



Virginia Department of
Behavioral Health &
Developmental Services

COVID-19 Virtual Activity Toolkit for People with Developmental Disabilities

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People with developmental disabilities (DD), families, and providers have reached out to DBHDS, searching for ways that people with DD can continue to engage and connect to their communities while being restricted from participating in school-based, community-based, and day programs and activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. DBHDS created this resource to assist in the development of creative and innovative virtual programming based on models already being used in the community. The resources and ideas presented span topic areas such as educational resources, social skill development, and recreational activities. The resources listed are those that can be easily replicated or are already available on a virtual platform. Most are free or available at a low cost. Some require participants to be part of an existing network.

This resource will continue to be developed and curated as needed, and will be shared as a working document. Submit your suggestions for resources and activities by emailing IFSPCommunity@dbhds.virginia.gov.

The Commonwealth of Virginia does not endorse the activities, programs, and events listed in this resource. Activities are NOT intended to replace, supplant, or meet state-required educational curricula. The Commonwealth of Virginia does not recommend or mandate any individual provider organization or entity, or individual activity.

COVID-19 Resources

- **SeniorNavigator:** <https://seniornavigator.org/article/74200/important-covid-19-information-older-adults-caregivers-and-families>
- **disAbilityNavigator:** <https://disabilitynavigator.org/article/74237/covid-19-resources-people-disabilities>
- **Center for Family Involvement (CFI):** https://centerforfamilyinvolvementblog.files.wordpress.com/2020/04/covid-19-information_toolkit_041020.pdf
- **Virginia Board for People with Disabilities:** <https://www.vaboard.org/>
- **NAMI:** <http://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Frontline-Professionals>
- **Mental Health America:** <https://mhanational.org/covid19/>
- **Autism Focused Intervention Resources & Modules (AFIRM):** <https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/supporting-individuals-autism-through-uncertain-times>
- **Virginia Department of Health:** <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/76/2020/03/Faith-Leaders-Virtual-Meeting-Resources.pdf>
- **Virginia Department of Social Services:** <https://covid.virginia.gov/>
- **Cover Virginia:** <https://coverva.org/covid19/>
- **Conscious Discipline -** <https://consciousdiscipline.com/covid19/>

Online Learning Opportunities

Many online resources can supplement educational content that is currently being taught virtually! They can also serve as a review for people who are no longer receiving school-based services.

We're sharing a few links to common websites that provide open online content that anyone can access. Some of these resources contain additional educational and social emotional instruction for student learners with or without disabilities.

Preschool to Grade 5

- **Education.com's Interactive Stories -** <https://www.education.com/stories>
This site features math and reading & writing content and interactive games. You can even search for content that meets Virginia's Standards of Learning! The site is free, but you must create an account.

General Educational Resources

- **Khan Academy -** <https://www.khanacademy.org/>
This popular learning site has a vast content library of video lessons, articles, and practice exercises on a variety of subjects, including SAT preparation. The site is free, but you must create an account.

Practicing Coping Skills and Managing Feelings

Social distancing doesn't mean that children and teens have to stop practicing social and emotional skills – there are many online learning opportunities! The videos and resources listed below model specific behaviors and strategies that children and teens can use when interacting with others.

For Older Children

- **Everyday Speech: “Think It or Say It”** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLm2BuW73m4>
- **Model Me Kids: “Autism Job Training: Model Me Job Skills”**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPgVMguP4J4>

This short video models job interview and employment skills for people with autism.

For Younger Children

Check out these social skills therapy videos geared toward younger children! Please note that they are not disability-specific.

- **“Mouse for Sale”** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gk1BuIECXrl>
- **“Tone Deaf”** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5bnFAfkmnXk>
- **“Playmate”** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2fR9HqilmKM>
- **“For the Birds”** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWIVoW9jAOs>
- **“Carrot Crazy”** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7V7MOK0FZrg>
- **“Embarked”** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y47-gmGvZhl&t=23s>
- **“The Egyptian Pyramids”** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j6PbonHsqW0>
- **“Runaway”** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7k2MkVYLDE&t=5s>
- **“What the Fly”** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzuTZKTzH8U>

Things You Can Do!: Ideas for Creating Virtual Activities and Opportunities that Promote Connection and Engagement

Did you decide you'd like to try holding an interactive virtual activity, but need some creative ideas or quick tips? Read the list below to learn how you can make the most of virtual spaces to connect and engage with others while staying safe. You can adapt these activities to fit any age group.

