**How do I convert my in-person youth program to a virtual one?**

As you consider how to deliver your program in the coming months, you may be thinking about virtual options. Walking through the resources and questions below may be helpful as you aim to create a safe and meaningful experience for youth in a virtual setting. A growing library of resources can also be found [here](https://youthprotection.virginia.edu/resources).

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| **Categories and Action Items** | **Questions for Consideration** |
| **Step 1:** Stepping into the new normal: Who are we, what are we about?   * Review the American Camp Association linked resource * Revisit the core purpose/mission of the program * Assess ways the program can be offered | [Creating a Plan to Start and Operate a Virtual Summer Camp: A Step-by-Step Guide](https://www.acacamps.org/sponsored/creating-plan-start-operate-virtual-summer-camp-step-step-guide)  Our program’s mission is:  The goals for our program are:  When participants complete the program, they will be able to/will have experienced:  What are the constraints/advantages (pros/cons) of offering our program in-person, as a hybrid program (some in-person, some virtual/online), or fully virtual/online?   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | In-Person | Hybrid (some in-person, some virtual/online) | Fully virtual/online | | Advantages (pros) |  |  |  | | Disadvantages  (cons) |  |  |  |   Who has traditionally been our target audience?  Is there a new audience we might reach during this season (local, out of state)? |
| **Step 2:** Moving the past to the present   * Identify what worked in your in-person program in the past and what you would like to keep and bring to the present | What activities have we done in the past which youth love, are meaningful, and we would like to incorporate into our virtual program?  What new activities might we introduce?  What methods do we typically use to engage, teach, or have fun with youth? (Examples: small group discussion, games, hands-on experiences, field trips, projects, service learning, drills, etc.)  How can these methods be adapted to a virtual setting?  What traditions of our program—if it has existed in prior years--do we want to keep alive (songs, skits, certain activities, theme nights, games, etc.)? How will those translate to a virtual environment? (Example: Singing songs together can be challenging when there are internet delays; perhaps everyone is on mute while 2-3 staff lead the song)  What do we already have from past programs (or from other programs across the nation) which can be reused or modified? |
| **Step 3:** Tools of the trade   * List what tools, equipment, or resources you may need to operate a successful virtual program * Plan for how tools, equipment, or resources will be accessible to participants | What tools/equipment does the program typically use?  Do participants need materials or equipment?  Do participants have access to needed materials or equipment at home?  Will materials or equipment need to be sent to them ahead of time (shipped/mailed), offered for pick-up or loan out, or can substitute materials or equipment be used?  If the materials/equipment are University property, what insurance coverage eligibilities, waivers, or agreements may need to be put in place or confirmed?  How will we work with participants who do not have access to devices (smartphone, tablet, computer) or to internet/Wi-Fi? |
| **Step 4:** Technology and your program   * Vet and choose a virtual platform * Train on and practice using the platform | What technology platform would we like to use?  What technology platforms does our parent organization (University or otherwise) have access to and/or support?  How are we vetting platforms for their user-friendliness, features, applicability to our program, and safety for youth?  Do we know how to set the platform up?  Do all staff who will be serving as the host/moderator know how to use all of the technology features?  Do all staff who will be serving as the host/moderator know how to break participants off into small groups/breakout sessions using the technology platform we have chosen?  How will we respond to participants who cannot login or have technology issues? |
| **Step 5:** Safety first   * Contact the Office of Youth Protection at [youthprotection@virginia.edu](mailto:youthprotection@virginia.edu) with questions, concerns, or to set up a time to brainstorm around any of these categories * Establish training expectations for staff * Establish procedures for when things do not go as planned * Prepare virtual codes of conduct for staff and youth participants * Review [resources](https://youthprotection.virginia.edu/resources) for keeping youth safe online during virtual experiences | How will we keep youth safe online?  How will we leverage or limit (turn off) the chat features on our platform?  What kinds of permission slips, agreements, waivers, or participant registration systems/platforms/forms might we need to put in place?  How will we leverage or limit (turn off) recording capabilities on our platform?  How will we keep youth safe during activities which might present risk? (Example: stretching, warm up/cool down, safety orientation, instruction)  Will we use a [code of conduct](https://youthprotection.virginia.edu/resources) for adult staff/volunteers?  Will we use a [code of conduct](https://youthprotection.virginia.edu/resources) for youth?  How will we manage or redirect behavior in the virtual environment?  Do we have a plan in place in the event something goes awry in a virtual session (“Zoom bombing,” inappropriate behavior of participant(s) or someone off-screen in the household, outages or disconnection, a participant discloses concerning information)? |
