



How To Convert Your In-Person Conference Into An Engaging Virtual Conference Experience

Stephanie Francis
Trevor Colhoun
Amanda Adams-Barney



Mental Health America
B4Stage4

Presenters



Stephanie Francis

Mental Health America for Greater Baton Rouge,
Development and Communications Director



Trevor Colhoun

TPN.health, CEO



Amanda Adams-Barney

The Sekmet Group,
Meeting & Event Producer/Stage Manager



The Louisiana MHA Experience

- Quick turn-around
 - Event scheduled for April 6-7, 2020
 - 150 registrants for live conference
 - Registration stalled in late February
- Why we did it
 - Audience that depends on CEUs
 - Sponsorship dollars
- Who helped
 - TPN Network
 - Confirmed speakers
 - LSU Social Work Board and Louisiana Counseling Association

By the Numbers



- April 6-7, 2020
- One track with only “breakout” presentations
- All presentations 1 hour
- Zoom webinar platform
- Discount registration - \$55
- \$50,000 in sponsorships
- No exhibitors
- 217 registrants for virtual conference
- 211 for 2 subsequent free events on PPP

Lessons Learned

From Louisiana MHA

- Gratitude and Acceptance
 - Cost and content drove attendance
 - Understood technical glitches
 - Appreciated short turn around time
- Room for Improvement
 - Speakers had challenges with technology
 - Speakers did not translate as well to virtual audience
 - Had difficulty accessing parts of the technology
- Expectations
 - Some level of “entertainment”
 - InstaCEUs

From Broader Conference Experiences

- Do the work upfront on customer service support and have plan
- Don't expect your attendees to READ everything you send, be patient when presented with attendee issue
- Have dedicated moderators for each speaker and have the moderator handle user engagement

Before You Begin

- **Who:** Who do you want to attend your virtual event?
- **What:** What is your starting place – existing event or starting from the beginning?
- **Where:** What virtual platform will you use to host your event? Will it be live, or pre-recorded?
- **When:** When will your webinar be?
- **Why:** Why are you hosting this event? What is the purpose?
- **How:** How are you going to host the webinar? Will it be live or pre-recorded?

In-Person Event Planning Considerations Still Apply

- Goals & timelines
- Budget
- Registration system & rates (charging vs. free)
- Audience (members only or open to the public)
- Content & speakers
- Course descriptions & learning objectives
- CEU approval and dissemination including verification

Special Considerations for Virtual Events

- Timing
- Platform
- Content
- Speakers
- Sponsors & Exhibitors
- CEUs
- Tech
- Customer Support
- Attendee Tracking

Timing is Everything

- One live conference day does not equal one virtual day
- Time of day for event
- How long should sessions be?
- Breaks – taking them & making the most of them

Virtual Conference Platforms

- Lots of options from simple (cheap) to complex
- What do you really need?
- What will your attendees expect?
- What can you afford?
- What do you have the time and bandwidth to produce?
- What do your sponsors and exhibitors expect?

End-to-End Tools for Online Events

VIRTUAL EVENT PLATFORM

Glisser



Network Tables



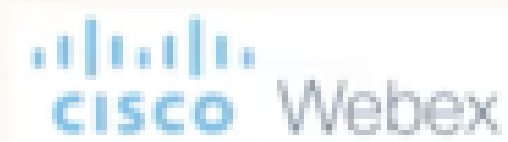
Remo



Icebreaker Video



WebEx



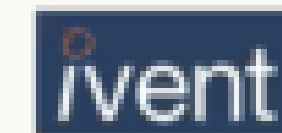
Run The World (RTW)



