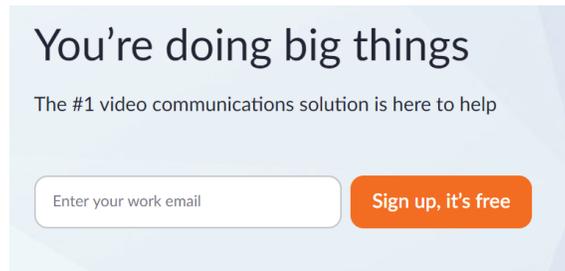


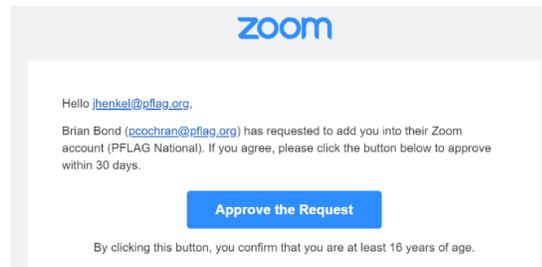


PFLAG Virtual Support Group Meetings: Creating Your Zoom Account

1. Visit the Zoom website at zoom.us and create a free account, preferably using your PFLAG chapter email address.



2. Complete this [simple Google Form](#) to request an upgraded Zoom account from PFLAG National.
3. Wait patiently (for up to 24 hours) while the PFLAG National team reviews your request.
4. Use your time wisely! This is a great time to start reviewing educational resources including Zoom tutorials, best practices, and sample meeting assets available at pflag.org/pflag-connects-educational-materials while you wait.
5. Upon approval, you will receive a confirmation email from Zoom with the subject line "Zoom Account Activation." Click the "Approve the Request" button. **This must be completed within 30 days of receipt.**



6. Begin scheduling your meetings! Check out this Zoom tutorial on [Scheduling Meetings](#) to get started.



PFLAG Virtual Support Group Meetings: Planning Virtual Meetings

Best Practices for Virtual Meeting Planners:

- Be patient and kind. This kind of virtual meeting space is new for everybody.
- For every virtual meeting assign a facilitator and live-chat facilitator. We have best practices for facilitators and live chat facilitators available at pflag.org/pflag-connects-educational-materials.
- Determine in advance the kind of space you are trying to create for participants (e.g. a traditional support group, a space for people to create connection and hang out, a structured discussion about a particular prompt, etc.)
- Begin and end your meeting on time.
- Determine in advance how you plan to use the chat function (e.g. Is it a place where people ask questions and share comments? Is it where participants can indicate that they have a question or comment so that the facilitator can call on them? Will you ask participants to share resources with one another in the chat?)
- Do your best to give attendees various options to participate (e.g. joining by phone only, joining but not activating their camera or mic, participating via chat only)
- Consider where you post the login information for the meeting. Your chapter should have people that are interested in attending send an email or complete a form to get the login information, instead of posting it publicly. We have a sample sign-up form available at pflag.org/pflag-connects-educational-materials.
- Be clear in publicity that PFLAG offers **peer** support that is available at no cost and open to all who wish to participate.
- Take threats of self-harm and/or violence seriously. Put a plan in place for when emergency assistance may be necessary. We have created a document that has suggestions on what to do if someone is in crisis available at pflag.org/pflag-connects-educational-materials.



PFLAG Virtual Support Group Meetings: Using a Sign-Up Sheet

PFLAG National **strongly recommends** that chapters hosting virtual support group meetings use a sign-up sheet or some other vetting process, rather than posting log in information publicly (e.g. posting the Zoom link on social media).

The purpose of using a sign-up sheet or some other vetting process is to give your chapter additional tools to ensure the privacy and safety of support group participants.

When thinking about your vetting process:

1. Use a sign-up sheet (samples are available at pflag.org/pflag-connects-educational-materials) or ask those who are interested in participating to email your chapter with their name, other pertinent details, and their response to a prompt like “What brings you to PFLAG?”
2. Ensure that the facilitator has a copy of the final participant sheet prior to the start of the meeting so that they have an idea of who should be in the room and what brought them there.
3. Set up your Zoom meeting so that it includes a waiting room, as outlined in this [Zoom tutorial](#).

Remember, when you ask potential attendees to send an email or complete a sign-up form, you will need to send them log-in details and the “Participating in a Discussion Virtually” document available at pflag.org/pflag-connects-educational-materials **prior to your meeting start time**. A general best practice is to send a reminder email that includes the log-in details, to all participants (using bcc to ensure privacy) *the day before your meeting*.

Ready to get your sign-up sheet going? We’ve got templates to help!

