The Chicago Parent Program

Guidance for Running Virtual Groups

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Disclaimer

This guide uses Zoom and Microsoft TEAMs as the model platforms for conducting virtual CPP groups. However, most of the strategies described can be adapted for other virtual platforms (e.g., Webex) that include important functions like the ability to show videos and use the whiteboard. No matter which platform you use, it is important to test out all the functions necessary for running group ahead of the first group. We specifically recommend that you:

1. Test the main functionality of the platform prior to the first group, including things like sharing screen, showing videos, using the whiteboard, and muting and unmuting yourself and others.
2. Test how the platform works on mobile devices (i.e., cell phone) as some parents will join groups from a cell phone and it will be important to describe how the basic functions of the platform (e.g., accessing the chat, raising your hand, switching between views) work on a cell phone.
3. Determine what security features (e.g., waiting room, passcode) you will use to ensure only the intended participants can access the group space.

Preparing Parents for Virtual CPP Groups and Ongoing Engagement with Parents Throughout Virtual Groups

It is important to communicate with parents who will be participating in your virtual groups prior to the first session and throughout the duration of the program.

Communication Prior to Group Start

The communication prior to the group start should focus on group logistics as well as problem-solving with parents about any barriers to participation in the group sessions. As part of this initial communication, consider encouraging parents to make a plan for their children during the time that the group will occur (e.g., another caregiver watching them, activities they will have on hand for the child to play with) to help parents get the most out of participating in the virtual sessions. This communication could take multiple forms, including emails, mailings, phone calls, text messages, and sending information home with children from their school or childcare center. As part of this communication, plan to share the following information outlined below (at a minimum).

- Day, time, and start and end dates for the group sessions
- Video conferencing link that will be used for all group sessions;
- What materials (e. g, handouts) parents will need for the groups and how you plan to share those materials with them
- Who they should contact with questions about the group, including if they are having any problems accessing the virtual platform.
- In what format parents would prefer to receive ongoing communications about the group sessions (e.g., text, email)
- Reminder to charge the device (e.g., cell phone, tablet) that the parent plans to use for the group prior to the session and to have the charger with them during the group just in case.

Ongoing Communication Throughout Groups

In addition to these initial communications with parents about the groups, it is also useful to establish a mechanism for weekly communication with parents while the groups are being implemented. This communication should include reminders about the group day, time, and video conferencing link for each session. If sending these reminders via email, you may also wish to include an attachment of the handouts for that session as part of the reminder.

Promoting Parent Engagement and Social Connection

During Virtual CPP Groups

There are two potential advantages of implementing Chicago Parent Program groups virtually rather than in-person. Specifically, virtual delivery can:

- increase access to the group for parents who: may have competing responsibilities or physical limitations that make it difficult to travel to the group location, lack access to reliable transportation, or live far away from the group location.
- be more cost effective and logistically simpler for agencies given they will not need to provide audio/visual equipment to show videos, childcare, refreshments, and sufficient confidential space to hold the groups.

There are also two potential challenges that are unique to virtual group delivery in terms of trying to build community among the parents. These include that:

- you lose the informal conversation and connecting that happens when parents come in to the physical space but have down time before and after the group.
- it is more difficult for parents to see each other's body language during a virtual group which can present challenges both with building community and with turn taking.

Below we present tips to help with promoting parent engagement and social connection during virtual CPP groups.

Promoting initial parent engagement

1. Welcoming parents into group: Welcome parents out loud by name as they enter the virtual group room each week.
2. Encouraging use of cameras: Encourage parents to turn and keep their cameras on. When we can't see other people's faces it limits our ability to form a connection with them. To encourage parents to stay on video, you may want to give tips on how parents can blur out their backgrounds or move to a neutral space in their house where they feel most comfortable staying on video during the group.
3. Encouraging use of preferred names: Encourage parents to rename the name shown on their video square to reflect their preferred name. For example, "Amie" instead of "A. Bettencourt's i-pad".
4. Orienting parents to video conferencing software features: If using Zoom, point out the features parents can use to stay engaged in the group discussion and activities including:
   - the "raise hand" function,
   - the chat function,
   - how to mute and unmute themselves,
   - and use of different screen views (e.g., gallery view)

5. Optimizing views in the software: Some video conferencing platforms have multiple views for seeing participants in the group. For Microsoft TEAMs, you will want to use the gallery view. For Zoom, there are two relevant view options:
   - Speaker view – participants can only see the person speaking. This view is particularly helpful when doing role plays.
   - Gallery view – participants can see everyone in the group at the same time. This is the recommended view for when engaging the participants in group discussion and problem-solving.