Zoom



iVent



INXPO



WorkCast



ubivent with meetyoo



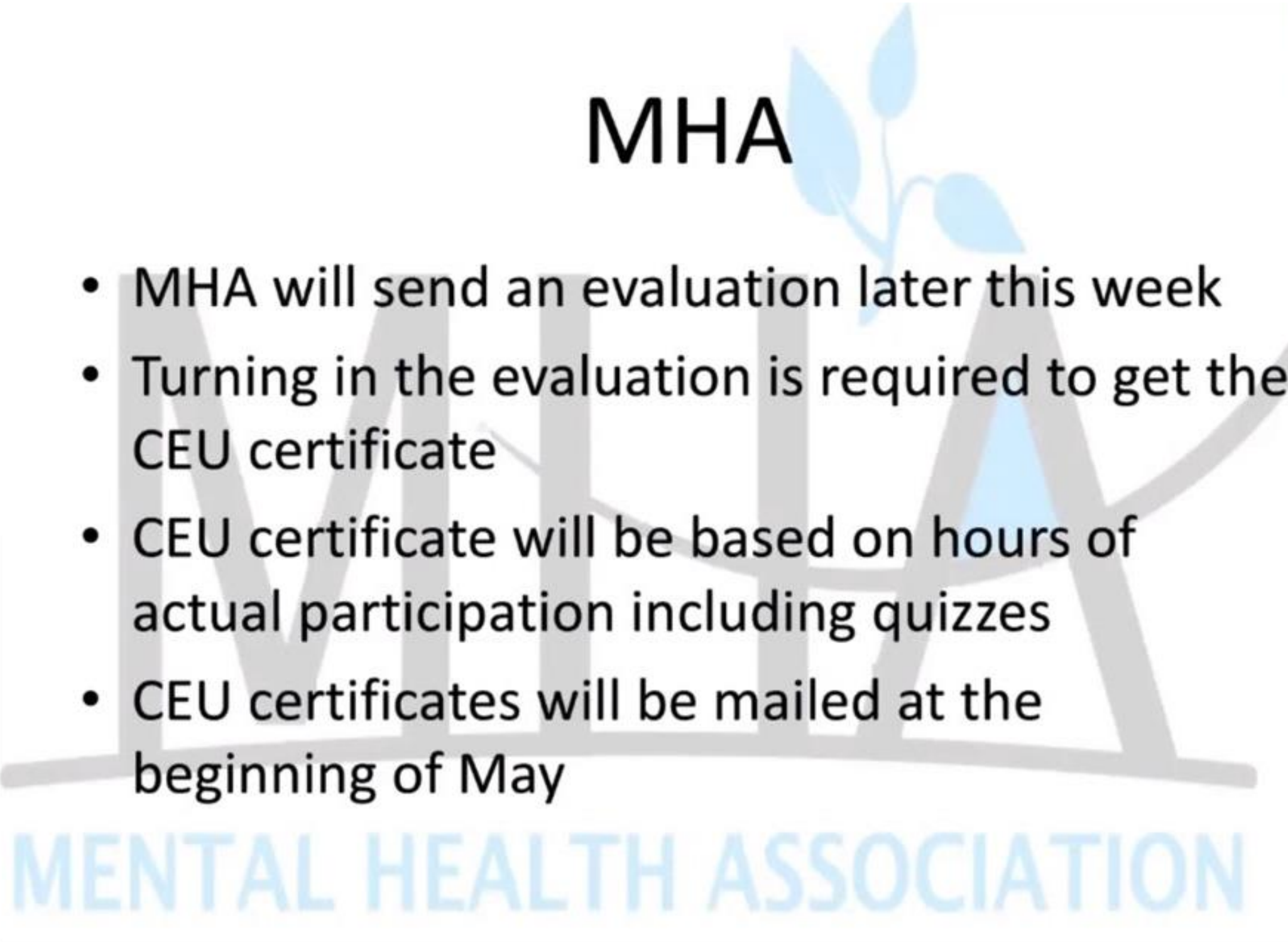
UgoVirtual



vFAIRS




Conference Experience: Webinar or Workshop



MHA

- MHA will send an evaluation later this week
- Turning in the evaluation is required to get the CEU certificate
- CEU certificate will be based on hours of actual participation including quizzes
- CEU certificates will be mailed at the beginning of May

MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION



Virtual Event



Content Development & Delivery



**Online is not same
as in person**



**Recorded for
posterity (cheaply
and easily)**



**Keeping people's
attention**

- Polls
- Q&A
- Chat
- Hand-raising

Engagement Features:

Polls, Q&A, Chat, Hand-Raising

What's your favorite ice crea... in Progress 0:07

Attendees are now viewing questions 0 of 0 (0%) voted

1. What's your favorite ice cream flavor?

| | |
|-------------------|--------|
| Vanilla | (0) 0% |
| Chocolate | (0) 0% |
| Strawberry | (0) 0% |
| I hate ice cream! | (0) 0% |

Q&A

All questions (1) My questions

Lee 01:54 PM

Will there be a follow-up session?

Comment

Type your question here...

Participants (3)

Panelists (1) Attendees (2)

Grant MacLaren

Carly Shannon

Lower All Hands

Speakers

- Need moderator to help speakers transition/overall session management
- Must work with speakers in advance to test their system, as well as coach them to adapt to the “venue”
- Practice, practice, practice
- Record practice session as back-up for tech failures
- For larger events with multiple speakers, consider a stage manager

Sponsors & Exhibitors

- There is value here for them, so sell it
- Include logos in pre-event emails, etc.
- Add logos to landing pages
- Roll “commercials” by sponsors & exhibitors during breaks
- Include sponsor logos during presentations (where appropriate)
- Higher end platforms allow for exhibit halls and even poster presentations

