

Alaska's COVID Technology Response Project



Best Practices Guide

Technology opens the door to community access and social connection for people with disabilities, especially during the current pandemic. This guide offers some ideas and tips.

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OVERVIEW

There are multiple ways technology can assist people with disabilities live the life they choose as well as supporting health and well-being during the pandemic. This guide is not all inclusive but is intended to encourage the introduction and support of technology in the lives of people with disabilities and summarizes lessons learned during the initial stages of this project.

Here are a few definitions to keep in mind:

Remote Support: also known as remote monitoring, is typically a combination of assistive devices that address safety concerns (such as cooking safety, medication dispensing, front door access, etc.) as well as provide support as needed through face-to-face communication.

Distance-delivered services: Under Appendix K, during the pandemic, service providers have been allowed to bill for services where a direct support professional delivers a waiver habilitative service to an individual either by phone or video.

Telehealth: Healthcare providers, including PT, OT, and speech as well as behavioral health services are delivering services from a distance either by phone or video.

In addition to the service types described above, people with and without disabilities are using video communication platforms to participate in community events and classes as well as to stay connected with friends and family.

While COVID is increasing the sense of urgency around technology, the supports described above will not go away once the pandemic is over. Experts have been predicting services will evolve and technology will play a bigger role in the lives of people with disabilities for several years now. Many states are ahead of Alaska in their adoption and success stories. The time is now to jump on board.

GETTING STARTED

Where to start? There's no step-by-step list. Every community, every provider, and every individual are different. Here are some recommendations and resources:

- Identify tech champions in your organization – who are the people comfortable with technology who can be available to problem solve or contribute to the planning effort? Does your organization provide services to a person who is tech savvy and could offer peer support?
- Commit to providing internet access in the spaces you control, i.e. group homes. In some states internet is considered essential and the cost is included in room and board or covered in the Medicaid rate.
 - Partner with a local internet provider. Questions to ask:
 - ✓ Can they provide discounts to support internet access for people with disabilities?
 - ✓ What support can they provide to manage data? *Note: Many providers have shared they are reluctant to provide internet access to recipients because of data misuse by recipients or employees in the past. Most internet providers have addressed this concern and have ways to control data usage.*
 - ✓ What filters are available to ensure safety? In addition to parental controls, filters are now available to block illegal or dangerous websites to ensure safety. One example: <https://www.asavie.com/>
- Portable mi-fi units may offer an opportunity to meet with people in a safe environment – possibly outdoors or in a well-ventilated indoor location with just a few people. This will allow for an in-person demonstration session – how to log on, how to access Zoom, etc.
- Consider setting up a media room at your office in a space that can be cleaned between users – this will allow for in-person support with learning technology.
- Assistive Technology of Alaska (ATLA) has many programs and technology funding options, depending on a person's disability. Reach out to ATLA to discuss individual technology needs and resources. <https://www.atlaak.org/>
- Learn from your peers! Join AADD's COVID Tech Project listserve for training and information. Reach out to other providers to ask how it is going and share ideas.

PLANNING ONLINE ACTIVITIES

As the pandemic continues through the fall and winter, services may need to continue to be distance delivered. Service providers around Alaska (and across the country) have successfully engaged people with a wide range of activities to keep them connected and active.

There are different structures to deliver services. Most common are group activities where a small group of recipients meet in a Zoom room with an activity facilitator and possibly additional staff. Another option is a DSP providing support as needed to a person participating in a community-based online class. There are thousands to choose from right now, in every interest area. Or a DSP may meet one-on-one with someone to provide a service. This is the most difficult scenario to make engaging and meaningful.

This section provides planning and facilitation considerations:

- Consider what will connect people if planning a group:
 - Shared interest in a particular activity
 - Age-specific activity: For example there are programs specializing in transition for teens and young adults that focus on independent living skills like budgeting, goal-setting, etc.
 - Social connections: are there friend groups who would like to spend time together?
 - Peer support
 - For ongoing groups – have the participants identify the activities they are interested in

- Know your audience:
 - Will they need a reminder about the time of the group?
 - Is there someone who can help with logging on and learning the technology?
 - Consider walking them through a Zoom test meeting. Here's a link to a Zoom Test Meeting: [Link to Join Meeting Test \(http://zoom.us/test\)](http://zoom.us/test)

- Choose the right group leader:
 - Is the leader comfortable with the technology? Perhaps staff team up and divide responsibilities.