Ongoing management of group discussion

6. Promoting discussion: You and your co-leader should pay careful attention to when parents unmute themselves to speak and you may need to call on parents to speak at times. You can also encourage parents to use the raise the hand function to let you know they want to share or to put their questions in the chat. It may be helpful to have one group leader asking the discussion questions and the other group leader monitoring the chat and when parents are raising their hands or unmuting themselves in order to share.

7. Two parents speaking at once: Often, two parents may try to speak at the same time as they are not necessarily able to see each other's body language. We recommend that you ask them both to pause for a second, and then that you direct who should speak first and who should speak second, etc.

8. Parents answering multiple questions in a row: Sometimes one parent may feel compelled to answer multiple discussion questions in a row since they were the person who started talking. We encourage you to thank them for sharing and very intentionally ask for additional responses by saying things like "What do others think" or "Does anyone have anything else to add?" If the problem persists, we encourage you to label what is happening for them and to assure them that just because they answer the first question you ask after a video, does not mean they have to answer all the questions.

9. Managing non-verbal signs of agreement: When you ask parents if other people in the group can relate to what someone is sharing, some parents may share verbally and others may just nod their heads. If this occurs, reflect how you see a lot of people nodding their heads in agreement and then call on some of these parents to say more about what they agree with.

10. Managing background noise and other unexpected behaviors: There may be times where it is necessary for you to mute a participant who is making a lot of noise unrelated to the group discussion (e.g., having a side conversation or a baby or child is crying in their space). Similarly, the need may arise for you to turn off a participant's camera during group.

Other important considerations

11. Using the chat box: Use the chat box in your video conferencing software to do any of the following:

- Message privately with a parent or your co-leader. Just take care to select the appropriate person's name instead of "Everyone" so only the intended recipient can see your chat.
- Share links to additional resources or to group surveys with all group members.

12. Avoiding screen fatigue: Fatigue from staring at the computer screen is real. Therefore, it's worth considering taking a brief break in the middle of the session to allow participants to stretch their legs, go to the bathroom or just simply look away from the video screen.

13. Navigating parent's childcare demands: Because of the nature of the virtual group, you will not be able to provide childcare for parents while they are in the group. This means that parents children may be nearby during the group or that parents may need to step away briefly to address a childcare issue. Normalize for parents that you know that they may need to balance monitoring their children while they are in group. It may also be helpful to problem-solve with parents about how to balance caring for their children and keeping their children occupied while still attending to and participating in the group discussion. This could include providing suggestions for age-appropriate activities to have on hand for the child that do not require a lot of parent assistance.

CPP Ground Rules for Virtual Groups

Similar to in-person groups, it is important for parents to feel safe and comfortable in the virtual group, so it is important to set "ground rules" during the first parent group meeting. Use the standard Chicago Parent Program Ground Rules (see page 21 of your Chicago Parent Program Group Leader Manual) and build additional ground rules as needed specific to the virtual space. We have added the following ground rules in many of our virtual groups and have found them to work well. It may be helpful to let parents know that the first two rules are important for building trust and safety in the group and not intended to check up on where parents are or what else is going on in the home:

- Turn and keep your video on so we can see everyone's faces
- Try your best to stay in the video frame during the session
- Unless speaking, mute yourself if there are other activities going on in your space
- Use the chat box to let us know if you need to step away from the group for more than a minute or two to attend to something in your space.

Use the share screen function to discuss and edit the ground rules. Create your ground rules in a Word document rather than using the white board function in your video conferencing software. This will allow you to save the ground rules, and add to the list, if needed (Note that the white board can only be saved as a picture and cannot be edited).

Remember to start each group session by:
- reviewing the session agenda,
- sharing and reviewing the Ground Rules (using the share screen function),
- asking for any additions to the Ground Rules.

