

ACTIVE IOWA: Program Manual of Implementation

Virtual Addendum



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

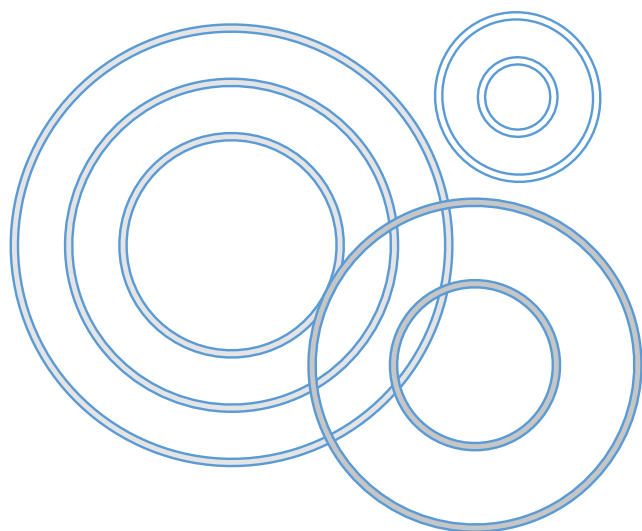
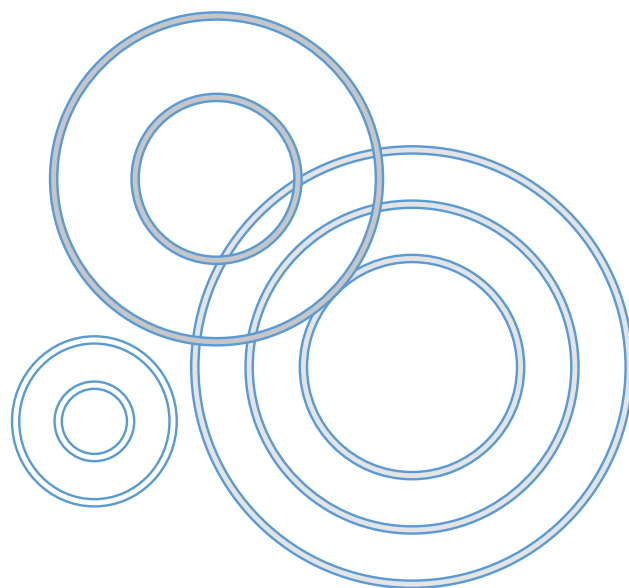
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of the Addendum

This adaptation to Active Iowa will provide guidance on conducting physical activity programs and offering safe physical activity options during an infectious disease outbreak. This addendum complements the Active Iowa [Manual of Implementation](#) to guide Active Iowa programs while our communities navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as other infectious diseases, such as the flu or seasonal cold, or any other diseases that may arise over time. The information presented in this document provides guidelines and suggestions for transitioning Active Iowa programming to virtual formats. This guide is useful within the context of a pandemic, or other infectious disease outbreaks, while also presenting new opportunities to reach historically excluded groups.



Flexibility & Safety During COVID-19

Due to the variable nature of COVID-19, it is important to be flexible and to prioritize safety. This document may be updated over time, and was last updated in September 2023, to reflect CDC guidance as the COVID-19 situation continues to unfold. When in doubt, or if the information in this guide conflicts with CDC guidance, adhere to the most recent CDC recommendations. [Click on this sentence to view the CDC's COVID-19 landing page.](#)

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VIRTUAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Introduction to Virtual Programming

Though outdoor activities work well for some communities at some times of the year, hosting physical activity programs outside is not always possible. On the bright side, we saw a boom in virtual physical activity programming during the COVID-19 pandemic that can be very useful for many circumstances such as: a pandemic or a flu outbreak, during poor weather, to accommodate folks with disabilities or mobility difficulties, for communities with limited safe and usable outdoor space, or in areas where finding accessible transportation is difficult. Learning how to host virtual activity classes may seem daunting, but the tips below can help prepare a safe and engaging class. The following section provides high-level information on platform options, along with tips for selecting a platform. As technology is always changing, there may be changes to how these platforms look and/or function over time. This document provides guidance as of Fall 2023.

Overview of Virtual Programming Options

Zoom

Zoom is a video conferencing platform that increased in popularity during COVID-19. Zoom can be used on a computer, phone, or tablet, and participants can join a Zoom call without an account. The meeting host must have a Zoom account, and the free basic account allows up to 100 people to join calls that last up to 40 minutes. See [this website](#) for more information on Zoom account features. Check out [this link for Zoom video tutorials](#) for general tips and tricks for learning Zoom. See Appendix 2 to access a “how to” video on using Zoom for physical activity programs.



