Guidelines for the use of online videoconferencing in Behavioural Research

The conduct of remote research using an online videoconferencing service, such as Webex, Zoom, or MS Teams, carries certain logistical and ethical considerations not typically present during face to face data collection. These guidelines are intended to assist researchers in communicating to the Research Ethics Board (REB) how they will manage these considerations and communicate them to prospective participants.

Be sure to include in your application a clear identification of which platform(s) you will use. If you wish to provide participants a range of options, you should identify all the options that will be available, rather than just to note that you will use whichever platform a participant wants.

Use of Zoom

Use of Zoom: Please note that Zoom is NOT supported by USask ITS and it is not considered by ITS to be as secure as Webex. That being said, the Behavioral REB recognizes that Zoom may be a preferred tool, especially for community-based research. At this time, a basic or free account cannot be used for the collection of identifiable information from participants. Interviews where an individual is recognizable, but little sensitive information is discussed, may be conducted with a Zoom Pro account, while Webex or Zoom Healthcare are required for the collection of personal health information or the collection of sensitive information from vulnerable populations. The Behavioral REB will approve research using Zoom in the following situations:
   a. You provide a rationale for why Zoom is the best option for your research
   b. You provide a confirmation that you or you unit has purchased a Zoom Pro or Zoom Healthcare account.
   c. You provide a confirmation that you will use the latest release of Zoom.
   d. You provide a confirmation that you will abide by the guidance document [link] on the secure use of Zoom.

Use of online videoconferencing in your application

Information to include in your application about your intended use of Zoom, Webex, or MS Teams:
   a. A description of how you will configure your software to ensure that uninvited guests are not able to attend. This may be through the use of scheduled meetings with a password or a securely configured personal meeting room.

b. A statement confirming that you will not use cloud-session recording, which may store the data on a commercial server. This statement should include that you will use local session recording and save the recording to a USask managed device (i.e., not a personal computer or device).

c. A statement confirming that you will move the recordings to a USask managed server, whether your OneDrive, Datastore, PAWS Cabinet, or a networked drive. Please also include a note that you will restrict access to appropriate parties (e.g., members of the research team).

More information on Webex can be found [here](#) and [here](#). And, if you have any questions, you can consult IT for advice on how to configure WebEx or MS Teams to ensure that the online data collection is secure and private. Please note that IT will not provide guidance about the use of Zoom, since it is not formally supported.

Potential Risks Associated with Remote Data Collection: Please include an assurance that the interviewer will explicitly ask, at regular intervals and at the end of the interview, if the participant is experiencing any stress or discomfort.

Storage of Data in the Home:
a. Please describe your storage and security plan for research data that may be temporarily stored in a home due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
b. Please confirm that you will use a USask cloud storage service (e.g., Datastore, OneDrive) or a USask networked drive to back up any data stored in a device in your home.
c. Please confirm that electronic devices temporarily used in the home due to the COVID-19 pandemic will be secure, password-protected, dedicated-research devices not accessible by individuals outside of the research team.

Use of online videoconferencing in the consent form

This information is intended to ensure that the participant understands the risks associated with the use of online video conferencing and how you will manage/mitigate those risks.

Procedures:
- *Identify the online video conferencing platform you will use to conduct the data collection (e.g., Webex). Include a link to the platform's privacy policy. If there isn't a web document with a clear and easily understood description of users' privacy, to which you can link, provide a brief lay-friendly summary of how the platform will handle participants' information.*

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- *If the data collection is being recorded, include a statement advising participants whether the recording will capture audio and/or video and whether there is an option if the participants would like to participate by phone (a function permitted by both Webex and Zoom).*
- *If data collection will include video-recording, include a statement advising the participants that they can choose not to be video recorded by turning off their device's camera.*

Compensation: *(If Applicable)*
- *Describe how you will deliver the compensation to the participant, given their remote involvement.*

Confidentiality:
- *Include a statement noting the inherent risks associated with the use of any online videoconferencing platforms.*
  - "Please note that although we will make every effort to safeguard your data, we cannot guarantee the privacy of your data, due to the technical vulnerabilities inherent to all online video conferencing platforms."
- *Include statement that participants agree not to make any unauthorized recordings of the content of a meeting / data collection session.*
- *In the case of focus groups or group meetings, include a reminder to participants that researchers cannot guarantee that all participants will refrain from recording the session.*
- *Include a confirmation that you will conduct the videoconference in a private area of your home or office that will not be accessible by individuals outside of the research team during the data collection. Please also include a recommendation that the participants do likewise.*

Storage of Data:

- *Include the location of the platform's servers and what data if any will stored outside of Canada (e.g., "Webex's servers are located in Canada and no data will be transmitted through, or stored on, any servers outside Canada").*
  - *The agreements that USask has with Webex and MS Teams ensure that all data transmitted using their software will only be routed through Canadian servers. And the use of Zoom Pro allows the user to restrict the routing of the data to servers in certain regions, such as Canada.*
- *Include a statement advising participants that you may store research data in your home, if applicable. You should then describe what security measures will be in place (e.g., electronic data will be stored on a password-protected research-dedicated*

computer, with access restricted to the researcher, and will be backed up using USask cloud storage).

- *Include a statement informing the participants that the recording will be saved to a local USask-managed computer rather than to the platforms' internal cloud storage and the security protections (e.g., encryption) for that recording.*