- It's important to pre-plan. Consider creating a simple class plan that includes:
 1. Timeline of activities
 2. Warm-up/Icebreaker activity
 3. Main activity including goals being addressed
 4. Review of the meeting rules

5. Time to visit
 6. Breaks
 7. Supplies Needed
 8. Visual Cues – videos, pictures, etc. Have them open and ready to share.
- Commit to the learning curve:
 - It may take some trial and error to make it work for everyone.
 - The technology takes time to learn, both for people with disabilities and staff. It takes patience but people of all ages and abilities are being successful.

FACILITATION BEST PRACTICES

- Simplify access as much as possible
 - Keep the meeting link/software the same
 - Use simple consistent passwords
- Keep groups small or use breakout rooms to help people engage
- Orient people to the audio and video controls of the technology, such as how to mute and unmute the audio, turn the camera on or off, use the chat, and explain when to use these features in the group. May need to review this repeatedly depending on the group participants
- Let people in the meeting know how to participate if it's a group situation – Should they raise their hand physically? Is there a button to push that will indicate they want to speak?
- Build in transition time – 10 minutes in the beginning so people can get on and say hello. Consider adding time at the end to socialize.
- Stay flexible – make changes based on experience
- Plan for breaks to go around the “room” to ensure everyone gets a chance to give input, including those who may be quiet or have not yet stepped up to add their thoughts.
- Build in time to stretch/move – take stretch breaks
- Create a consistent structure for each virtual session – start creating new routines
- Avoid anything that could intensify sensory overload, including background noise, bad audio, large groups, brightness, or messy backgrounds. Your role as the facilitator is to manage those distractions. As the facilitator, you may need to mute people.
- It's OK if people call in on the phone – be sure to describe what is happening and who is in the meeting because they won't know. Also at the beginning of the meeting/group – type their name in the participant list so people know who's on the phone.
- As the facilitator, you should keep the phone number and access for the meeting handy, in case you need to call in because of poor audio quality or an unstable internet connection.

ZOOM TIPS

Zoom is the most common platform being used to provide services as well as for virtual events. While there have been some concerns with safety, taking reasonable precautions addresses the safety issues. In addition, Zoom has made significant changes to ensure the safety of participants. Zoom provides many how-to guides and resources. Zoom handouts, which can be either emailed or printed and displayed in various settings, are included at the end of this guide.

Here are a few highlights:

Safety precautions

- Don't publish the Zoom link on social media
- Set up either a passcode or a waiting room (Zoom will require this beginning 9.27.20).
 - Again – make the process to join an activity as simple as possible for the participant. A waiting room option is easier than expecting someone to enter a passcode.

Other tech tips

- Keep the phone number and access for the meeting handy, in case you need to call in because of poor audio quality or an unstable internet connection.
- If you call in while staying on the computer video, turn your computer 'speakers' off. This is different choosing 'mute'. If you're on both the computer and the phone there will be a loud echo that will make it impossible for people to hear each other. Just remember to turn your computer speakers back on after the meeting is over.
- If there is an unstable internet connection, give Zoom time to adjust – it will often improve in a few minutes. In the meantime, turning off the video may help.

Here is a series of short how-to videos created by a service provider for people with disabilities and supporters on how to use Zoom:

How To Join a Zoom Meeting:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ApwdyWdV_s&feature=youtu.be

How to Use Zoom During a Meeting:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fYOZlWi8n-U&feature=youtu.be>

How to Download Zoom

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HRrIJVQAINQ&feature=youtu.be>