Lead a Live Zoom Class

For those who are used to leading physical activity classes in person, switching the format to Zoom may be a good option. Given the instructor has space, the class can be taught largely in the same way as in person, only using Zoom instead of a space with people physically present.



TIP: Encourage participants to keep their microphones muted during any activities that include music or sound. This helps ensure everyone can hear and participate. It may also be helpful to recommend participants “pin” the instructor’s video to ensure their video stays large on the screen, making it easier for participants to follow along.

Instagram Live



Instagram Live allows the host or instructor to share live videos with anyone who follows their account. Instagram Live has the added feature where up to 3 people can join the broadcast with their video, making this a nice option for classes led by more than one person. Participants can also react or comment during the broadcast. See Appendix 2 to access a “how to” video for using Instagram Live.

Instagram has several other useful features that could be used for physical activity sessions.

Instagram Analytics

This is a great way to understand who your audience is, when they are most active, and what type of content they engage with most. Using this information, hosts can choose the best times to post class announcements or host sessions, as well as track participation in sessions. [Click here for more information about using Instagram Analytics.](#)

Count Down Sticker

If you have a virtual activity class coming up, you can create a countdown, and followers can subscribe to your countdown event. This means they will get reminders and notifications related to the event so no one misses out on the action. [Click here for more information about using countdown stickers.](#)

Facebook Live



Facebook is one of the most widely used social media platforms, and it became even more popular to stay connected with loved ones during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Facebook Live feature works much like Instagram Live and allows physical activity instructors to share fitness activities on a platform that many people use daily. A phone or computer can be set up to capture a yoga class, step session, or many other types of physical activities. See Appendix 2 to access a “how to” video on using Facebook Live for physical activity classes.



TIP: Post an announcement for your session in advance so people know to come back and participate in your activity.

Facebook Insights can help you track how many people are viewing your page’s Facebook Live sessions and related posts. [Click this link to see an article on using the Facebook Insights feature.](#)

Google Meet

This is the video conferencing program created by Google. It works through users' Gmail accounts and allows group video calls (up to 100 people for up to 60 minutes). This is a good option for groups who will be meeting many times with the same group because the meeting links can easily be included in shared Google Calendar invitations. Plans can be arranged through Gmail or the calendar, and classes can take place with the video call, all within Google's platform. Find more information on starting a Google Meet [by clicking the link here](#). Check out Appendix 2 for a "how to" video on using Google Meet for physical activity programs.



TIP: Since Meet works within Gmail accounts, calendar invites can be sent to interested participants to reserve the time on their calendars and provide an easy way to find the link.

Platform Choice Tool

Use the table below to help choose the platform that fits you and your audience's needs the best. Clicking within each box of the Paid Account Options row will redirect to the relevant website with more information.

| Feature | Zoom Live Class | Facebook Live Class | Instagram Live Class | Google Meet Live Class |
|---|-------------------------|--|--|-------------------------------|
| Maximum Capacity | 100 people | No limit | No limit | 100 people |
| Account Needs | Only host needs account | Only host needs account | Account required for everyone | All need Google/Gmail account |
| Analytic Options | ✗ | ✓ (only for pages, not personal accounts) | ✓ | ✗ |
| Time Limit | 40 minutes | 8 hours | 60 minutes | 60 minutes |
| Screen Sharing | ✓ | ✓ (only from a computer) | ✓ (must be saved to your camera roll) | ✓ |
| Built In Saving/ Sharing Platform | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ |
| Auto-Captioning | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ |
| Computer, Android, iPhone, tablet compatible | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Paid Account Options | Zoom | ✗ | ✗ | Google Meet |

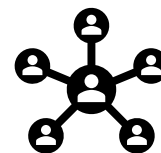
VIRTUAL CONNECTIONS

Building and Engaging a Virtual Audience

The COVID-19 pandemic was difficult, and its impact continues to be felt by many, so it is important to build stronger and healthier community connections, habits, and behaviors. The virtual Active Iowa program can help guide a journey to recovery for communities. In-person Active Iowa has the opportunity to build social circles and make connections, but this community building became more difficult in the virtual world of COVID-19. Social media and other virtual strategies have been useful tools for keeping us connected at a time when physical distance was necessary. After the pandemic, we continue to leverage these tools when in-person classes are difficult due to scheduling conflicts, transportation barriers, poor weather, or geographic distances.

Utilize Existing Networks

Physical Activity Leaders often have existing connections in the community. Have Physical Activity Leaders call friends, email family members, or message work groups to encourage healthy physical activity habits in their lives. Physical Activity Leaders could let them know about Active Iowa programs, suggest a walking meeting on the phone with coworkers in their own neighborhoods, or simply remind people to be active.



