

Guidance on the Use of Teleconferencing to Provide Services

DORS values our Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) willingness to continue providing services (Job Development Prep, Development and/or Coaching) to consumers during these unique times. The use of teleconferencing practices is being permitted as a **temporary measure** that may be provided during the COVID-19 social distancing period. These practices do not reflect a change in service provision for periods other than this unique situation.

DORS appreciates your creativity and continued collaboration in delivering employment services. Questions have been asked concerning teleconferencing and whether DORS is supportive of using video to provide the aforementioned services.

For purposes of this guidance teleconferencing includes the use of video and/or telephone to provide employment services.

Procedure

DORS has researched practices that are commonly used to provide teleconferencing (including the use of telephones) and it has been determined that:

1. DORS will not recommend or approve meetings through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and/or Instagram as there are significant issues around security, confidentiality, and HIPPA compliance.
2. DORS will authorize the continuation of services (Job Development Prep, Job Development and Job Coaching) via teleconferencing using web-based services such as **Zoom** and **Doxy.me** etc. While DORS does not endorse any specific web-based service, it has been determined that **Zoom** and **Doxy.me** are free, accessible and HIPPA compliant. Other options that may be considered include **Google Hangouts Meet** and **FaceTime**.

Each web-based service has advantages and limitations and your agency should determine what works best for your situation. In selecting a virtual format, we strongly recommend that you consider:

- Security vulnerability – is the platform encrypted
- Confidentiality – will confidentiality be maintained during meeting
- Accessibility – will that platform be accessible for all abilities
- Reliability – confidence in the ability to provide the service when agreed upon
- Connectivity quality – will your agency be able to handle the connections;
- User friendliness – will use be easy to use or understand by all involved
- Affordability – is it free or not a financial burden to your agency, as DORS will not reimburse for such services

DORS has recommended the aforementioned options as they are free, HIPPA compliant, and accessible. **DORS is not able to fund our providers in the purchase of equipment to provide services in a video format.**

Additional Considerations

The use of teleconferencing practices is being permitted as a **temporary measure** that may be provided during the COVID-19 social distancing period. These practices do not reflect a change in service provision for periods other than this unique situation.

Teleconferencing (including the use of telephones) may be provided with the verbal consent of the individual. The consent will be documented on the report of the email that demonstrates the individual's knowledge and permission.

The use of audio only (telephone) services cannot be used to expand and grow programs. These services are approved to allow individuals who are already approved to receive services continue their pursuit of competitive integrated employment and/or maintain their position.

The information presented in this document is intended to be applied to the three services outlined above (job development prep, job development, and job coaching). If there are questions about services not outlined in this document, please seek guidance from DORS prior to providing those services.

DDA specific questions can be directed to Kathleen Walker at kathleen.walker1@maryland.gov.

Additional information may be found for BHA licensed providers by going to:

https://maryland.optum.com/content/dam/ops-maryland/documents/provider/Alerts/Telephone%20Services%20Authorized%20for%20SE_033020.pdf and accessing the **PROVIDER ALERT, Updated COVID-19 Information and Guidance, April 1, 2020.**

Questions:

Inquiries specific to the provision of services for the Office for Blind and Vision Services may be directed to Toni March at toni.march@maryland.gov

Specific guidance for Vendors (not CRPs) will be provided on a case-by-case basis. Please contact Darlene Peregoy at Darlene.peregoy@maryland.gov.

Questions about the information outlined in this document may be directed to Latonya Cobb-Cannon at Latonya.cannon@maryland.gov or Kate Drake at Catherine.drake@maryland.gov.