- Download a Word document with a sample sign-up sheet to adapt and use at pflag.org/pflag-connects-educational-materials.
- View a [sample Google Form sign-up sheet](#) to see how a form can look. (Looking for more details on how to create your own Google Form? Check out this [Google tutorial](#).)



PFLAG Virtual Support Group Meetings: Sample Sign-Up Sheet

Our work continues. PFLAG is here to support you, so you can support your LGBTQ+ loved ones.

PFLAG Connects is a new virtual meeting space for the PFLAG Chapter Network. You can join by video, audio or chat - whatever you're comfortable with. PFLAG offers peer support that is available at no cost and open to all who wish to participate. All of our groups are led and facilitated by [PFLAG Chapter Name] volunteers.

Safety is of our utmost priority for all of our virtual support group meetings. We will discuss privacy, confidentiality, and group agreements at the start of the meeting. Please fill out these questions to the best of your ability. This information is gathered for intake purposes only and will not be shared with anyone. Once you submit this form, we will send you an email with instructions on how to join the group.

First Name, Last Initial:

Personal Pronouns:

Email:

City, State:

How did you find out about this virtual support group?

- Email
- [PFLAG Chapter] Website
- PFLAG National Website
- Social Media
- Family or friend
- Other

Is there anything specific you would like to talk about or have the facilitator bring up during the meeting?

Are you under the age of 18?

- Yes
- No



PFLAG Virtual Support Group Meetings: Facilitating a Virtual Meeting

Virtual Meeting Facilitator Best Practices:

- Be patient and kind. This kind of virtual meeting space is new for everybody.
- Assign a live-chat facilitator for your meeting who can monitor and moderate the chat throughout the session. We have best practices for live-chat facilitators available at pflag.org/pflag-connects-educational-materials.
- Remember the role of facilitators. They are great listeners and communicators and set the tone for the meeting. They are neither a content expert nor a lecturer.
- At the start of the meeting, the facilitator should:
 - Give some basic instructions including where the chat is and how participants can mute their line.
 - Remind the group of the purpose or agenda of the meeting.
 - Read ground rules and/or group agreements. Ask the live chat facilitator to share the ground rules in the chat.
 - Specifically request that people do not take screenshots or livestream the meeting.
 - Read a confidentiality statement and remind people that while the format of the meeting is different, confidentiality remains an important tenet of PFLAG gatherings.
 - Preemptively address concerns about trolling/doxing/Zoom Bombing and share that there's a plan in place to remove folks if necessary.
- Prepare a short icebreaker, group activities, and discussion prompts to keep the conversation moving. This is especially important for groups that don't already know each other.

- Check in with folks on how they're coping but do not dwell on COVID-19 or allow it to dominate your meeting.
- Take threats of self-harm and/or violence seriously. Put a plan in place for when emergency assistance may be necessary. We have created a document that has suggestions on what to do if someone is in crisis available at pflag.org/pflag-connects-educational-materials.



PFLAG Virtual Support Group Meetings: Live-Chat Facilitation

Live Chat Best Practices:

- Be patient and kind. This kind of virtual meeting space is new for everybody.
- Ensure that the live-chat is civil and that participants are using respectful language.
- Be prepared to remove a participant from your meeting if absolutely necessary.
- The chat facilitator should:
 - Be prepared to answer tech-related questions.
 - Post reminders about ground rules and confidentiality in the chat throughout the meeting for people who may have joined late.
 - Answer any immediate questions (e.g. what does that word mean) and queue up bigger questions (e.g. how have others told extended family that a child is LGBTQ+) for group discussion.
 - Help the support group facilitator with any activities that are coordinated using the chat.
- Anonymously share comments made in the chat throughout the session, especially if someone has chosen to join by chat only.
- Maintain a list of local and national hotlines and resources to share as needed (e.g., emergency housing services, crisis and suicide hotlines, local mental health services, addiction services, etc.). Use pflag.org/hotlines to get started.
- Take threats of self-harm and/or violence seriously. Put a plan in place for when emergency assistance may be necessary. We have created a document that has suggestions on what to do if someone is in crisis available at pflag.org/pflag-connects-educational-materials.



PFLAG Virtual Support Group Meetings: Sample Opening & Closing Scripts

Sample Scripts

To Start Your Meeting:

We are about to start this virtual PFLAG [chapter name] support group meeting. My name and pronouns are [your name and pronouns] and I will be facilitating our meeting. My friend [chat facilitator name] will be facilitating the live-chat today. If you have not already done so, please mute your line.

This session will not be recorded and we will discuss confidentiality and ground rules momentarily.

