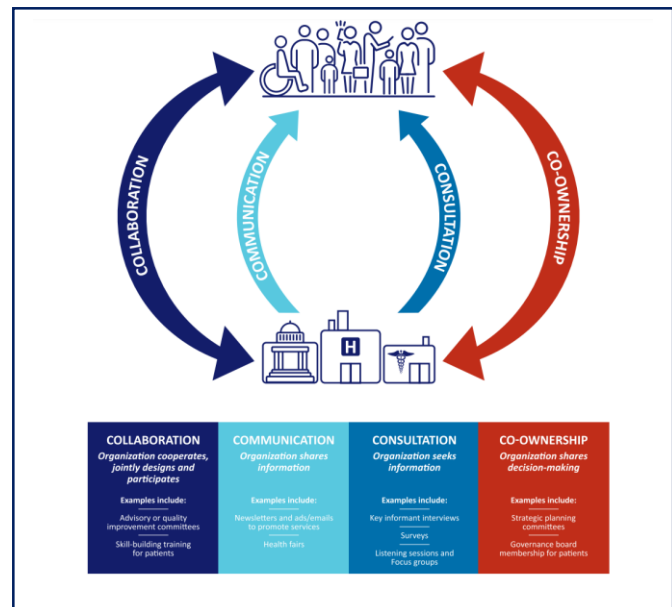


Consumer and Community Engagement Tip Sheet: Staying Engaged in the Midst of the Coronavirus Pandemic

Health care organizations – hospitals, health plans, ACOs etc. – use a variety of approaches to engage patients and family members (“individual advisors”), as well as community organizational partners in their work. At a time when we need each other most, the physical distancing protocols associated with the coronavirus pandemic make staying connected harder, particularly with those from historically underserved communities.

This tip sheet offers suggestions to help health care organizations to maintain connection to their individual and organizational partners during this challenging time. These suggestions are meant to ensure that these important engagement relationships continue and that health care organizations are responsive to their advisors’ and partners’ needs.



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General Guidance

- **Coordinate** with your community partners to share information and knowledge.
- **Listen carefully** for what people need and help to meet the needs by coordinating resources.
- **Use a variety of modes of communication;** don’t assume everyone can communicate electronically. For many low-income people, a voice call may be the only available option.

- **Convey appreciation** for your consumer and community partners' contributions, large or small.
- **Communicate in culturally competent and linguistically appropriate ways**, and make sure that communities most at risk are receiving the information needed to provide meaningful input or feedback.
- **Seek real-time feedback** on your organization's COVID-19 response and policies.

Individual Advisors

- If you have advisory committees or Boards that include patients or family members, **make regular phone calls to individual advisors** to check on their health and safety and to identify their unmet needs or those of people in their communities. Make sure that the staff person speaks the same language as the advisor.
- **As much as possible, maintain regularly scheduled meetings.** Call all individual advisors to find out what technology they are able to use and what supports they need in order to fully participate.
- **Use video conferencing platforms** to host listening sessions, trainings and advisory committee and Board meetings. Make use of interactive platform functions (e.g., chat boxes, breakout rooms) to recreate the networking experience participants might have in person, and to make sure you gather everyone's ideas and input. Following these sessions, use private social media groups to continue the conversation, or share contact information with all willing participants.
- If consumer advisors do not have the technology necessary to participate on video conferencing platforms, **consider lending them Chromebooks or iPads** for use during the coronavirus pandemic, as well as paying for their monthly internet service.
- Be sure that **Board members/advisors receive materials well in advance** of the meeting (ideally, one week) so that they can fully and meaningfully participate.
- If your organization typically offers advisors a **stipend or honorarium**, continue providing these through gift cards that can be issued electronically or through the mail.

Community Organizational Partners

- **Hold regular phone calls and/or video chats** with community organizational partners serving high-risk populations (e.g., homeless, older adults, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ+, immigrants) to discuss any unmet needs or gaps in services for these populations and to identify ways to coordinate available services.
- **Collaborate with your community partners** in developing a community response and communications plan to listen for needs and to distribute information on local resources and supportive services related to the pandemic. This may include:
 - Hosting community listening sessions on virtual platforms or teleconferencing calls.
 - Regularly broadcasting messages that share positive encouragement and resource links using text, Instagram, Facebook live, or other messaging platforms
 - Conducting surveys using online tools or by phone
 - Distributing information via traditional media (newspapers, radio, television)
 - Partnering with faith-based organizations to distribute information to members of their congregations.
- Make sure **all communications meet plain language standards and are in all the primary languages of the communities served** by your organization.