| **Step 6:** Bringing the fun with programming   * Plan when, how often, and for how long the program will be offered * Pre-record or locate content from other resources; load onto virtual platform being used | What will our day to day schedule look like?  Attention spans when in virtual environments can be limited (especially with youth) -- how will we spend our time together (as a program) in a meaningful way? (Example: 6-10 minute bursts of content or engagement is recommended before moving on to the next item on the agenda; keep the content moving)  How might we pre-record some material so youth can engage with it at times outside of live content?  How will we engage **all** participants, giving them space and helping them feel recognized within the virtual environment? (Examples: ice breakers, forming questions, mining for involvement and engagement, offering small group/breakouts, offering a diverse array of options for participation or demonstrating knowledge or engagement)  How will we adjust programming for different levels? (Example: offering an athletic program virtually and not all children have the basic pre-req skills)  How might coaching, instruction, or moderating need to adjust given the virtual environment?  How will we offer intentional (still supervised) down time so participants can work towards building community, creating meaningful relationships, and have impromptu fun? (Examples: building in commercial breaks which allow participants to go on mute; take a “water in/water out” break; putting everyone on mute and playing music while participants complete a task on their own independently; small group breakout sessions; think/pair/share)  Are there other people in similar programs or within the industry we could reach out to? (Example: Twitter is a popular go-to source for physical education networking; YouTube; TeachersPayTeachers; other universities)  Are there activities/partners in the community which are meeting in-person or are doing work aligned with our mission we could refer participants and/or their families to? How can our work/investment in this program be extended beyond what we’re offering in this wave of programming? |
| **Step 7:** Money and the value of your program   * Assess cost needs * Prepare a budget | What costs will be involved in running the program? (Examples: paying staff who are not volunteers, equipment/materials, postage, additional insurance, facility rental, technology fees, background checks)  If a fee is charged for participants, what will the fee be? How does this fee compare to what was charged in past years for similar programs?  How will we translate the value of the program to families/parents/guardians who:   1. Feel their child is already spending too much time in a virtual environment 2. May not see the value-add of a virtual program when they have historically experienced it in-person 3. Have a child who has no experience in the content area of the program |
| **Step 8:** Recruiting and equipping staff   * Develop a plan to recruit and select staff/volunteers * Develop a training plan for staff/volunteers | What is the ideal number of participants so the experience remains one of quality?  How will we recruit staff?  How will we keep staff engaged throughout the program when they may be feeling burnt out on living in a virtual world?  [Keeping Staff Engaged](https://www.acacamps.org/news-publications/blogs/camp-connection/how-keep-staff-engaged-person-or-virtual-programming-summer)  How can we create community among the staff so we retain them for when programming returns to in-person in the future?  How will we train our staff on a variety of topics—including youth protection?  [Protecting Children During a Crisis](https://www.d2l.org/education/additional-training/protecting-children-during-crisis/)  [Safe Digital Learning Plans](https://www.d2l.org/safe-digital-learning-plans/)  [Office of Youth Protection Official Training for Recognizing and Reporting Abuse and Neglect](https://youthprotection.virginia.edu/trainingandreporting)  Note: If offering a virtual program and you’re interested in staff/volunteers receiving credit/having a record of their UVA training on recognizing and reporting suspected abuse and neglect with the Office of Youth Protection, please contact [youthprotection@virginia.edu](mailto:youthprotection@virginia.edu) |
| **Step 9:** Communicating is key   * Develop a marketing plan * Create resources needed for marketing or sharing about the program * Plan a pre-program orientation for families | How will we market or share with the community and families about our program?  Do we need to create any kind of marketing or communication materials (social media posts, flyers, etc.)?  How will we communicate with families (before, during, and after the program)?  Will we offer a parent/guardian/family/participant orientation before the program (to walk through technology, expectations, questions, etc.)? Consider making this orientation a virtual one, offering a variety of dates/times, or recording it so families can access it at their convenience.  Will we have an attendance policy? What if a youth misses a session or “doesn’t show up?” Will we contact the parent/guardian?  What emergency contact information will we collect?  How will we debrief with staff (after each session, weekly, after the program is completed)? |
| **Step 10:** Looking to the future   * Plan for retention of staff and participants | How can we retain participants in the future? (Example: How do we make this the best hour of their day, experience of their summer/semester so they want to come back for the next virtual session or when we are live and in-person again?)  Knowing some amount of “virtual experiences” are here to stay, how can we capture the experiences and feedback of participants and their families to translate the value in the future or tell/share the story now? PR—through many mediums—is a powerful tool! (Examples: Exit questions or polls at the end of sessions, social media posts, surveying, examples of participant work/demos, participant submitted photos or videos, quotes from participants or families) |