To Close Your Meeting:

Thank you so much for joining us for this virtual PFLAG [chapter name] support group meeting. Our next meeting will be [date, time].

If you are in need of additional support, please reach out to us by email at [email address] or give us a call at [phone number]. If you find yourself in crisis please dial 911 or reach out to one of the organizations listed at pflag.org/hotlines. If you're looking for support locally please contact [chapter email] immediately.



PFLAG Virtual Support Group Meetings: Sample Ground Rules

Below are a few suggested ground rules for virtual support group meetings. Adapt them to make the rules fit your needs. After you share the ground rules, ask everyone to either say “yes” or raise their hand if they agree to the guidelines for the meeting. If someone has an additional suggestion, hear what they have to say and let the group decide if they want to adopt the suggestion.

Sample Ground Rules:

- **This is a safe space.**
 - Be honest about your feelings and thoughts
 - Use “I” statements
 - Maintain the confidentiality of other participants
- **Respect the limited time we have today.**
 - Keep questions and comments relevant and concise
- **Listen generously.**
 - Step up and step back
- **Please silence all other electronics and be present.**
- If possible use headphones, limit ambient noise, mute your microphone when you’re not speaking.
- To help protect privacy and confidentiality, do not record, screenshot, or share on social media any portion of this meeting.



PFLAG Virtual Support Group Meetings: Confidentiality in Online Spaces

Just because you're holding your support meeting online doesn't mean that privacy isn't an important issue. Be sure to read a confidentiality statement at the beginning of your meeting so people know the rules and feel secure. You can take inspiration from existing confidentiality statements (see some examples below).

Best Practices:

- When you send log-in details to those who have signed-up to participate, tell them they should not share the Zoom link or access codes with others but are welcome to share the sign-up form with others.
- Disable screensharing for participants and ask that nobody record or screenshot the meeting in your ground rules/group agreements.
- Virtual support group participants should be mindful and aware of who in the physical space they are occupying.
 - If a participant cannot be alone, ask them to consider headphones so the other folks in the room can't hear
 - If a participant can't be alone and does not have access to headphones, make sure other folks in the room also agree to the confidentiality agreement
- Preemptively address concerns about trolling/doxing/Zoom Bombing and share that there's a plan in place to remove folks if necessary.

Sample Confidentiality Statements:

For Virtual Meetings: PFLAG meetings are confidential. What you hear and who you see here are confidential even if this is a different format than our regular meetings. That includes not repeating things you hear, sharing details on social media, or taking photos/screenshots/video of this meeting.



PFLAG Virtual Support Group Meetings: Participating in a Discussion Virtually

Participant/Attendee Best Practices:

- Be patient and kind. This kind of virtual meeting space is new for everybody.
- If you're able, log in a few minutes before the meeting starts to get comfortable with the technology.
- Determine in advance how to mute your phone line or microphone.
- Participate in the way that makes you feel most comfortable whether that is on video, by phone, or only in the live-chat.
- Come prepared to discuss any materials or prompts that are provided by the meeting organizers in advance. For example, "What brings you to PFLAG today?"
- Show respect for other participants by following the ground rules/group agreements set by the facilitator.
- Take threats of self-harm and/or violence seriously and report any private messages that express thoughts of self-harm or suicidal ideation to group facilitators.



PFLAG Virtual Support Group Meetings: Handling Doxxing and Trolling

Definitions:

- **Doxxing:** The act of revealing identifying information about someone online — their real name, address, workplace, phone number, or other identifying information.
- **Trolling:** Accessing online spaces to bully, incite panic or shock in productive participants, and use time and resources of hosts.

Best Practices for Creating Safe Virtual Support Spaces:

- Provide guidelines for participants about who can have the meeting invitation and how people can gain access.
 - Use a sign-up form or other vetting process. We have samples for you to use available at pflag.org/pflag-connects-educational-materials.
- Choose a naming convention and share it with folks who have the Zoom log-in information.
 - First name, pronouns
 - First name, last initial
- Disable screen sharing for participants. Refer to this [Zoom tutorial](#) to learn more about how to do that.
- Familiarize yourself with Zoom’s moderation tools. Refer to this [Zoom tutorial](#) to learn more about how to do that.
 - How to remove a participant
 - Muting participants
 - Blocking participants
 - Consider a co-host
 - Locking your meeting or using a waiting room
 - Password protecting your meeting

- In your ground rules ask that nobody record or screenshot the meeting in any way and provide clear guidelines for confidentiality.
- If a troll does get on the meeting, ask participants to ignore them and let them know someone is handling the situation. Remain calm and address the issue without bringing attention to the troll.
- If absolutely necessary, end your meeting early so participants do not have to endure abuse from trolls. If this happens, report it to PFLAG National staff immediately.



meeting where you are.