Playing CPP Videos Using Virtual Platforms

Make sure that you and your co-leader test out sharing the Chicago Parent Program videos via whichever videoconferencing platform you plan to use <u>before</u> you run your first virtual group so you can troubleshoot any problems that arise.
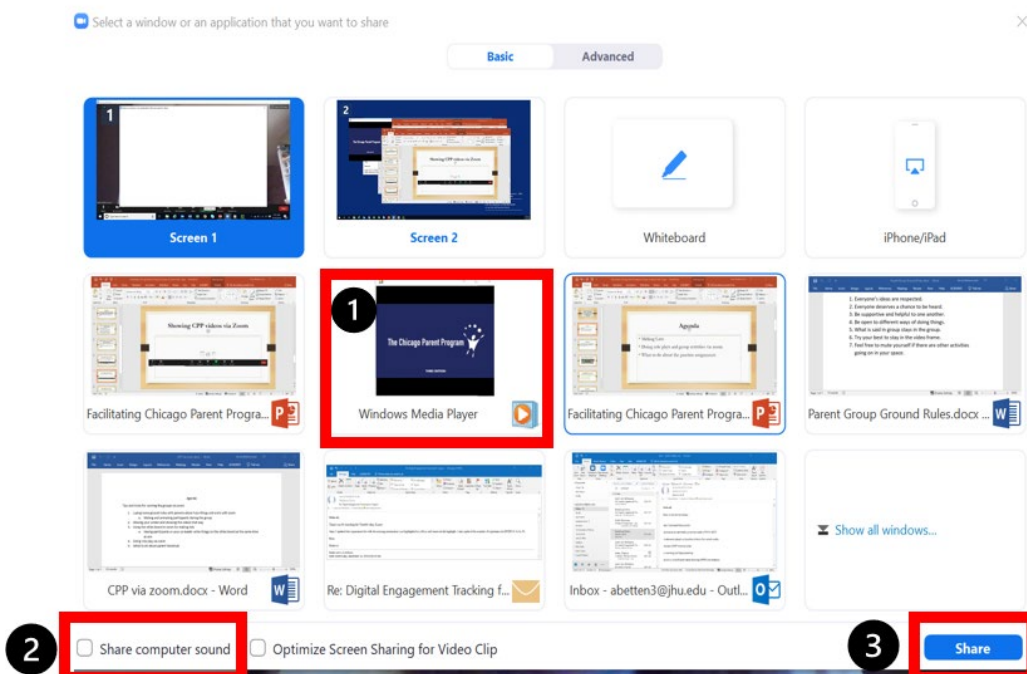
Steps to sharing the Chicago Parent Program videos via Zoom

1. **Before the session:** Before the session starts, open the session videos that you plan to show on your computer and test to make sure your computer audio is working and sufficiently loud by playing the CPP disclaimer.

2. **After logging on:** Once you have logged on to Zoom, go to the bottom of your Zoom screen to the following toolbar and select the "share screen" icon.
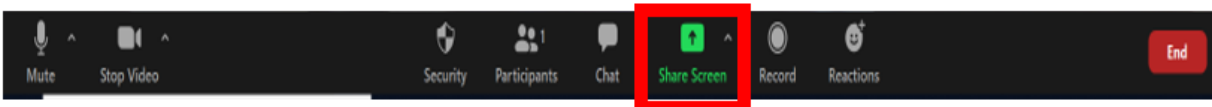
3. **Sharing the video:** The image below will appear on your screen. Then:
   - **Select the CPP videos and**
   - **at the bottom left click "Share computer sound."**
   - **click the "Share" button to share videos with everyone in the Zoom room.**

Note: we do not recommend selecting "optimize screen sharing for video clip" as you will no longer be able to see your co-leader or any of the participants while you are sharing the video in this setting.

Steps to sharing the Chicago Parent Program videos via Microsoft TEAMs

1. **Before the session:** Before the session starts, open the session videos that you plan to show on your computer and test to make sure your computer audio is working and sufficiently loud by playing the CPP disclaimer.