Activity Ideas and Models

- **Virtual peer group for social skills gatherings (Zoom, Google Meets, etc.)**
Your personal network – social groups, employment service organization, day support provider, etc. – can be a natural place to build community for virtual activities! You can also look for existing groups that already provide virtual programming.

Anyone can lead activities: individuals, family members, or providers. This can be an opportunity to introduce an activity that represents your area of interest or expertise! You can also choose to record these events for future access.

- **Explore employment, travel, and other interests using YouTube videos**

Take turns using a theme that could include exploration of various types of jobs (e.g., veterinary assistant, chef, etc.). After the video, discuss on the types of skills needed to do that job.

Host a session with virtual destination themes to other cities or countries! Explore local attractions, people, cultural activities, and hold a discussion about your favorite takeaways or what you learned.

Watch a video about a topic (e.g., dinosaurs). The following week, hold a follow-up session where participants complete a themed activity related to that theme (e.g., complete a dinosaur puzzle, complete a drawing, share a book you read about dinosaurs) – this carries the instruction over a week and helps test learning.

- **Coordinated social interaction activities**

These activities can be as unique and creative as you and your group! Set a time for everyone to “meet” virtually every week, or every few weeks. Use Zoom, Google Meets, or FaceTime to try anything from cooking presentations, karaoke with online videos, virtual game nights (bingo, themed trivia, etc.), dance parties, album listening parties, short movie viewing parties, Zumba, yoga, art demonstrations, crafting, comedy nights, book clubs, and scavenger hunts.

- **Virtual skill demonstrations**

Practice social and employment skills in a virtual format! As a group, watch and review videos. Try doing virtual Q&As with a facilitator or expert. You can even do virtual role plays to demonstrate knowledge transfers.

- **Buddy Club**

Use this model to pair someone with a peer and support staff, and teach them how to navigate social interactions together. Great for play dates gone virtual!

Resources Outside Virginia

- **Ohio State University’s Nisonger Center** - <https://nisonger.osu.edu/technology-project/remote-supports/project/remote-supports/>

Browse the Nisonger Center’s page to learn how remote support technologies can help people with developmental disabilities in their homes. Be sure to read their Frequently Asked Questions for people with developmental disabilities, their families, and providers.

- **PathPoint Remote Learning Community Channel** - <https://www.pathpoint.org/learning-center/>

Looking for ideas on what to do if day support isn’t an option? This California-based nonprofit has you covered, from arts and crafts to Zumba. *NOTE: Registration is limited to Pathpoint’s service areas, but the YouTube videos on this page are accessible to everyone.*

Explore the World Virtually!

Can't get to a museum in person? These virtual tours and online activities might be the next best thing. Activities requiring a participation fee will be noted below.

Virtual Museum Tours and Programming

- **Metropolitan Museum of Art** - <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/online-features>
The Met's many online features emphasize everyone's personal connection to art. Highlights include The Met 360° Project videos using spherical technology to view the museum, and their #MetKids digital feature for children with learning activities and gallery videos.
- **NASA** - Visit these NASA sites to watch presentations about space exploration and NASA's various projects!
 - **Glenn Research Center** - <https://www.nasa.gov/glennvirtualtours/>
 - **Langley Research Center** - <https://oh.larc.nasa.gov/oh/>
 - **Space Center Houston** - <https://spacecenter.org/resources/>
Check out Space Center Houston's at-home activities, or download their mobile app to try their interactive mobile tour.
- **National Gallery of Art** - <https://www.nga.gov/education.html>
Browse the National Gallery of Art's educational resources for teachers and families. Don't forget to check out the interactive programming for young children, teens, and adults!
- **Smithsonian Museum**
 - **Early Enrichment Center Virtual Family Workshop** - <https://seecstories.com/community-programs/>
The Smithsonian's online family workshop series offers classes for preschool and early elementary students. Parenting classes are available for children younger than 3 years old. You must pay a registration fee; fees range from \$20 to \$75.
 - **Museum of Natural History** - <https://naturalhistory.si.edu/visit/virtual-tour>
Browse permanent, current, and past exhibits. Some tours are narrated. These exhibitions are free to view online!
- **Virginia Museum of Fine Arts** - <https://www.vmfa.museum/learn/>
Search VMFA's learning resources and activities for educators, kids, and families. Videos are free to watch!