PFLAG Virtual Support Group Meetings: If Someone is in Crisis

It is possible that someone will join your chapter's virtual support group meeting while in crisis. If that happens, don't panic. Here are some important next steps:

- Use the Zoom Breakout Room feature to speak to the person one-on-one. There is a [Zoom tutorial](#) available to help you do this.
- Maintain a list of local and national hotlines and resources to share as needed (e.g., emergency housing services, crisis and suicide hotlines, local mental health services, addiction services, etc.). Use pflag.org/hotlines to get started.
- Use the sample scripts* included below (adapted from [Q Chat Space, a program of CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers](#))
 - **Immediate danger:** If you're in immediate danger, you need to call 911 to get help right away. If you don't have a phone, contact a friend or family member that can call 911 for you. You could reach them by texting, or using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or another social network.
 - **Suicidal thoughts:** Based on what you just shared, I encourage you to contact the National Suicide Prevention Hotline. You can chat online at <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/>. You can also reach them by phone. Their number is (800) 273-TALK and their website is <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>. "I encourage you to seek out those resources as soon as you can. Help is available."
 - **For transgender/nonbinary people experiencing a crisis:** "I want to thank you for trusting me with that information. What you've said makes me concerned for you. I encourage you to contact the TransLifeline at (877) 565-8860. They are available 18 hours per day every day of the week. Their website, with the hours, is <https://www.translifeline.org/>. The hotline is staffed by transgender people for transgender people."
- Remember to take time for self-care after you interact with someone in crisis. It can be just as challenging and difficult to help someone as it can be to experience a crisis. Be gentle and seek support from peers and professionals as needed.

*These sample scripts can be adapted as needed to refer individuals in crisis to the resources, from your list of local and national organizations, that are best suited to meet their immediate needs.



meeting where you are.

PFLAG Virtual Support Group Meetings: Working with Youth

PFLAG National has detailed guidelines for PFLAG Chapters regarding working with youth in their community. *Working with Youth: Best Practices and Guidelines for PFLAG Chapters* is available to all chapter leaders by request and interested chapters should reach out to the Chapter Engagement Coordinator for their region (pflag.org/staff) to receive a copy. Chapter Leaders in the Western Region should contact Jamie Curtis, Director of Chapter Engagement.

The best practices and guidelines outlined in that document apply to virtual spaces as well. Our recommendation is for chapter leadership to review this document before moving forward with a virtual support group that includes or is specifically designed for youth.

Important Reminders:

- If your chapter moves forward with a virtual support group that includes or is specifically designed for youth, it is your responsibility to be aware of local laws and regulations regarding parental consent and mandatory reporting and to consult with an attorney if necessary.
- To protect your chapter from liability, we recommend you not advertise your general virtual support group meetings or other virtual events directly to youth.
- Take threats of self-harm and/or violence seriously. Put a plan in place for when emergency assistance may be necessary. We have created a document that has suggestions on what to do if someone is in crisis available at pflag.org/pflag-connects-educational-materials.

Best Practices:

- Be patient and kind. This kind of virtual meeting space is new for everybody.
- Maintain a list of the programs and organizations in your community, state, and region that serve LGBTQ+ youth as well as information about any virtual programming they offer.
- If your chapter elects to create a virtual space specifically for youth train prospective leaders in youth group facilitation and provide clear, written guidelines. Refer to our documents on confidentiality, setting ground rules, facilitating a virtual meeting, and live-chat facilitation available at pflag.org/pflag-connects-educational-materials for additional information.

- As a part of your chapter’s sign-up sheet or other vetting process for your virtual meetings, ask participants to indicate if they are under the age of 18.
 - If your chapter is not prepared to move forward with a virtual support group that includes youth let the young person know as quickly as possible. Send an email response that includes details from your list of community organizations that serve LGBTQ+ youth.
 - If your chapter moves forward with virtual support groups that include youth, be sure to let the facilitator and live chat facilitator know, in advance, when a meeting will include LGBTQ+ youth so that they can prepare.
- When you are scheduling a meeting that might include youth, it is strongly recommended that you turn off the option for participants to share their screens. Refer to this [Zoom tutorial](#) to learn more about how to do that.
- Consider holding youth-centered virtual spaces at the same time you’re holding adult/parent virtual support groups. This can be done using the breakout room feature on Zoom. Refer to this [Zoom tutorial](#) to learn more about how to do that.