



## A Brief Introduction to Online Learning

Norio Umezu Hall, with contributions from  
Kris Bein, Cat Fribley, Michelle Dixon-Wall, and Tracy Wright

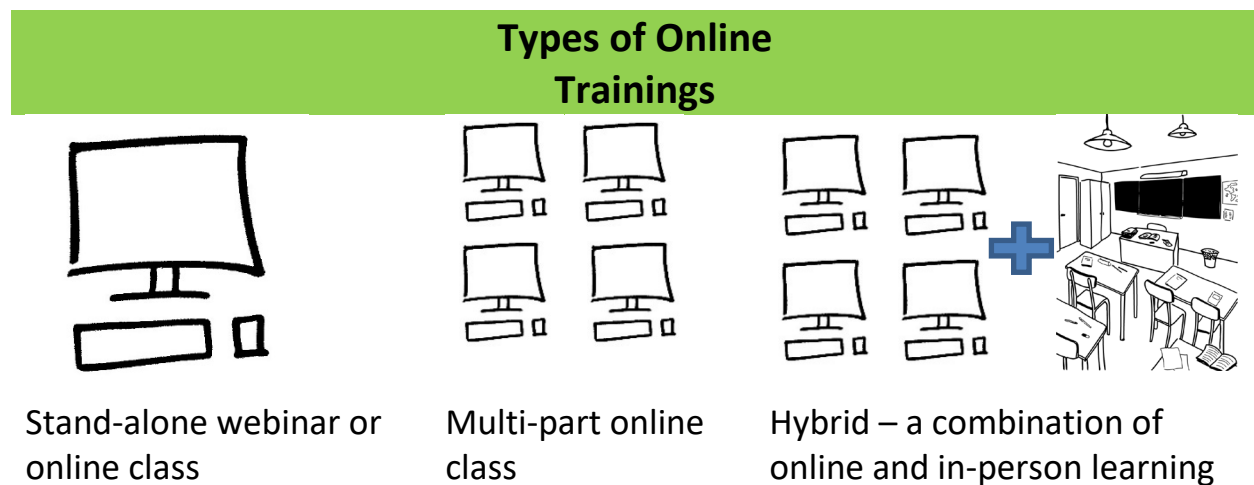
*“A learner-centered approach suggests that we design lessons that accommodate human learning process regardless of the media involved” – Ruth Clark, [“Six Principles of Effective e-Learning: What Works and Why”](#)*

When used effectively, online learning can engage people and speak directly to their experiences in the world in ways that sometimes rival or exceed face-to-face experiences (Knowles, 1996; Chick and Hassel, 2009; Rodriguez Milanes and deNoylles, 2012). Online classes bring people together across different geographies and life experiences to create learning environments that allow people to learn about the complexities of sexual violence in a community that may be more diverse than the physical ones they live in. But deciding to offer online trainings is a big choice. Doing it well takes an investment in time and resources (Contact North, n.d.; Rodriguez Milanes and deNoylles, 2012; Chick and Hassel, 2009; Ortega and Marquart, 2015). Coalitions and programs need to evaluate what topics are suited for online learning, how much time coalition staff or others have to engage learners in online spaces, and what kind of budget is available to meet accessibility needs. When guided by the coalition’s mission, vision, and goals, online learning can amplify their effectiveness in community. When made without meaningful discussion, it can reinforce an approach to

survivor support that ultimately undermines broader goals of empowerment and social change.

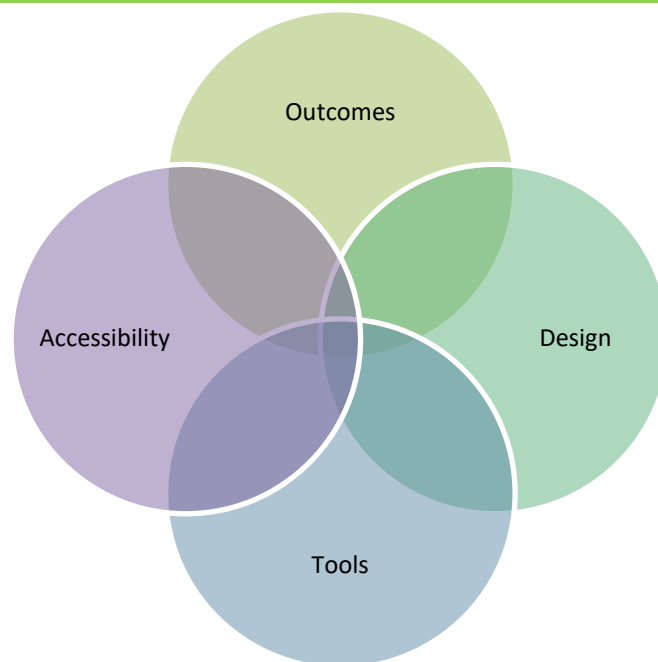
## What is online training?

Most online learning happens through online training. Online training comes in many forms. Coalitions may facilitate one-time recorded webinars on a specific topic or create multi-part e-Learning courses to look at topics more in-depth. For example, coalitions may create a Sexual Assault Advocacy 101 series to teach people commonly used terms, provide an overview of different systems advocates may work with, and to discuss the short- and long-term impacts of sexual violence on survivors' lives. They may choose to supplement that with one-time webinars for seasoned advocates to share strategies about working with specific subgroups such as adult survivors of child sexual abuse or incarcerated survivors. And they may launch online trainings to coincide with preparations for a statewide in-person conference on sexual assault services. Coalitions can also use online training for internal purposes like orienting new coalition staff or to support systems change efforts by training allied professionals. People can participate in online trainings at the same time (synchronous) or at different times (asynchronous). Online trainings can also be hybrids, providing some learning in-person and some learning online.



Regardless of how training is delivered, all trainings are a constant negotiation between desired outcomes, design, tools, and accessibility. *Outcomes* identify what coalitions want people to learn from the training based on how people might use the information or skills in their work. *Design* refers to both how the class is structured and what the materials look like. *Tools* are computer-based programs, and the unique functions they provide, that coalitions use to create materials and host the learning sessions. Examples of programs that coalitions use to deliver trainings include Zoom, GoToWebinar, CoalitionManager, Moodle, and Teachable. *Accessibility* means considering how coalitions support people to complete the training, regardless of internet connection, language, and physical or cognitive abilities. Accessibility can also include honoring multiple ways of knowing. In online trainings, that includes thinking of ways to engage people in learning based on physical practice, movement, and storytelling.

## Online Training Planning



Some questions coalitions can ask themselves as they consider how to use online training as part of their advocate and community education include:

- What online technology do we have now?
- What funding do we have available now and in the future to build and maintain online learning opportunities?
- How comfortable are coalition staff and potential learners with this technology? How accessible is it?
- What topics do we want to offer or not offer online? Why? Why not?
- How will online trainings fit into the broader arc of trainings we provide?
- How will we build off any online trainings with in-person learning opportunities?
- What capacity do we have to track and maintain online training content and learner engagement?
- Where will we need to build our skills at facilitating and moderating discussions and interaction online?

Developing online trainings or learning opportunities may seem daunting. While the number of choices coalitions have for implementing online learning can be overwhelming, with a better understanding of the things that make online learning effective, coalitions can make informed and empowered decisions to best meet the needs of their communities and their coalition goals.

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