2. **After logging on:** Once you have logged on to Microsoft TEAMs, go to the top right of your TEAMs screen to the following toolbar and select the "share screen" icon.
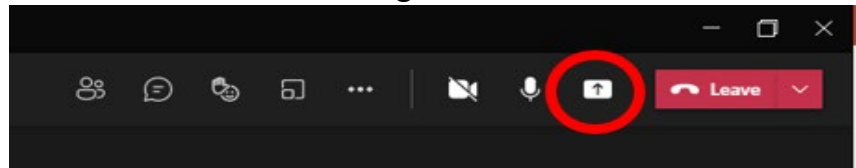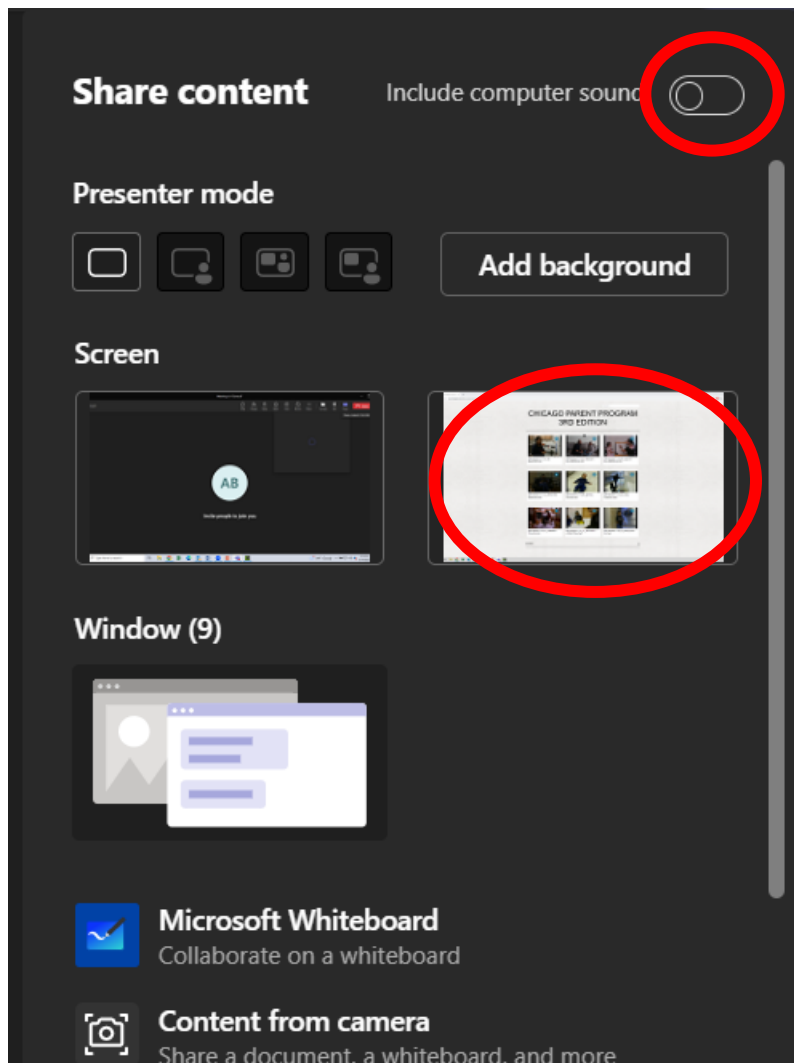

3. **Sharing the video:** The image below will appear on your screen. (1) Select the CPP videos and (2) click "Include computer sound." (3) Then click the "Share" button shown above to share videos with everyone in the TEAMs room.


After you show a video during the group, make sure to stop screen sharing prior to the group discussion so that everyone can see each other during the group discussion to promote connection.

Making Lists During Virtual Groups

As with the sharing of CPP videos, make sure you and your co-leader test out making lists <u>before</u> you run your first virtual group so you can troubleshoot any potential problems. There are several options for making lists during a virtual group, including using the whiteboard function or a word document. Both approaches will allow you to save the lists you make and return to them in subsequent sessions. However, one caveat is that saved lists done using the whiteboard will be saved as pictures and therefore cannot be edited in future sessions. We have found making lists using the whiteboard function is an effective strategy and we provide steps for how to do this in Zoom and Microsoft TEAMs below.