Support Each Other

Encourage Physical Activity Leaders to create their own network for support and coordination while serving as links between Active Iowa and the community. This space can be used to share tips to work through challenges Physical Activity Leaders may face.



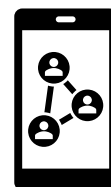
Consider Your Audience



A PAL who wants to lead a running club for single 20-somethings will need to use very different advertisement and engagement approaches than someone interested in hosting Tai Chi for arthritis relief. Utilize the platform that reaches the most people in the audience. Some ideas are: Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, email Listservs or groups, Google Meet groups, text message groups, or even phone calls. For a Tai Chi class for arthritis relief, Physical Activity Leaders may even want to consider targeting caregivers who are more familiar with virtual platforms as the audience who can pass along the information to the person they care for. [Module 11 of the supplemental training videos](#) has more information on choosing the right social media platform based on your audience.

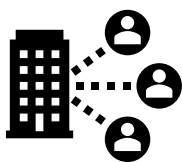
Boost Your Social Media Presence

See Chapter 4 of the [Manual of Implementation](#). Social media kept us connected during the pandemic and serves as a great way to promote any Active Iowa programming happening (virtually or in person). Post activity schedules, links, and descriptions before Active Iowa programs. Encourage your followers to engage with the posts through comments, reactions, requests, or shares. The more your followers interact with the post, the more *their* followers see the post. You may want to consider having Physical Activity Leaders create their own groups or pages on social media to engage directly with their participants.



Collaborate with Community Organizations

Active Iowa programs have a unique place in the community as trusted sources of information and support. Collaborating with local social services organizations to share helpful information—even if it is outside the direct realm of physical activity (e.g., food pantry or counseling service organizations) -- will benefit the overall well-being of your community. Look for other trusted community organizations, groups, healthcare providers, or resource pages to share.



Offer Flexible Options

In communities where trained Physical Activity Leaders are not available or live virtual physical activity classes are not feasible, virtual resources can still promote physical activity in other ways. Program advocates or ambassadors can function similarly to Physical Activity Leaders without needing prior expertise or training. Program advocates and ambassadors could experiment with:



Virtual Physical Activity Challenges

Challenge friends and followers to some friendly competition where social media can keep you engaged. People can participate on their own time and enjoy the competitive aspect of these challenges. These challenges can be modified to fit your audience and participants.

- **Step challenges:** Participants compete against each other to see who can take the most steps in one week.
- **Plank/sit-up/squat challenge:** Participants compete to see who can increase the number of planks, sit-ups, or squats they can do in a day for one week.
- **Push-ups/lunges/burpees challenge:** Participants compete to see who can do one minute of push-ups, lunges, and/or burpees every day for one week.
- **7-minute workout challenge:** Participants compete to see who can complete 7 minutes of high-intensity exercises every day for seven days straight.
- **5k challenge:** Participants compete to see who can slowly increase their running distance over 30 days until they can run a 5k.
- **30-day yoga challenge:** Participants compete to see who can do yoga every day for 30 days.

Get Moving on Your Own...

...Then encourage social networks to do the same. Comments, posts, chains, or threads can serve as a great way for people to share their experiences with asynchronous physical activity. Look around on YouTube to find videos that you can share to encourage people to watch/participate in. Click on the descriptions below to see some examples of the types of videos you could share.

- [Walk through Switzerland Mountains](#)
- [Walk through London Covent Garden](#)
- [No equipment cardio warm-up](#)
- [Family fun cardio workout](#)

Travel the World Without Leaving Your Neighborhood

Call up family or coworkers and invite them to try one of the countless virtual park tours available online. Participants can take in the sights and get some movement in while on the phone with their sister or across the street from their neighbor.

- [Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming](#)
- [Kenai Fjords National Park, Alaska](#)

THE DIGITAL DILEMMA

Resource Considerations

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw how promising virtual adaptation can be to staying connected. Although they can work well for some, virtual options are not possible or useful for all people.

Broadband Internet Access

The Digital Divide

There is a gap between people who have electronic devices and internet access ready for their use and those who do not. In the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, places where people commonly use the internet (e.g., libraries or coffee shops) were sometimes closed. For those without ready access to computers or an internet connection, participating in a virtual program may be difficult. In Iowa, which ranks 45th in the nation for broadband system strength, communities might have to navigate a larger digital divide to connect with all residents.

For more information on internet access in your community, see Appendix 7.5 of the [Manual of Implementation](#).