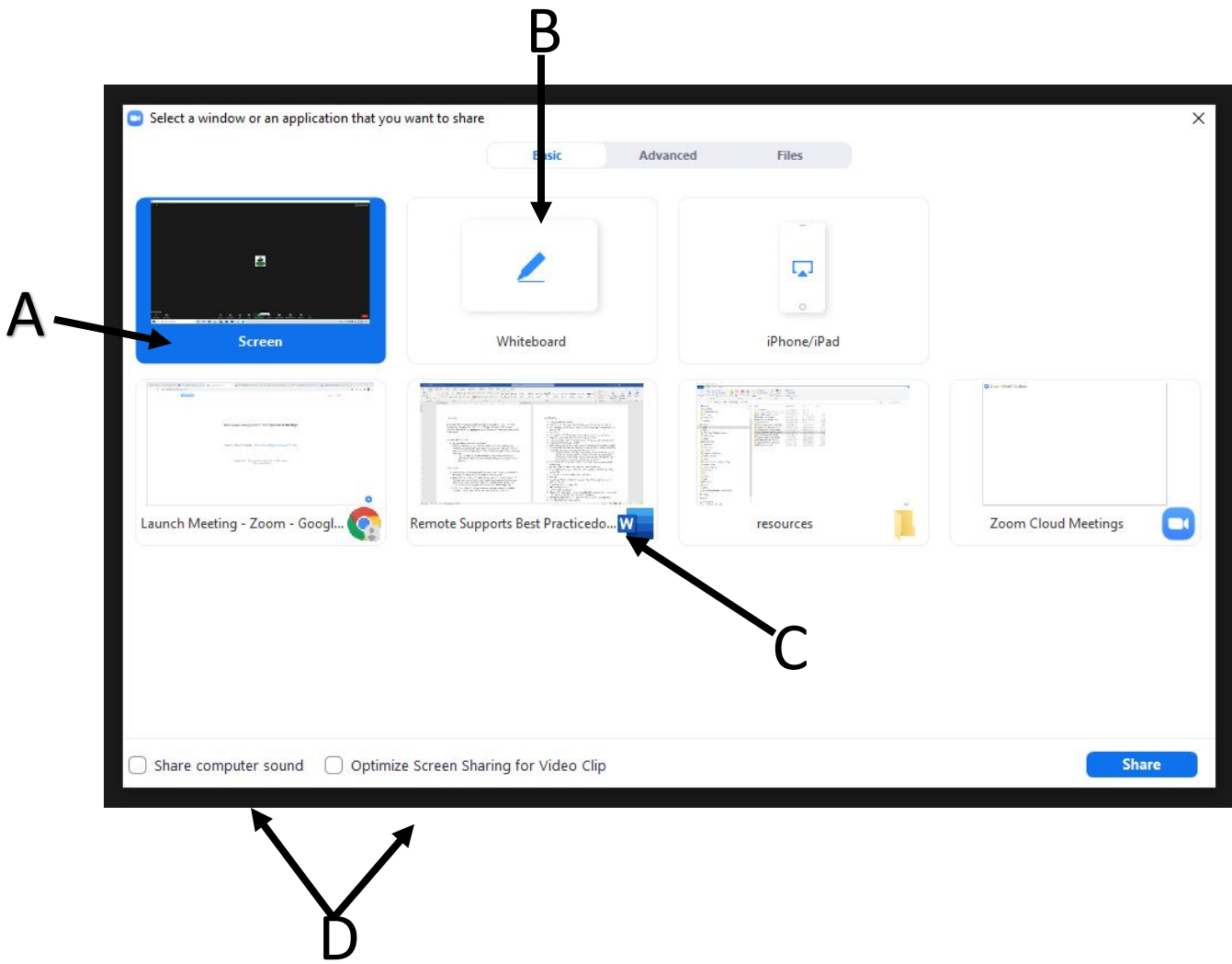
If you plan to share your screen, pay attention to the screen pictured below which pops up after you click Share Screen – choose what you want people to see by clicking:

A = Blue Screen: everyone will see whatever you see on your screen.

B = Whiteboard: for games like Pictionary or Hangman

C = A specific file: If your file is open on your computer, it will appear as an option when you screen share.

D = If you are going to share a video with sound, check the “Share Computer Sound” box to ensure good sound quality. If you check the “Optimize screen sharing for video clip” – then you won’t see the participant screen when you are sharing a video or doing a presentation.