Steps to using the whiteboard in Zoom

1. **Selecting to share screen: Go to the bottom of your Zoom screen to the following toolbar and select the icon that says "share screen."**
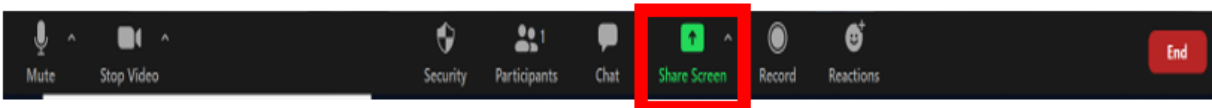
2. **Selecting whiteboard: The box shown below should appear on your screen. Within this box, select the whiteboard and click the "Share" button to share the whiteboard with everyone in the group.**
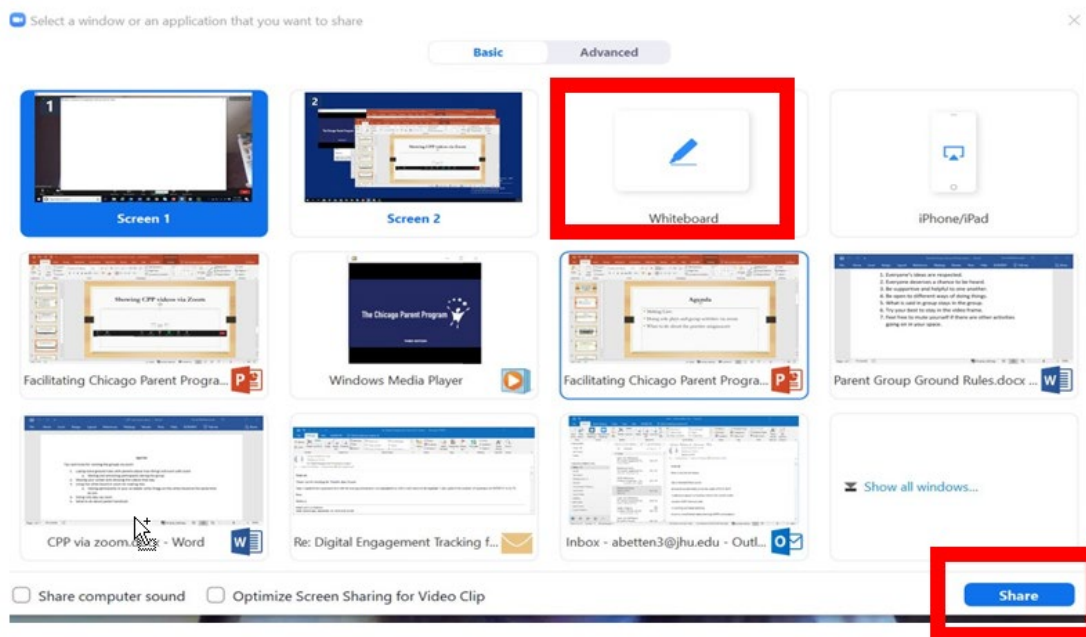
3. **Using the whiteboard: The whiteboard in Zoom includes a toolbar that has a number of different tools that you can use. In facilitating the groups, you will most often use the following tools:**

    *   **Text – for making the list**

- Select – for going back to a list you have already started in order to continue adding to it or editing what is already shown
- Save – to save the list made during your group to your computer so that you can share your screen and refer to the list during future groups.

Steps to using the whiteboard in Microsoft TEAMs

1. Selecting to share screen: Go to the top right of your TEAMs screen to the following toolbar and select the "share screen" icon.

2. Selecting whiteboard: The box shown below should appear on your screen. Within this box, select the whiteboard and click the "Share" button to share the whiteboard with everyone in the group.

