to let another participant go first and that you will come back to that person. If many participants in the group want to go down the same "rabbit hole" allow them to do so.... Meet the consumer(s) where they are at and with what they need to talk about. Overall, use the facilitator skills you know and have developed.
- One online facilitator 'hack' is to make space for everyone to share by unmuting participants as you call on them. Those who are still muted still need a turn. Go down the list of participants until all are unmuted. This might help people to all have turns to share and encourage participation. It is also a nice way to "direct traffic." Make sure to let them know that they are unmuted on their end so they are not surprised.
- Try to make it fun. Funny Memes, chat activities, etc. Have FUN!!!! If you're having fun, they will have fun. This will be an opportunity to live in a different COVID free world for a moment. Try show and tell, engaging activities, take a group stretching break or breathing activity. Practice changing your background to funny backgrounds.
- Take breaks if they need it, and sign off early if they need to. Maybe consider having a group guideline that if people need to get up to take care get a drink etc., they can just do it.

Thanks to Ability360 for contributing to this tip sheet!