ONLINE ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Card games like War, Yahtzee
- Exercising – you can use screen sharing and participate in an online exercise class together. Or someone from the group could lead an exercise routine. Zumba and yoga have been popular options.
- Use action figures to role play scenarios specific to individual goals (safety, social skills, employment)
- Simon Says
- Use a prop like a stuffed animal, photo to engage in conversations, turn taking
- Art projects (drop materials off, then do art together online)
- A virtual experience tour – lots of these online, see Resources page of this document
- Explore music using YouTube – karaoke!
- Walk in place while watching a travel video (YouTube has lots of virtual hiking options)
- Do It Yourself facial masks using items found in a kitchen. Add on painting nails and call it a Spa Day. Here's a sample recipe (there are many online!)
 - *Combine 1/2 cup hot—not boiling—water and 1/3 cup oatmeal. After the water and oatmeal have settled for two or three minutes, mix in 2 tablespoons plain yogurt, 2 tablespoons honey, and 1 small egg white. Apply a thin layer of the **mask** to your **face**, and let it sit for 10 to 15 minutes. Then rinse with warm water.*
- Photo collages/photo quilt – collect pictures and create a collage using powerpoint, publisher, etc
- Scavenger Hunts for items around the house or in a neighborhood
- Virtual walks together – go on individual walks – show people what they are seeing using phones
- Dance parties – search *Just Dance videos* on YouTube
- Charades – use texting/private chatting to assign words
- Virtual Disney Rides – on YouTube. In a group – have breakout rooms by ride type (fantasy, scary, etc)
- Storytelling – each person says a line
- American Sign Language class
- Dungeons & Dragons group – use the website Roll 20 for



Adventure Club Idea

Staff set up community-based challenges - for example, a treasure hunt that a participant completes around town with a parent or direct support professional. Afterward - everyone in the group meets on Zoom and shares their experience with the activity. For every challenge completed, the person earns a badge or points (either tangible or digital). So many badges/points earned then you level up. Earn prizes for reaching certain levels.

campaigns, dice rolling, etc. (In a Zoom session, share the screen to view Roll 20 platform)

- Cooking - one program started a “Salad Club” – everyone made salads together and then ate their salads. Also Special Olympics has been hosting a weekly “Cooking with Darcy” event.
- Use Zoom Whiteboard – play Pictionary or Hangman
- Educational groups on topics like budgeting, social skills, advocacy, etc. Zoom makes it easy to share visuals like videos or photos.

5-To-1 Countdown: To get focused before an activity

- ◇ Describe 5 things you see in the room
- ◇ Name 4 things you can feel (“my feet on the floor” or “the air in my nose”)
- ◇ Name 3 things you hear right now (“traffic outside”)
- ◇ Name 2 things you can smell right now (or 2 smells you like)
- ◇ Name 1 good thing about yourself

EMPLOYMENT

While new employment opportunities may be limited during this time, meaningful skill-building and job exploration activities can occur remotely. This may also be a good opportunity to partner with the local school district transition program to create new relationships. Schools will be seeking out meaningful remote learning options.

Employment-related activities that can be supported remotely:

- Job seeking skills training
 - Practice interviewing
 - Online applications
 - Review job listings
 - Resume development
 - Consider working with someone to develop a video resume – can use Zoom to record. Lots of information online – here’s one resource:
https://ohioemploymentfirst.org/view.php?nav_id=120
- Career Exploration – lots of online tools for this! Examples:
 - MyNext Move (<https://www.onetonline.org/help/onet/mynextmove>)
 - Youtube videos highlighting areas of interest
 - Informational interviews via Zoom
 - Online Interest inventories: Pictorial Interest Inventory is one example (https://ca01000043.schoolwires.net/cms/lib/CA01000043/Centricity/Domain/220/Pictorial_Interest_Inventory_template_Boces.pdf)
- Vocational Evaluation
- Job Development
- Pre-Employment Transition Services
 - Explore Work is an online resource, specific for transition age – from the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WITAC) (<https://explore-work.com/>)
- Career Discovery
- Job Coaching
 - Explore apps to provide remote support through the SOAR search engine at the Job Accommodation Network (<https://askjan.org/soar.cfm>)
 - MeMinder app was developed specifically for people with IDD who need vocational supports (<http://createabilityinc.com/vocational-assistance/>)

APSE (Association for Persons in Supported Employment) is a very good resource for information! <https://apse.org/>

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Curriculum Example

This curriculum example was provided by Capabilities Inc. during an APSE Remote Supports Webinar – all learning objectives can be completed via phone or videoconference. Site visits are coordinated remotely with willing employers.