3. **Using the whiteboard: The whiteboard includes a toolbar that has a number of different tools that you can use. In facilitating the groups, you will most often use the following tools:**
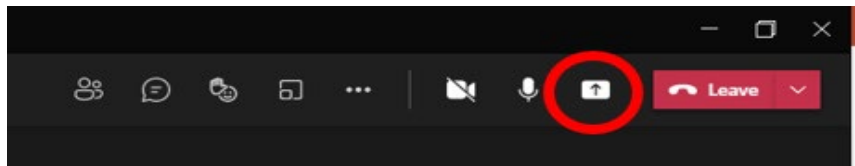
    - **Text – for making the list**
    - **Select – for going back to a list you have already started in order to continue adding to it or editing what is already shown**
    - **Export image – to save the list made during your group to your computer so that you can share your screen and refer to the list during future groups.**
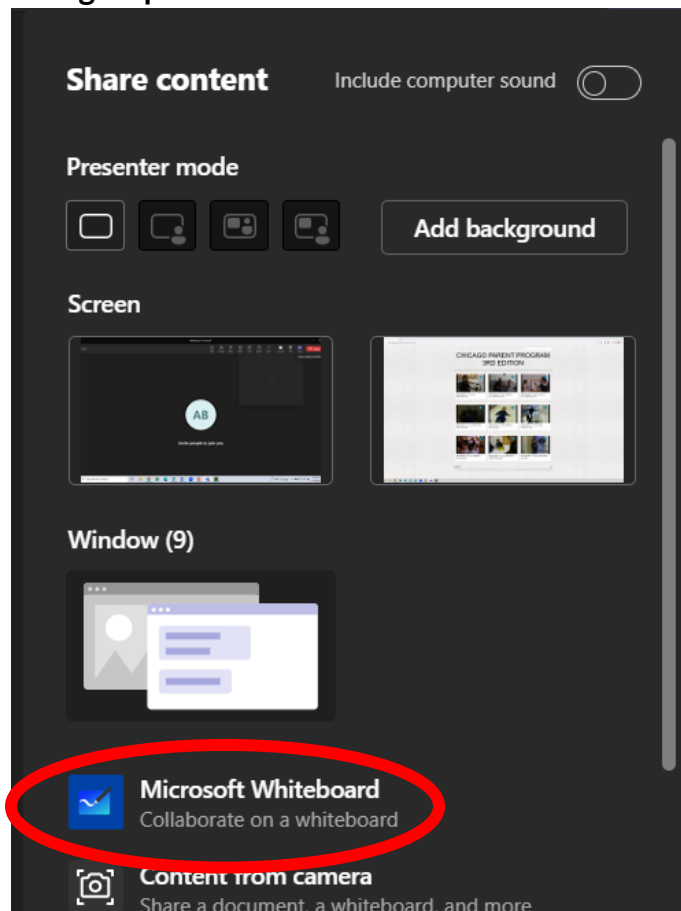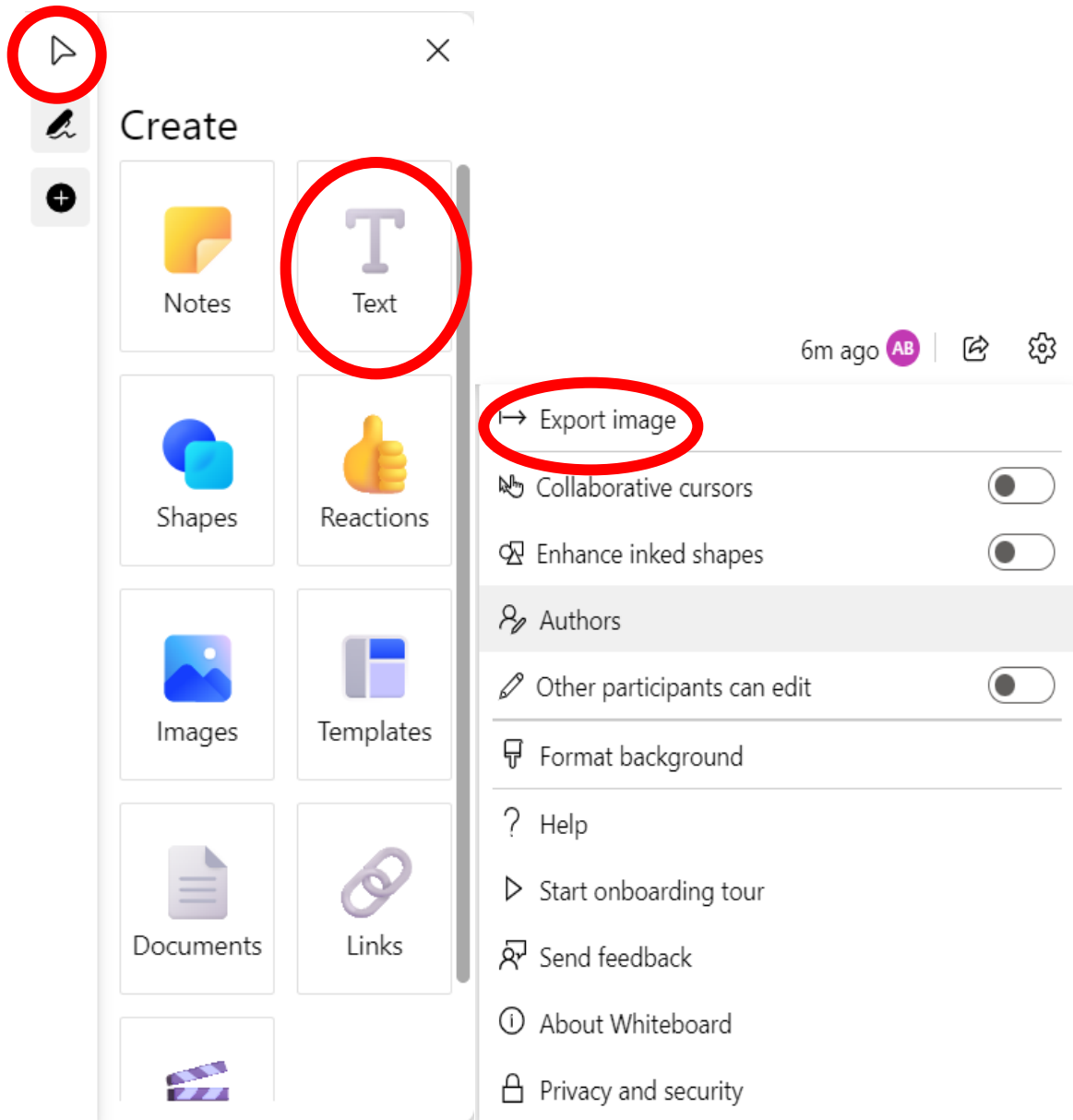
Sharing CPP Handouts with Participants in Virtual Groups

