Conferencing Best Practices

Create a Good Setting for Your Meeting

- **Find a Quiet Space:** Extraneous noises can be distracting and create an unproductive environment. Choose a location where there is no foot traffic, coworkers talking, or other distracting noises. A conference room or office where you can close the door is your best option.

- **Choose a Well-Lit Area:** Choose an area that is well lit so Attendees can see you clearly.

- **Choose a Suitable Background:** Look at your camera image and pay attention to what you see in the background behind you. If possible, sit in front of something decorative, like a bookcase or plants or a colorful wall.

- **Place Your Web Camera at Eye Level**: Looking straight ahead will feel more natural to your viewers than looking down the whole time. This will also prevent the ceiling from being your background. If you are using your laptop camera, consider placing the laptop on top of something to make it level with your eyes.

- **Use a Good Headset or Echo Canceling Speakerphone:** If available, use a headset with a built-in microphone to help with hearing and being heard clearly. If using a desktop microphone, an echo canceling speakerphone will prevent feedback when multiple people are talking.

Before Starting Your Meeting

- **Require a password for your meetings:** This protects your meetings and your content and helps prevent uninvited attendees. Encourage your Attendees not to share this link publicly or with others who were not invited. Do not post you link in a public space.

- **Test Your Audio:** Select your microphone source and test before you join the meeting to make sure you have good levels. Test your selected speakers to make sure you are hearing properly. Discovering these issues after joining will delay the meeting.

- **Turn Your Camera On:** At least half of all communication is nonverbal. Our supported technology includes a robust video connection that will add considerable value to your participation in the meeting.

  - **Note: If anyone experiences connection issues or audio delays during the meeting, turning off their camera may improve connection and audio.**

- **Use the Conferencing App When Joining Meetings:** Although some meetings can be joined through a web browser, using the conferencing app will help you get the richest experience and provide fuller control of your settings.

Meeting Etiquette

- **Keep Mics Muted**: Encourage Attendees to keep their mics muted when they are not speaking. This is especially helpful for large meetings, like class instruction. This prevents distracting noises like typing or other background noises. Also encourage Attendees not to eat during the meeting.

- **If You Can't Understand Someone, Tell Them:** If someone is speaking and their mic is not working properly or they are speaking too low, let them know. They are likely unaware of how they sound and may need to adjust their audio.

- **Limit the Number of Conversations at One Time:** When multiple conversations happen during a meeting, it's hard to decipher anything being said, and the meeting becomes unproductive.

- **Wait an Extra Second to Allow Remote Participants More Time to Speak:** There can sometimes be delays in audio, especially if there are connection problems like slow internet speeds. Some delays can be as long as ten seconds and sound like people are interrupting each other. It helps to be aware of this common issue and give participants an extra moment to make sure they have finished their thought.

Recording (Also see PHI section below)

- **Let Everyone Know You Are Recording:** This is not only a courtesy, but it also makes everyone aware so that no one says something they do not want recorded. This also reduces the risk of someone sharing potential sensitive information, including patient information, that should not be recorded and shared.

- **Webex Recording:** School of Medicine Webex recordings reside in the Webex cloud and are stream only by sharing the password-protected link. These recordings are not downloadable per policy. However, they can be transferred to another User's account.

- **Zoom Recordings:** School of Medicine HIPAA sub-account recordings can only be recorded locally on an encrypted device. Anyone with a standard UNC Zoom account can record to the cloud or locally, but cannot include any sensitive information.

- **You're in Control of Your Recording:** You can Start, Pause, and Stop your recording when you choose. After processing, your recording is stored in your Webex account for you to control. You can share the link with whomever you choose and require a password if desired.

When Including Protected Health Information (PHI) in a Conference

Patient protected health information (PHI) can be included in School of Medicine Webex and Zoom HIPAA sub-account conferences. However, HIPAA guidelines and federal law still apply. The following are general best practices to consider. Please refer to our Conferencing Policies page for more information.

- **Share Only with People Who Have Permission:** Make sure all meeting attendees with whom you are sharing have permission to view the patient information.

- **Consent Forms:** Make sure you have signed patient consent allowing you to share their information. Also, be aware of any limitations listed in their consent.

- **Limit Your Data:** This is for both the patient's and your own protection. Only include the specific patient information necessary for your meeting.

- **Identifier Awareness:** Be aware of any identifying images or information you are sharing in your meetings. If you use an image you found on the internet, be sure to site the source, as well as any copyright requirements or restrictions.

- **Recording and Sharing:** Make sure you have patient permission for recording and sharing their information with others.

Need Support? Please contact ATS Classroom Support at chmed@med.unc.edu or open a support ticket at help.unc.edu.