Session 1: Worksite Behaviors

- Introduction: shaking hands and making eye contact – discuss the importance
- Importance of first impressions
- Good and bad body language/ behavior
- Watch videos of jobs visiting in next meeting (if available/ time allows)

Session 2 & 3: Site Visits

- Visit two community employers to learn about jobs (remotely or with safety precautions in place)
- Employer's daily duties, personnel, daily expectations, shifts, accommodations, compensations, and unwritten rules of work at job sites
- Review site visits
- Importance of thank you notes
- Thank you notes

Session 5 & 6: Site Visits

- Visit two community employers to learn about jobs (remotely or with safety precautions in place)
- Employer's daily duties, personnel, daily expectations, shifts, accommodations, compensations, and unwritten rules of work at job sites
- Review site visits
- Thank you notes

Session 7: Networking (consider local Rotary groups, business organizations)

- Networking using social networking
- Appropriate social media
- Local networking organizations
- Local resources
- Contact local networking organizations and resource

RESOURCES

National Technology Resources

- Disability Cocoon: information hub dedicated to relevant technology for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities <https://disabilitycocoon.com/>
 - Shift Technology training: Disability Cocoon recently launched a technology training program specifically for DSPs and organizations providing supports to people with developmental disabilities <https://disabilitycocoon.com/shift-1>
- National Resource Center on Nutrition and Aging distributed resource guides targeted at training volunteers on how to teach technology use to older adults: TeachSD Toolkit: <https://sdsu.app.box.com/s/4bciodwx6n3wllhqqzjskabxka3014z>
- Mobile Internet Skills Training Toolkit: a collection of short simple videos on different platforms – Youtube, Facebook, Whatsapp, etc. as well as more general safety and accessibility features: <https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/connected-society/mistt/>
- Apple: recently introduced a dedicated support team to address accessibility questions; launched a new website focused on accessibility features - <https://support.apple.com/accessibility>
- APSE (Association for Persons in Supported Employment) is a very good resource for information! <https://apse.org/>

Alaska Resources

- Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities: to connect with other service providers and information regarding technology and people with developmental disabilities <http://www.aaddalaska.org/>
- Assistive Technology of Alaska (ATLA): <https://www.atlaak.org/>
- Stone Soup Group’s COVID resources: <https://www.stonesoupgroup.org/resources-for-families/>. Stone Soup is also providing virtual activities like monthly game groups and Friendships & Dating classes.
- Alzheimer’s Resource of Alaska has ideas for online activities: <https://www.alzaska.org/social-hub/>
- Special Olympics Alaska: lots of virtual activities – from dance parties, to cooking classes, to sports challenges. Details on their website – specialolympicsalaska.org

Recreational Activities

- Great activity list for kids: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2020/04/28/parents-guide-education-resources-coronavirus/?arc404=true>

- Great list of virtual tours: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/laurabegleybloom/2020/04/27/ranked-worlds-15-best-virtual-tours-coronavirus/#72bafd0a6709>
- Another list of virtual field trips: <https://www.weareteachers.com/best-virtual-field-trips/>
- Virtual Disney Rides: available on the Virtual Disney Youtube channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYyJUEtYv-ZW7BgjhP3UbTg>
- Online Uno with Friends: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/p/uno-with-friends/9p110p3hnghd?activetab=pivot:overviewtab>

Curriculum/Educational Activities

- Skills to pay the bills curriculum: <https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/>
- Online safety: <https://www.communitylivingbc.ca/resources/safeguards-resources/i-can-be-safe-online/>

Other

- Can Plan App: this is a simple app that can help organize daily tasks and schedules. <https://www.canassist.ca/EN/main/programs/technologies-and-devices/at-home/canplan.html>
- House Party: Houseparty is a social networking app that allows up to eight people to video chat at once in a “room.” There is a dice option that makes playing games easy. <https://www.pocket-lint.com/apps/news/151530-what-is-houseparty-the-group-video-chat-app-that-s-brightening-up-isolation>
- Netflix Party: This is a Google Chrome add-on that allows people to watch a Netflix movie together remotely. All participants have to have a Netflix account. Combine it with Zoom to have a movie night with friends remotely. <https://www.netflixparty.com/>
- Simply Home provides innovative, person-centered technology options to support people being independent in their home environment. They provide information videos and resources. <https://www.simply-home.com/>
 - FeelSafe Consulting is an Alaskan-based partner of Simply Home that can provide consultations and advice: <http://www.feelsafeconsulting.com/>