The weekly parent handouts are an important tool to emphasize and elaborate on the content from each parent group session. For virtual groups, we recommend using a multi-pronged approach for sharing the Chicago Parent Program handouts with the families, including:

1. **Hard Copy Handouts:** Distributing a hard copy of all handouts to parents before the first session either by sending them in the mail or giving them to the parent when they sign up for the group if this is done in-person.
2. **Email Handouts:** Include an attachment of the handouts for each session as part of a weekly email that you send to families to remind them about the day and time and video conferencing link for that session.
3. **Review in Groups Using Share Screen Function:** Use the share screen function in your videoconferencing software to visually display the handouts as you are reviewing the handouts with your group participants.

Role Plays in Virtual Groups

As with in-person CPP groups, role play is a useful strategy for teaching parents new skills. The CPP group leader manual includes specific information about the role play to be implemented for each session. The following guidance should be used in combination with your group leader manual and is specific to conducting role plays in the virtual space. For all role plays, begin by ensuring that parents understand the strategy about to be practiced and make lists as appropriate. We will provide guidance for conducting three different types of role plays virtually.

For role plays involving two parent volunteers (Sessions 1, 7, and 10)

1. **Explain the Role Play:** explain the role play as you normally would for an in-person group.
2. **Ask for 2 volunteers: Ask for volunteers and**
3. **Change View Option:** If using Zoom, encourage your two volunteers to switch their videoconferencing view to speaker view so that they will only see the other person with whom they are role playing.
4. **All Others Mute:** Remind all other parents to keep themselves muted during the role play.
5. **For Child-Centered Time Role Play (Session 1):** Commence the role play as you normally would with a couple caveats:

   - **Drawing as activity:** If the parents select to do drawing as the child-centered activity, we recommend that you either encourage one of the parents to share their screen and use the whiteboard for the drawing OR one person should grab paper and markers or pens in their own space and draw and then show it periodically to the other parent.
   - **Playing with toys as activity:** If the parents select to play with toys or play a game, you may need to encourage the participants to pretend they have the toys or game pieces to play with or ask the person playing the child to grab toys from within their own space.
6. **For Problem-Solving Role Play (Session 10):** For the problem-solving role play in session 10, if you happen to have two parents who are joining the session from the same space, keep in mind and assure them if needed that they should not feel they have to do this role play together just because they happen to be in the same space as we do not want them to feel pressured to role play the problem they may be planning to work on outside of session together in front of the group.
7. **End the role play:** End the role play as you normally would as outlined in the group leader manual.

Role plays involving one parent volunteer (sessions 4 and 8)

1. **Explain the Role Play:** explain the role play as you normally would for an in-person group.
2. **Ask for 1 Volunteer:** Explain the role play as you normally would for an in-person group and ask for one volunteer to play the child.

3. **Change View Option: If using Zoom, encourage your volunteer to switch their videoconferencing view to speaker view so that they will only see you during the role play.**
4. **Parents Do Not Mute: Other parents do not need to stay muted during this role play (unless there is a lot of noise going on in their space) because you will be asking them to yell "stop" when you make a mistake and tell you what to do differently the next time.**
5. **Extra Step for Session 8: Commence the role play as you normally would with one caveat:**
   - **For session 8, we typically recommend that you let the parent volunteer know quietly that you might raise your voice/yell as part of one of the mistakes you make. In order to do this discreetly in the virtual space, we recommend that you send the parent a private message in the chat and let them know to look at their chat. If the parent is not able to access the chat, you may also just say aloud that you want to prepare them for the fact that you may yell so they are not startled by it.**
6. **End the role play: End the role play as you normally would as it is outlined in your group leader manual.**

Role Plays Involving Parents Pairing Up (Session 3)

For the praise role play in session 3 where parents are asked to pair up and take turns giving each other unlabeled and labeled praise, there are three approaches that you can take depending on what you think will work best for the needs of your group:

Option 1: Pairing Parents Up

- **Explain the role play as you normally would**
- **Pair parents up by announcing aloud who the pairs are.**
- **Call on each dyad to take their turn giving and receiving unlabeled praise while the rest of the group stays muted.**
- **Encourage each dyad to adjust their view to speaker view when it is their turn so they only see the other person who they are role playing with.**
- **Once everyone has had the opportunity to try unlabeled praise, repeat this same approach again for labeled praise.**
- **Debrief with the group about the differences in how it felt to give and receive unlabeled praise versus labeled praise.**

Option 2: Going Around in a Virtual Circle

- **Explain the role play as you normally would**
- **Conduct this role play as if members of your group are sitting in an actual circle.**
- **Call on each person and ask them to give an unlabeled praise.**
- **Then call on each person and ask them to give a labeled praise.**
- **Debrief with the group about the differences in how it felt to give unlabeled praise versus labeled praise.**

- A potential downside of this approach is that it won't make sense to ask them how it felt to receive the unlabeled versus the labeled praise as the praises given would not have been specific to a given person.