Internet as a Social Determinant of Health

The COVID-19 pandemic showed that the lack of internet access influences each of the six social determinants of health domains defined by the American Medical Association. A few of the clearest examples are explained below.

- **Economic stability:** Internet access has become increasingly necessary for work, job searches, applications, and filing for unemployment benefits. When social-distancing orders were enforced, many employees were told to work from home assuming that they had strong internet access. Internet access has become a necessary component of economic stability.
- **Neighborhood and physical environment:** During the pandemic, many in-person gyms, sports, and organized activities were shut down. In their place, many organizations offered online-based exercise classes to keep people physically active while enforcing social distancing orders. However, these activities only reach and benefit those with internet access.

Importance of Increased Access

As our communities grow more digital, it is important to make sure no one gets left behind. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and even before for some, access to the internet has become essential to daily life for most people. Access to the internet allows people to connect with friends and family, work remotely, and stay active with virtual programs, such as Active Iowa. Increasing internet access helps create a more equitable society in our increasingly digital world.

If you are looking for steps to improve the internet availability and accessibility in your community, click the resource titles below to get started.

- [How to Improve Your Community's Internet Connectivity](#)
- [Becoming Broadband Ready: A Toolkit for Communities](#)

Stretching Beyond the Internet

If efforts are ongoing to address your community's digital divide, take some time to brainstorm ways to reach community members who lack the technological capabilities to participate in live virtual physical activity programs. A few ideas to consider include:



Advertise any non- or low-internet use physical activity options in frequented places like grocery stores, libraries, or doctor's offices. Utilize other forms of communication like calls, texts, mail, and word of mouth.



Take pictures of exercise routines and pair those with written instructions for a workout routine. Leave copies of these guides in frequented places or offer to deliver them to interested participants.



Establish a partnership with the local cable company to broadcast physical activity sessions over the television.

COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD CONSIDERATIONS

Building Technological Infrastructure

Virtual programming furthers inequity if it fails to reach community members who would benefit from the activities. Partnering with local organizations and businesses that can help address the digital divide in your community is vital to the journey toward health equity and beneficial Active Iowa programming.

Partnerships

See Chapter 7 of the [Manual of Implementation](#) for information on assessing the community's digital landscape, as well as the following list of potential partners in improving the digital divide:

- Local cable or satellite companies
- Internet companies
- Organizations or people with A/V skills
- Libraries
- Grocery stores or food banks
- Nursing homes or long-term care facilities
- Schools that have Wi-Fi
- Local technology organizations, clubs, or businesses that can help set up virtual infrastructure



Organizational Adaptations

In Active Iowa's virtual format, some technical aspects of the program might need to be altered. Using the [Manual of Implementation](#), your Community Advisory Board should consider the pieces of training, program preparation, activities, and evaluation that need attention. Some examples include:

- Update the adaptation table to match virtual online activities and what is core to the virtual Active Iowa program (online videos and online classes by Physical Activity Leaders)
- Update logic model to reflect virtual additions (Appendix 8.1 of [Manual of Implementation](#))
- Update evaluation documents (Chapter 9 and Appendix 9.8 of [Manual of Implementation](#))
- Liability waiver language during participant registration
- Joint use agreements more focused on the distribution of information than physical spaces
- Online Physical Activity Leader and Active Iowa Ambassador training and recordings

CONCLUSION

Addendum Wrap-Up

Physical activity is vital to healthy communities. The Active Iowa program seeks to encourage community members to use Iowa's parks and recreational facilities for physical activity, as well as increase the number of Iowa community members who are physically active. The COVID-19 pandemic showcased the danger of ill-prepared public health infrastructure, the devastation a virus can bring, and the need for healthy communities. At the same time, COVID-19 also demonstrated the power of creativity, collaboration, and compassion in the resilience of our communities. The demand for engaging in meaningful physical activity is now present more than ever. Though these insights were assembled in the context of a global pandemic, they may also be useful for a variety of contexts and settings, including areas with geographical barriers, dangerous weather conditions, communities with limited transportation or mobility, and many other situations. Together, Active Iowa can continue to support micropolitan communities in their efforts toward health equity, activity, and wellness.

Key Takeaways

After reading the Active Iowa Manual of Implementation Addendums, leaders will be able to...

- Explain the role and importance of vaccination in the safe return to in-person programming (COVID Addendum).
- Modify in-person program protocols to protect the safety and well-being of participants.
- Differentiate and select between live virtual physical activity platforms based on population characteristics.
- Bolster networks and diversify options to further the reach of virtual programming.
- Narrow the digital divide and generate internet-limited programming opportunities.
- Adapt program logic models, materials, and evaluation documents to altered program formats.

