

Tips For Recruiting and Retaining Youth in Virtual Programs

On February 25, 2021, the RHNTC presented a webinar entitled: [Recruiting and Retaining TPP Program Participants Virtually—Strategies From the Field and Peer Sharing](#). Three adolescent health experts, along with webinar participants, shared the following tips on how to recruit, support virtual implementation, and retain youth in virtual programs. [Access the archived webinar materials](#) on rhntc.org.

Recruit Youth Virtually

- **Use social media for participant recruitment.** Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, or YouTube can be effective recruitment tools. Poll youth on their preferred social media platforms before using.
- **Solicit feedback from youth to improve your virtual program.** Offer easy and anonymous ways, such as using social media (Instagram) and/or a google form for youth to give feedback.

Support Virtual Implementation

- **Work with the curriculum developer to adapt your intervention/curriculum to a virtual setting.**
- **Create a virtual implementation toolkit** that may include materials to help implement the curriculum, including PowerPoint slides with facilitator notes to go along with the intervention.
- **Seek out a fellow TPP grantee implementing the same curriculum.** Share challenges and what strategies have worked when recruiting and retaining youth virtually.
- **Engage parents virtually.** Send a quarterly eNewsletter to update parents/guardians about your program and how they can get involved. Hold a trivia game night as a fun way to involve families.

Retain Youth Virtually

- **At the start of the program, drop off swag bags to youth that are participating.** A swag bag could have your program's logo and contain snacks, water/juice, program/curriculum materials, and hygiene items. Consider delivering food, along with the bag, to each participant's home before the program starts to ensure they have something to eat.
- **Provide headphones to youth** for privacy from others in their home.
- **Create a welcoming and nurturing virtual environment.** Create group agreements that provide youth with an environment where they feel respected, valued, and safe.
- **Have at least two facilitators during virtual implementation.** Ensure facilitators are skilled at virtual facilitation and participant engagement.
- **Send frequent reminders to youth on program time.** Discuss with your participants the most effective way to get reminders.
- **Be flexible and adaptable.** Technology issues may occur beyond your control. Don't get discouraged and ask for help.
- **Incorporate easy-to-learn EdTech tools.** Research shows that these tools benefit youth: [Kahoot](#) (quizzes), [Animoto](#) (animated videos), [Padlet](#) (post board), [Mentimeter](#) (polling), [Jamboard](#) (brainstorming), [Flipgrid](#) (facilitate video discussions), and [Pear Deck](#) (interactive slides).
- **Support online engagement by using Nearpod.com.** This online student engagement platform can be used to create interactive presentations with quizzes, polls, videos, collaborative boards, and more.
- **Present a lesson/session over multiple days.** This can reduce participant burnout.
- **Schedule frequent breaks and encourage youth to get up and move.** Consider sending youth on a scavenger hunt in their homes to find random objects. Have them come back on camera at a set time with all the objects they could find.
- **Let youth know when cameras can be optional.** Make it clear that there will be times when it is fine to have cameras off. Brainstorm with participants when it will be best to have cameras on.
- **Create a Google Form to allow youth to submit sensitive questions anonymously.** This is an alternative to youth using the public virtual chat box to ask questions.
- **Provide incentives.** Announce that gift cards will be given to the most valuable participant (voted on by the youth), or during a random drawing at the end of a lesson and/or end of the program.
- **Create an incentive tracker spreadsheet** if you are giving incentives to youth participating in your program. [This example](#) captures the details needed for audit tracking.