

Practical Microphone and Speaker Options for Virtual Communications, April 15, 2020

Greetings from the County Training Program,

We hope this finds you safe and well during this difficult time.

The County Training Program has been using the ZOOM software to conduct our online training webinars and some of our advisory board meetings.

To facilitate your use of ZOOM, we contacted Andy Lowery, head of our IT department, for some options for audio/video/computer equipment for you to use for our online training.

Here is Andy's response:

Normally, it's easy to make sure everyone has sufficient gear with reasonably priced options that are found at many stores. However; with the virus, many places are sold out. I put two orders from 2 different suppliers for 10 web cams each out over a month ago. They still haven't arrived! All that said, hopefully supplies will start coming back into stores soon.

Headsets

For people who are attending online meetings solo, I suggest USB headsets with built-in microphones. Logitech is my go-to brand for them, but there are other good ones. This is what I own personally at home:

<https://www.logitech.com/en-us/product/stereo-headset-h390?crd=36>

Webcams

Webcams are nice, because they have microphone and camera built-in. This is our go-to webcam at the office:

<https://www.logitech.com/en-us/product/hd-pro-webcam-c920?crd=34>

Microphone

I would say at this point, get anything that is actually for sale. That said, Shawn loves the Blue Designs microphones. They have options from low to high end. We have one of these in office:

<https://www.bluedesigns.com/products/snowball-ice/>. It's \$50, but really good. The higher end one would probably be overkill for webinars.

At this point though, if someone doesn't have a microphone, headset/mic, or webcam/mic, anything they can find will be helpful no matter the brand. Walmart, Staples, BestBuy are places to find them locally. I did a quick check on Amazon - most headsets and webcams are still out of stock or way overpriced.

Other options...

1) Laptops - if the participants have access to a laptop, most have microphone/webcam built in.

2) Phones or tablets - The Zoom app is available for both Apple and Android products. And most people who have a phone have ear buds / mic that came with them. It's not my favorite way to do Zoom, but if that's all you have, that's all you have.

3) People can attend meeting on their computer, but still call in with a phone for the audio portion.

In summary, remember one of the main points is that many inexpensive microphones work well. CTP has several \$20 USB microphones that we have used for years. Likewise, if you don't already have speakers, earbuds or a headset are good options, especially if you do not want to disturb others. As always, call if you have questions.