

COVID-19 UPDATE: How to do Virtual Activities

Part 1 – How to Set-Up to Broadcast Activities in Your Residents’ Rooms

COVID-19 has changed the way we currently interact. 1:1 engagement of seniors in retirement communities is essential, now more than ever, yet exhausting for activity staff to provide. Furthermore, how can residents benefit from activities if they are to stay in their rooms?

On March 18, the National Certification Council for Activity Professional (NCCAP) conducted an hour-long webinar to address this challenge. There are a couple of ways to go about this. In short, technology and the use of virtual activities are becoming a necessary and viable solution to engage.

One way is to set-up and broadcast activities from an activity office directly to each of your resident’s rooms. Following the guidelines of NCCAP, here is a step-by-step version I’ve put together for you. Please feel free to print this out and use as a checklist during set-up.

Pros – Residents can take part in LIVE activities in the privacy of their own rooms.

Cons – Takes a little bit of time and equipment to set-up (I’ll outline the steps with links below). Free Zoom account limits activities to 40 minutes maximum at a time.

What you Need – (2) laptops (at least one with a camera), a current cable provider, an HDMI-to-RCA converter, and an HMDI cable.

Step 1. Locate your residences’ electrical room typically where the TV cable boxes are stored. (Your Director of Maintenance will be handy to have here with you.)

Step 2. Each cable box represents a channel on each of your facilities TVs. Determine which channel is not being used much or at all and can now be used as a dedicated Activities channel.

Step 3. Disconnect the coaxial cables (yellow & white for video and audio) from the back of the chosen cable box. (The other end will be attached to an auxiliary output device (AOD). Each cable box has its own AOD. Leave the AOD cables attached).

Step 4. Connect the yellow & white coaxial cables instead to the colored outputs of a “**digital to analog converter**” box. You can buy [one on Amazon](#) here. Note: NCCAP posted an 11-minute video about this set-up on YouTube but the Insignia box they linked to on Amazon is incorrect. **You need one with an HDMI to RCA connection.**

Step 5. Connect an HDMI cable from the converter box to one laptop. Ask tech support to set-up a generic email account on this laptop. This laptop will stay in the mechanical room connected to the converter.



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Step 6. The other laptop with camera will be set-up in the Activities office. (Here is where you will conduct your activities and send a live feed of those activities down to the laptop in the mechanical room via Zoom, a video conferencing app. There are tutorials on Zoom to walk you through the basics of hosting, sending, and receiving meetings. The meeting/activity is basically between you (the laptop in the activity office) and the other laptop in the mechanical room.

Step 7. Register with [Zoom here](#). This will take you to a free basic account. Be aware the free option is limited to 40 minutes max per activity. If budget allows, upgrade to \$15 per month for more time flexibility.

Step 8. Each time an activity is to begin you will send an email link (provided to you from your Zoom account) from the Activity room laptop to the generic email in the laptop in the mechanical room. An Activity assistant or other staff person will physically click on that link in the mechanical room to **“Join Without Video”**.

Step 9. Once that happens, action! You’re on TV from your Activity office. Now you can conduct activities from here such as Morning Stretch, Bingo, and more.

Step 10. The NCCAP has an [11-minute video](#) which explains the process if you need a visual walkthrough. Remember, you need an HDMI to RCA converter.

I hope this step-by-step guide is helpful. What about when activity staff need a break? I can help with that too by providing any of my [monthly senior programs](#) from my Zoom account to you. If you need a hand, I’m not far away.

Thanks for all you do!

Chris



A once nationally touring stand-up comedian and trained improver from *The Second City*, Chris Covell is now a traveling certified dementia practitioner with a guitar and a mission: Create Joy, Connect More, and help others to do the same.

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