*Delivering Your Evidence-Based Physical Activity Program Virtually*

Offering your evidence-based physical activity programs virtually (by e-mail, phone, an online platform, or a combination of the different formats) can be a great way to continue to engage community residents during the COVID-19 crisis when you are unable to offer in-person classes (or offer limited capacity classes in areas where centers have already re-opened). Due to the uncertainty of what programming will look like- particularly for older adults- in the coming months, some degree of virtual programming may be warranted long-term. Below we provide some guidance on ways to plan and implement a virtual Walk With Ease and Active Living Every Day program.

**Benefits to offering virtual classes:**

* No need for a physical space to hold your classes
* Participants do not need to travel to and from class thereby reducing transportation issues
* Flexibility to schedule class sessions at convenient times to engage a more diverse audience including but not limited to those older adults still in the workforce and those with caregiving responsibilities
* Ability to engage participants from different remote locations
* Participants are able to engage in the program in their own time and at their own pace, especially if sessions are recorded and shared

**Challenges to offering virtual classes:**

* Technology challenges for the participants (reliable internet access, comfort level navigating online resources and having updated equipment)
* Keeping in regular contact with the participants
* Participant recruitment
* Retaining participant engagement and motivation
* Providing program materials

**Suggestions for how to facilitate your virtual classes:**

1. ***Determine each participant’s form of communication and capability:***
   * Do they have reliable internet access?
   * Can they send and receive emails?
   * Do they have the appropriate equipment?
   * How comfortable are they with navigating the intended online platform?
   * Do they have a phone with unlimited minutes?
2. ***Choose the class format***
   * Tips for choosing phone and/or online platforms: [*Tools for Reaching a Remote Audience*](https://d2mkcg26uvg1cz.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/Tools-for-Reaching-a-Remote-Audience.pdf)
   * Offer via an online platform – if you and your participants have the technology to conduct an instructor-led live or pre-recorded session
   * Email – send weekly emails that could contain a recorded video from the instructor, along with a PPT presentation with the curriculum/instructions for the week
   * Phone calls only – if email is not available, conduct group check-in calls, one-on-one check-in calls or both. The frequency of the calls would be dependent on your staff capacity and the structure of the program. For example, the Walk With Ease is 3 times per week for 6 weeks and phone calls could be conducted weekly, up to 3 times per week.
   * Combination of the above formats, for example:
     + Participants do not have access to the participant books but can send and receive email: An option to offer the program is to send weekly emails with the necessary course curriculum and then conduct group or one-on-one teleconference calls
     + Participants each have a participant book but have no internet/computer access: An option to offer the program is to have the participants complete the course on their own and perhaps have check-ins (phone) with an instructor one or more times per week
     + Participants each have internet access and are comfortable using a virtual platform: An option to offer the program is to have an instructor lead (live or recorded) for each class session.
3. ***Decide on a specific start and end date for the program and market through various communication channels*** to the community to see if people are interested in this format.
4. ***Develop a system for registrations***
   * Will there be a minimum number of registrants?
   * Will there be a cost for the program?
   * How will the participants securely receive class log-in information?
   * How will participants receive program materials?
5. ***Suggest a participant buddy system:*** After you are past the second or third class you can pair the participants if they are interested. Buddies can check-in with each other to get to know other participants, encourage and keep each other accountable.

**Be willing to change things up if the format chosen is not working for**

**your participants**

**Virtual Delivery of WWE:**

* ***WWE program delivery options:***
  + *Self-Directed* – participants complete the 6-week class on their own following the participant book
  + *Self-Directed-Enhanced* - participants walk 3 times per week on their own with scheduled check-ins (via one or more of the formats described above) with a trained WWE instructor (this is a hybrid model of the Self-Directed and the in-person versions of WWE).
  + Participants can be encouraged to walk in and around their homes, parks or in places where they feel comfortable and safe.
  + See the below document from the Arthritis Foundation for suggested weekly emails that can be sent to participants



* ***WWE participant book delivery options*:**
  + e-books from [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/Walk-Ease-Arthritis-Foundation-ebook/dp/B00LWCXWIW/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=walk+with+ease&qid=1588273591&sr=8-1) (can be used on a computer, iPad or smart phone, do not need a kindle)
  + Obtain program manuals from NRPA and arrange for participants to pick-up
  + Obtain program manuals from NRPA and mail them to the participants
* ***Program Example***: (Hot Springs Village, AR)
  + Began an in-person WWE session but 2 weeks in, the in-person program was suspended due to facility closures
  + Created PowerPoint demonstrations of the program and sent weekly emails with program curriculum to the group
  + Established group check-ins via phone
  + Challenges:
    - Technology (lack of equipment, i.e., smart phones or computers, and lacking the knowledge or are uncomfortable using an online system)
    - Lack of safe outdoor walking spaces in the community to allow participants to walk on their own
    - Weather (heat)
    - Participant motivation to continue the program virtually – they were missing the social connection with the in-person format
  + Solution:
    - As a result of the challenges listed above, Hot Springs Village has postponed their virtual WWE program while they reassess and consider other ways to communicate with the participants.

**Virtual Delivery of ALED:**

* ***ALED program delivery options:***
  + Virtual – participants complete the readings and “homework” on their own using a participant book with no ALED facilitator
  + Virtual led by trained ALED facilitator – engage participants via phone, email, an online platform or a combination of the formats

*\*\* Note: a webinar from Human Kinetics discussing virtual delivery of ALED is available using this link-* <https://us.humankinetics.com/blogs/health-promotion-webinars/remote-facilitation-skills-for-active-living-every-day-and-healthy-eating-every-day>

* + See the below document from Human Kinetics for suggested weekly emails that can be sent to participants



* ***ALED participant book delivery options***

*\*\* Note: NRPA will ship 15 participant books to your agency*

* + Obtain program manuals from NRPA and arrange for participants to pick-up
  + Obtain program manuals from NRPA and mail them to the participants
* ***Program Example*:** (Pataskala, OH)
  + Currently looking to pilot a virtual ALED program beginning in June using an online portal software - the portal software is capable of or providing constant communication (registration, instant messaging, integration with Zoom platform) with the participants

The agencies listed below have expressed interest in offering their programs virtually, some of which have explored or are exploring options to do so.

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| **Agency Name** | **State** | **Program** |
| Hot Springs Village POA/Coronado Fitness Center | AR | WWE |
| Newington Parks and Recreation | CT | WWE |
| Indian River County, Department of Health | FL | WWE |
| The Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge | LA | WWE |
| Jefferson City Parks, Recreation and Forestry | MO | WWE |
| Southern Pines Recreations & Parks | NC | WWE |
| City of Pataskala | OH | ALED |
| Chattanooga Parks and Recreation | TN | WWE |