



VIRTUAL MEETINGS

PHA support group leaders might not be able to proceed with an in-person meeting for some reason: last-minute venue changes, inclement weather, etc. Rather than cancelling the meeting, consider conducting the meeting virtually. Thanks to modern technology, leaders can salvage their meetings even at the very last minute.

HOW TO SET UP A VIRTUAL MEETING FOR YOUR SUPPORT GROUP

Submit a meeting request, but instead of clicking on “Support Group Postcards,” select “Virtual Meeting Form.”

PHA will set up a virtual meeting on your behalf through RingCentral. PHA will email you a link to access the call through their computer with or without video, and a phone number for those who prefer to use the phone.

PHA will not include the link and phone number on your postcards, emails or calendar listing to protect the integrity of your call. Participants will be instructed to RSVP to the leader to receive the call-in information. When you send the meeting access information to your group, please ask participants not to click the link before the meeting time. Let PHA staff know if you or a group member would like to test the platform before the meeting.

BEGINNING THE VIRTUAL MEETING



- Call the number, then enter the access code, or click the link to join on the computer or tablet.
- Encourage group members to use either the link or the phone. Using both will create feedback during the call.
- Technology changes all the time. PHA has no control over RingCentral, which could its interface or policies at any time for any reason without notifying PHA. If you encounter any issues, please notify Support@PHAssociation.org, or call 240-485-0777.

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL CALLS

Set ground rules at the beginning of the call and when a new person joins the call, usually signaled by a bell or other sound effect. Ground rules should include:

- **Begin any comment by stating your name.** Example: “This is Mike from PHA, and I just wanted to thank everyone for coming.” That will reduce confusion about who is speaking.
- Remind everyone that **only one person may speak at a time.**
- Encourage attendees to **make brief comments or questions.** Some people find it harder to focus on a conference call than an in-person meeting. If one person monopolizes the conversation, it will discourage others from speaking. Some might leave the call.
- Give **specific guidelines for introductions**, such as, “Please state your name, city and state, if you’re a patient or caregiver, and one fun fact about you.” Do not say, “Tell us about yourself.” That is too general and can encourage long replies.

If someone joins mid-call, acknowledge them at the nearest opportunity by saying, “This is [your name], the support group leader. Whoever just joined the call, could you state your name” and whatever other introductory remarks you require. Then, go back to the previous conversation.

Ask someone to take notes. Like any support group meeting, it helps to have a “secretary for the day” in case you need to follow up or answer questions. It is difficult to lead a call and take notes, the leader should ask a helper to take notes.