APPENDIX 1

Virtual Physical Activity Class Preparation

In this appendix, you will find some general tips to share with Physical Activity Leaders during training to consider while they prepare to host a virtual physical activity class. Not all of these suggestions will be applicable to every Physical Activity Leader in every situation, but they are a good starting point for a safe, successful, and fun class.

- Determine your audience: depending on who you want to participate in your class, the platform, timing, and style of your class may change. Consider the following questions:
 - Who is my audience?
 - Does my audience work or go to school at specific times?
 - What times would most people likely be available and willing to do a physical activity class?
 - Does my audience have mobility constraints that make some types of activity better than others?
 - Does my audience have internet access?
 - Does my audience have a space in which they can participate in this activity?
 - What potential class platforms does my audience have/know how to use?
 - Will my class include single participants or might couples or families attend?
 - What language does my audience speak most comfortably?
- Choose your activity platform: depending on the audience you choose, some of the platforms discussed in the [Virtual Activity Section](#) may be better suited for your activity. Utilize the table at the end of that section to help make this decision:
 - Does your audience have video camera capabilities?
 - What potential class platforms does your audience have/know how to use?
 - Do you want to limit the class to specific people or make it more broadly available?
 - How much interaction do you/does your audience want from the class?
 - How many people do you want to participate in your class?
 - How long will your class last?
 - Do you want detailed information on who attends your class?
 - Do you want to require participants to register for the class in advance?
- Prepare the class platform: Depending on the platform through which you choose to host your class, ensure your class and link are ready well before the class itself. This may mean creating a Zoom meeting or scheduling a Facebook Live session. This will make it easier to share information about your class and ensure the settings are ready for your use without last-minute scrambling.
 - If you want to host an activity that involves music, please note that music licensing laws for virtual or recorded events can be difficult and expensive to navigate. When in doubt, search for terms like “royalty free” or “free use”.

- **Advertise!** The unique and fun piece about group physical activity is the camaraderie and social aspect, so be sure to let people know about your class so you have participants. Consider the following:
 - Post on social media – especially if your class will be taking place on a social media platform
 - Send to your family, friends, or colleagues personally
 - Share the information in group messages or email groups
 - Post physical flyers in any spaces people frequent (grocery stores, coffee shops, gyms, etc.)
 - Make sure you share what the activity is, the time, and the link where participants can register or watch the class when it occurs
 - If available on the platform you will be using, ensure safety features are enabled so harmful people cannot get into your class. See appendix 2 to access “how to” videos that cover safety options
- **Create a space to host the class:** With virtual physical activity classes, you likely will not have access to dedicated fitness spaces. Leading (or participating in) a class from home is possible with some safety tips.
 - Create an area clear from hazards on the ground, walls, or hanging. This ensures you can move freely during the class without worrying about tripping or having something fall on you.
 - When the class begins, encourage participants to do the same to stay safe
 - Set up your camera at an angle that includes the whole space you will be using. No one wants to see your ceiling or just your feet!
 - Prepare the appropriate settings for your class. For example, create a waiting room for Zoom meetings so you can only let in people you know or learn how to kick out participants who cause problems. See appendix 2 for “how to” videos for each platform.

APPENDIX 2

How to Use Different Platforms for Physical Activity Classes

Using Zoom for Physical Activity Classes

Zoom is extremely versatile and is an excellent option for virtual physical activity classes.

If you don't already have a Zoom account, create one by following the directions linked on the [Zoom website here](#). You can use Zoom online in a web browser, or you can download an app for your desktop, phone, or tablet at the [website linked here](#).



“How to” Instructional Video

To watch a “how to” video for using Zoom for physical activity classes, [click here](#).

Using Instagram Live for Physical Activity Classes

Instagram Live can be a good option for virtual physical activity classes.

If you don't already have an Instagram account, create one on the [website linked here](#).



“How to” Instructional Video

To watch a “how to” video for using Instagram Live for physical activity classes, [click here](#).

Using Facebook Live for Physical Activity Classes

Facebook Live can be another good option for a virtual physical activity class.

If you don't already have a Facebook account, create one on the [website linked here](#).



“How to” Instructional Video

To watch a “how to” video for using Facebook Live for physical activity classes, [click here](#).

Using Google Meet for Physical Activity Classes

Google Meet has many similar features to Zoom and can be a good option for virtual physical activity classes.

If you don't already have a Google Account, typically associated with an email address that ends in “@gmail.com”, create one on the [website linked here](#).



“How to” Instructional Video

To watch a “how to” video for using Google Meet for virtual physical activity classes, [click here](#).