Other Resources

- **Google Arts & Culture** - <https://artsandculture.google.com/>
Use your computer or the Google Arts & Culture mobile app to explore over 2500 museums, historic locations, and cultural heritage sites. Play interactive games with color, music, or augmented virtual reality to discover new works or revisit ones you love.

- **Travel and Leisure** - <https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours>

This Travel and Leisure article lists 12 museums offering free virtual tours, some of which are listed in this resource guide and in Google Arts & Culture.

Get Help from People in Your Community!

Don't forget that you can turn to your community to help you plan or hold virtual events!

- **Host Facebook Live Q&As on different topics**
Is there a topic you've ever wanted to hear discussed in a Facebook Live? Are you a subject expert or a Facebook maven? If you're part of a social or advocacy network, try hosting a Facebook Live Q&A!
- **Service learning volunteers**
You might know a high school, college, or graduate student who can help you/a group with virtual facilitation or programming for an event! If not, most high schools or colleges have a group or an office of volunteerism or service learning, so try asking them for help. Students may be able to receive volunteer or internship hours if they are involved with leadership programs, such as [Partners in Policymaking \(PIP\)](#) or [Virginia Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities \(Va-LEND\)](#).
- **[Individual and Family Support Program \(IFSP\) Regional Councils](#)**
If you haven't already connected with your local IFSP Regional Council, now is the perfect time! Regional Councils hold virtual events that are important to you and your family. Find your Regional Council on Facebook, attend a virtual meeting, and participate in the planning process!

How Provider Support Can Innovate

Families are not the only ones adjusting to planning virtual activities. The links listed below contain some activity and resource suggestions for providers in need of ideas. Activities can be completed individually or in a group – the rules are up to you!

Providers can try ...

- **Weekly and/or daily check-ins** - Use Zoom or Google Meets. Be mindful of best practices for confidentiality and privacy!
- **Social skills peer groups** - Use Zoom or Google Meets to hold and facilitate these events.
- **Scavenger hunts** - Select a topic or theme, and create your own list of items for participants to find. This activity can occur virtually or in participants' homes, and can be completed individually or in groups.
- **Arts and crafts** - Provide instructions and kits for your participants, or have them use supplies around the home that they can use to draw or make something to show how they feel.

General Resources

This section contains a selection of virtual resources and toolkits for general use. Some sites and events may be specific to COVID-19.

- [Eventbrite's online events](#) - Did you know that Eventbrite lists specifically targeted events, including events for people with disabilities? Consider attending a virtual event, many of which are free.
- [New York City's Virtual Activities Toolkit](#) - The NYC Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities curates an ongoing virtual resource list for use during COVID-19. The list includes museum tours, as well as live and recorded virtual events. As the site notes, most activities and events are free, while some require a sliding scale fee.
- [Best Buddies: Virtual Program Toolkit](#) - Best Buddies is a nonprofit whose mission is to connect people with intellectual and developmental disabilities through one-on-one friendships, integrated employment, leadership development, and inclusive living. Find your local virtual chapter and check out the virtual Activity Calendar!
- [Beyond My Battle: Emotional E-Toolkit](#) - Beyond My Battle knows that living with a serious illness or disability can be stressful. This unique virtual toolkit of strategies to reduce stress and build resilience is designed specifically for people with disabilities, and the people who support them.
- [Beyond My Battle: Virtual Support Group](#) - Beyond My Battle offers two guided weekly virtual support groups. The first group is for people who are managing an illness or disability, while the second group is geared toward caregivers. You must register to attend before you receive a Zoom link.
- [SEEC Virtual Curriculum](#) - SEEC is a Maryland-based nonprofit providing community services to people with DD. SEEC's virtual curriculum offers downloadable social distancing activities, ideas, and materials supporting job discovery, employment, communication and conflict management skills, coping with grief, developing empathy, health and safety, internet safety, physical activity, money management, networking, social skills, and more. You can download this curriculum from SEEC's website at no charge, but please consider making a donation to support the continuation of this information resource!