

Guidance on the Use of Teleconferencing to Provide Services

Updated Information: 4/7/2020

Guidance previously provided from DORS noted specific platforms that may be accessible and HIPPA compliant. Recently, it was brought to DORS' attention through MSDE that there are issues surrounding the use of Zoom – specifically security/privacy issues. Therefore, DORS does not recommend the use of this platform by our providers in the provision of approved employment services (job development, job coaching, and job development prep). It is DORS' recommendation that providers explore alternative tele-conferencing platforms that are accessible and HIPPA compliant.

If providers choose to continue to use Zoom, they must use the password feature and make all consumers aware of the issue outlined above.

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

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 for BHA licensed providers from the Maryland Optum website: [04-01-20: Telephone Services Authorized During State of Emergency for Supported Employment \(April 1\)](#).

Questions:

Inquiries specific to the provision of services for the Office for Blindness & 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.