Zoom - How to Zoom

Zoom helps people meet, talk, and share with video phone calls

Connect to Zoom on Your Device

Go to Zoom website using your computer browser: [Link to Zoom website \(zoom.us\)](https://zoom.us)

OR

Download the Zoom app to your phone or tablet:

Go to the Zoom Download Center: [Link to Zoom Download Center \(zoom.us/download\)](https://zoom.us/download)

Choose the blue Download button labeled Zoom Client for Meetings.

Watch a video - TMG: Zoom Made Easy

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ApwdyWdV_s&feature=youtu.be

Join a Zoom Meeting from an Email Message

Check your email. Open the Zoom message.

Click the link entitled “Join Zoom Meeting.”

A pop up box will ask if you want to Open Zoom. If you are on a computer, click Open Zoom. If you are using a phone or tablet, click “Ok.”

Need help?

Join a test meeting: [Link to Join Meeting Test \(http://zoom.us/test\)](http://zoom.us/test)

Zoom Help Center: [Link to Zoom Help Center \(https://support.zoom.us\)](https://support.zoom.us)

ZOOM – HOW TO SET UP SOUND & VIDEO

Zoom helps people meet, talk, and share with video phone calls

How to set up your Sound & Video in Zoom:

After you join a Zoom Meeting ...

1. Pick your sound from choices on the popup box

Phone Call:

- Click “Phone Call”
- Call a phone number on the “Dial” list
- Type in the Meeting ID numbers, then #

Computer Audio:

- Click “Computer Audio”
- Click button labeled “Join with Computer Audio”
- Test Speaker and Microphone

2. Start your Video

- On Computer: Click “Start Video” button at bottom of page
- On Phone or Tablet: Click “Join with Video”

Need help?

Join a test meeting: *Link to Join Meeting Test* (<http://zoom.us/test>)

Zoom Help Center: *Link to Zoom Help Center* (<https://support.zoom.us>)

ZOOM - MEETING CONTROLS

Zoom helps people meet, talk, and share with video phone calls

Videos on Zoom Meeting Controls

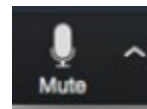
New York Institute of Technology on Zoom Meeting Controls: [Link to video on You Tube](#)

Video from Zoom on Meeting Controls: [Link to video on You Tube](#)

Important Zoom Meeting Controls

1. The Microphone Button (Unmute or Mute)

- Click “Unmute” to talk
- Click “Mute” to turn your microphone off
- Click the up arrow to expand microphone menu to check your sound



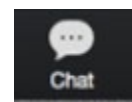
2. The Camera Button (Start or Stop Video)

- Click “Start Video” to turn camera on
- Click “Stop Video” to turn camera off
- Click the up arrow to expand video menu to check your video



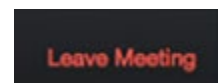
3. The Share and Chat Buttons

- Click “Share” at bottom to show the screen on your device to others
- Click “Chat” at bottom to type messages to people in the group
- You can share web pages or chat with others



4. The Leave Meeting Button

- Click the “Leave Meeting” button to exit the meeting



ZOOM - SOCIAL RULES

Zoom helps people meet, talk, and share with video phone calls

Video Meeting Social Rules

1. Be Ready

- Do: Practice before the meeting
- Do: Be on time
- Do Not: Wait for the start time to practice getting into a Zoom meeting
- Do Not: Show up late

2. Check Sound

- Do: Unmute microphone to talk
- Do: Listen to others
- Do Not: Eat food during meeting
- Do Not: Make too much noise

3. Check Video

- Do: Wear nice clothes
- Do: Groom your hair before the meeting
- Do Not: Wear your PJs (pajamas) to the meeting
- Do Not: Use a bad background

4. Take Turns

- Do: Raise your hand
- Do: Type in the chat box
- Do Not: Talk over others
- Do Not: Talk too long