

# Professional Development Checklist: Six Ways to Improve Your Skills From Home



You have a commitment to improving the lives of your **deaf and hard of hearing students** and clients. The COVID-19 pandemic has created new challenges to meeting that commitment and to working, connecting, and engaging from home. Yet it may also offer time to focus on professional development and find opportunities for growth—for you and for those you serve.

## **Make a Plan**

*Structure, goals, and plans*—you probably use these three words all the time with your students, and these ideas are also essential to furthering your professional development. Shifting to working at home requires creating structure, reconsidering goals, and revising plans. Challenge yourself to create a professional development strategy that you can achieve at home based on your career goals.

## **Take Free Online Classes**

Students are now learning online. Why not you, too? Expand your expertise and even earn continuing education units or clock hours (CEU/CRCs) for free. The National Deaf Center offers **online courses** on a variety of topics — including a new class, **Developing Accessible Work Based Learning Programs**, which provides practical knowledge and resources for professionals seeking to increase employment opportunities for deaf youth.

## **Embrace New Technology**

Video meeting platforms, online project management tools, online library resources, and human resource systems all come with layers of functionality designed to make your work-from-home life more effective and efficient. Now is the time to learn how to use that technology, with a special focus on the features needed to **connect with your deaf students and clients online**.

## **Improve Communication**

Deaf people widely vary in their communication preferences, needs, and language skills. Take **Deaf 101**, a short online course that explains the diversity within the deaf community and how to communicate effectively in professional and educational settings. Explore and download toolkits with customized resources on providing **vocational rehabilitation** and **disability services** to deaf people. If you are learning American Sign Language (ASL), make a plan to improve your skills. Enroll in an online class, download an ASL app, and practice your signing with colleagues during video meetings.

**Get Social**

Not on [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#) yet? Both are ideal for connecting with peers and thought leaders in your field, following organizations you belong to, learning new developments and research, and building a profile for networking online and at conferences. Review social media best practices, establish accounts, and engage!

**Connect With Colleagues**

You are not alone. Your colleagues across the country are also experiencing disruption and isolation. Reach out to them, set up video chats, and share ideas for staying engaged and developing professionally.



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