Option 3: Using Break Out Rooms

- If your group is very comfortable with technology, you can put them in random breakout rooms with one other parent and they can engage in the praise role play as they normally would in person.
- A potential downside of this approach is that some parents may have difficulty getting into the breakout room or returning to the main room after the breakout room so we would recommend caution in using this approach.

Group Activities in Virtual Groups

As with in-person CPP groups, group activities typically involve everyone in the group and provide opportunities for parents to practice and demonstrate their ability to apply a new strategy. Group activities in virtual groups can largely be conducted as you normally would for an in-person group. The following guidance should be used in combination with your group leader manual and is specific to conducting group activities in the virtual space.

- **Making Lists: Use the whiteboard or a word document for any list making to prepare parents for the group activity.**
- **Posting Lists: During the group activity, keep the list posted for parent reference.**
- **Reviewing Handouts: If a group activity includes a review of a handout, share your screen and show that handout as you are reviewing it in case anyone does not have the handout with them during the group.**

For session 2, where the parents are asked to work on a product (i.e., list of morning and evening routines) as part of the activity, we recommend the following additional steps:

- **Announce a time frame for the activity.**
- **Encourage parents to stay in the video frame while working on the activity.**
- **Periodically check in with the group to see if there are any questions as they are working on the activity**
- **End the activity by having parents share aspects of their product with the group.**

Managing Practice Assignments for Virtual Groups

Practice assignments are important because they provide opportunities for parents to try out the strategies discussed during group and then return to group for problem-solving as needed. Therefore, it is important to be vigilant about the practice assignment just as you would in in-person groups

Here are a few tips for how to handle the practice assignment in the context of virtual groups.

Preparing for Practice Assignments

- **Allow time for practice prep: Spend 10-15 minutes at the end of the group helping parents to prepare for the practice assignment.**
- **Make a list: Use the whiteboard or a word document and make a list of what each parent intends to do for their practice assignment.**
- **Save the list: Save this list for use in the next group.**

Reviewing Practice Assignments

- **Allow time for practice review: Spend 10-15 minutes at the beginning of the group reviewing and discussing how the practice assignment from the prior week went.**
- **Share last week's list: As part of this review, share your screen with the practice assignment list from the last session during the next session. It is possible that parents will end up doing something different than what they said they would do at the last session. Regardless, the list from the prior week serves as a good starting place for discussion of the practice assignment.**

Collecting Practice Assignments

As you will not be physically collecting the practice checklist from parents during the group, we recommend using one of the following approaches instead:

- **Take a photo of checklist and send: Asking parents to complete the practice checklist, take a picture of the checklist, and text or email it to you depending on their preference.**
- **Take a photo doing the practice: Ask parents to take pictures of themselves doing the practice assignment and share those pictures with you.**
- **Provide online form to complete: Create an online form or survey via google docs and send parents the link or post the link in the chat and ask them to complete the practice checklist at the beginning of the group.**

Administering Group Surveys During Virtual Groups

As with in-person Chicago Parent Program groups, it is important to evaluate how the virtual groups are going. Use the weekly parent group surveys (end of each session in your manual) and the End of Program Evaluation (page 232 in your manual). You can also download the weekly group surveys and other parent handouts from www.chicagoparentprogram.org in the group leader only section. Like the practice assignment, there are different ways you can collect the surveys.

Here are a few ideas for administering and collecting the surveys from group participants:

1. Electronic administration: Create a version of each survey in google forms and share the link to the survey at the end of each group. Remember, group leaders should review the feedback at the end of the group to plan for the next week.

2. Paper administration plus pictures: Include the surveys in the packet of handouts that you send home to parents. At the end of each group, ask parents to fill it out and take a picture of the completed survey and send to you. A potential downside to this approach is that it removes the anonymous nature of the survey feedback.

3. In-formal checking in: Check in with parents periodically throughout the 12 weeks and encourage them to share with you privately or publicly in the chat how they feel the groups are going.