

COVID-19 Response: Conducting Remote Legal Outreach & Community Education

TIP SHEET • May 2020

Sarah Galvan, Justice in Aging

NATIONAL
CENTER ON
**LAW &
ELDER
RIGHTS**

Introduction

In-person legal outreach events are suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the importance of physical distancing. However, programs are deploying other methods for continuing legal outreach and education, namely by utilizing technology for video-based training and distributing written information.

Continuity of legal outreach efforts is particularly important during this crisis. Older adults are grappling with new legal issues, such as questions around economic impact payments and benefits, unemployment, nursing facility residents' rights, access to nutrition and other critical supports, and moratoriums on evictions and foreclosures. Legal outreach and community education efforts provide an opportunity for legal aid providers to share legal information with the community on these ever-evolving legal matters and to communicate that legal assistance is available, even if the services are currently provided through remote means.

Even as shelter in place orders are gradually lifted, older adults and other individuals at high-risk if exposed to COVID-19 may be hesitant to attend in-person events or to receive in-person services. Legal assistance providers may want to keep these remote legal outreach and service models in place for these populations.

Platforms for Hosting Virtual Community Education Events

There are many technology platforms available for hosting virtual community education and outreach events. The National Council on Aging has assembled a helpful [comparison chart](#) that outlines the pros and cons of many existing training platforms.

When choosing a platform to host legal outreach and community education, there are several factors that may be helpful to consider:

- **Ease of Connecting to the Platform:** Do attendees need to download anything? Is the process to join the event complicated?
- **Cost:** If there is a cost for using the platform, are the features worth it? Do you pay per use or flat fee?
- **Capacity:** How many attendees can the platform host?
- **Video/Audio Quality:** Will the platform work in areas with low-bandwidth?
- **Recording:** Does it allow you to record the training for future viewing?
- **Screen-Sharing Capabilities:** Do you plan to use slides or display any visuals? Are there options to share your screen or program?
- **Audience Interaction:** Do you want to interact with your audience? Does the platform allow you to interact with the audience in some way, such as polls, comments or chat?

- **Accessibility:** Does the platform have simple options for adding captions or translation?
- **Security:** How secure is the platform? Are there options to hide attendee information or disable comments if needed?

Advertising and Distributing Your Information

During the COVID-19 pandemic, promoting information through social media platforms, your website, and other virtual locations are good options to reach older adults with access to technology. To reach older adults who are sheltering in place without access to internet, consider some of the following options:

- Share your event information with aging services partners. They may be talking to older adults by phone or in limited in-person interactions and can help spread the word about your event. Use the [Elder Care Locator](#) to find your local aging services partners.
- Distribute printed materials with legal information or event details. These could be distributed by Meals on Wheels, or with grocery or pharmacy deliveries.
- Work with the courts. Older adults may be reaching out to the courts for information, and court staff could pass along information about your event or services.

Developing Written Outreach Materials

Legal assistance providers develop and distribute written materials to the public in a number of ways: brochures, self-help materials, flyers, blog posts, and more.

The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the need to share information with the community and it is more essential than ever that outreach materials be understandable, accessible, and framed to encourage people to take action. Some tips and resources to consider when developing materials include:

- **Use positive messaging and framing when developing your COVID-19 related materials.** Focus on the services that remain available and provide clear and simple guidance for accessing help. The Frameworks Institute has developed a [series of tips for framing COVID-19](#).
- **Consider the legal needs that older adults are experiencing right now, and provide proactive steps that can be taken to address them.** For example, in this time of physical distancing, older adults may be experiencing higher rates of elder abuse, particularly if they are sheltering with an abuser. Continuing outreach and communications on elder abuse is essential to ensure that older adults know that services are still available. The National Center on Elder Abuse's [Talking Elder Abuse](#) can be used to develop outreach materials on this topic. Their [Tuesday Tips](#) also offer a good model for getting essential information to the public in an accessible and understandable format.
- **Utilize plain language and offer materials in a variety of languages.** Plain language communications help people understand your information the first time they read or hear it. The Self-Represented Litigation Network's [Plain Language Resources](#) are helpful for understanding and utilizing this form of communication. Additionally, once materials are in plain language, it is easier to translate the materials into other languages. [LEP.gov](#) has maps available to see the concentration of languages spoken in your community.

Additional Resources

- [NCLER: Strategies for Providing Remote Legal Services to Older Adults](#)
- [NCLER: Creating Effective Legal Outreach Programs](#)
- [ACL & NCLER: Legal Assistance for Older Americans & COVID-19](#)

- [Administration for Community Living: COVID-19](#)
- [National Council on Aging: Tools for Reaching a Remote Audience](#)
- [National Center on Elder Abuse: Reframing Elder Abuse Project](#)
- [Legal Services Corporation: How to Write for Clients](#)
- [Remote Legal Support Guide: A Best Practices Manual for Nonprofit and Pro Bono Innovation](#)
- [Legal Services National Technology Assistance Project](#)

Case consultation assistance is available for attorneys and professionals seeking more information to help older adults. Contact NCLER at ConsultNCLER@acl.hhs.gov.

This Tip Sheet was supported by contract with the National Center on Law and Elder Rights, contract number HHSP233201650076A, from the U.S. Administration on Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201.