Sponsors

Presenting Sponsor



Capital Area United Way

Platinum Sponsor

*Baton Rouge
Area Foundation*

Gold Sponsors



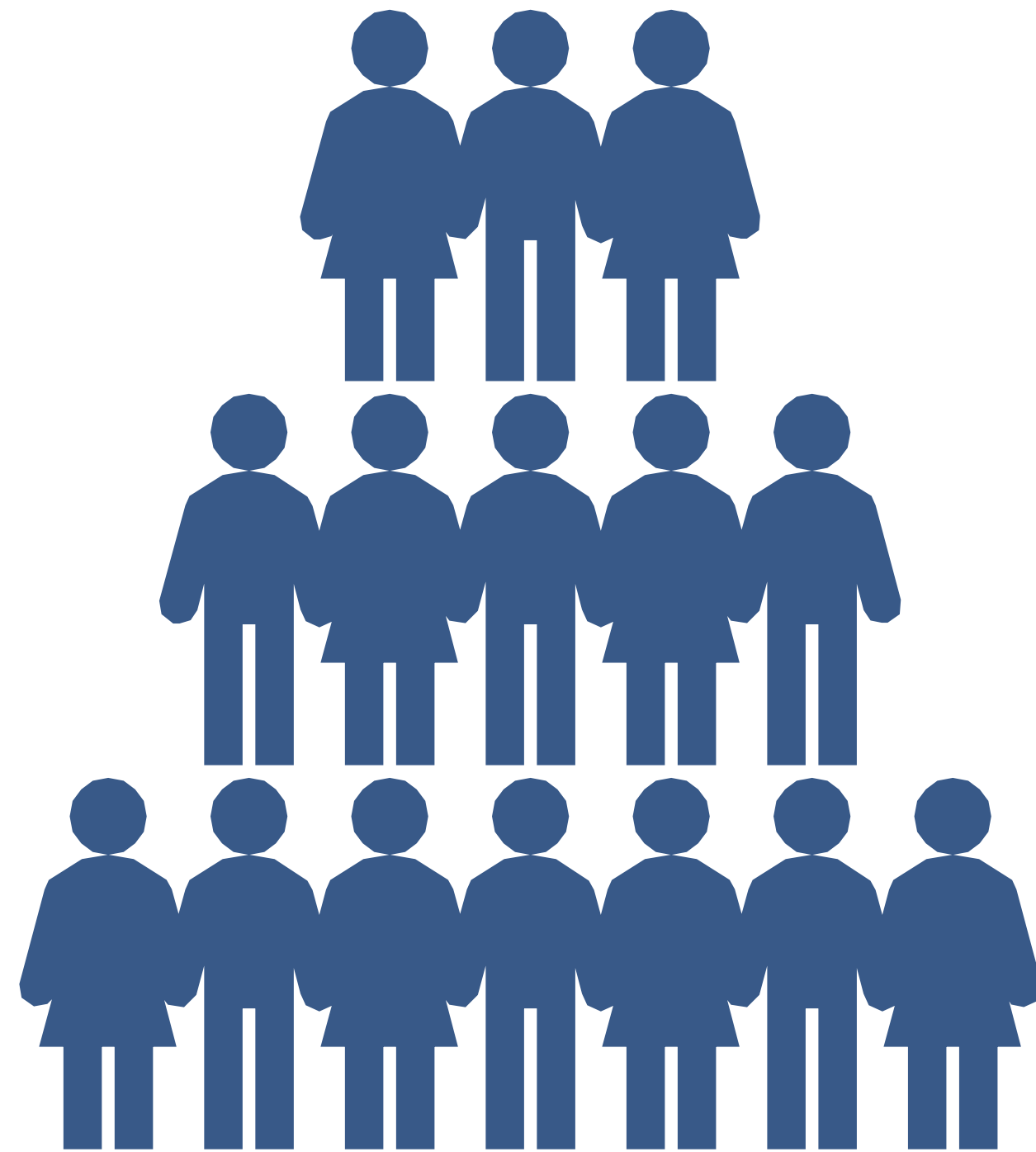
Silver Sponsors

*Aetna, Amerihealth Caritas, Our Lady of the Lake, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana
and Otsuka Pharmacueticals*

Continuing Education

- Make sure you are meeting regulatory expectations
- Attendee tracking is key
- Must have event evaluation
- Automate as much as possible
- Issue certificates

Technology

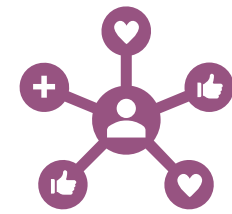


- Registration
- Ensuring information/link gets to people
- Someone who can assist when people have trouble accessing platform (not speakers, etc.)
- Have tech person available before, during, and after

Keys to Success



Set appropriate expectations with attendees



Utilize the right platform for your level of event



Have plenty of help on the backend



Practice, practice, practice



Have the right team in place

Q & A



You are not alone
in this.

Resources

Stephanie Francis

Mental Health America for Greater Baton Rouge

sfrancis@mhagbr.com; 225-772-3383

Trevor Colhoun

TPN.health

trevor@tpn.health; 504-430-3340

Amanda Adams-Barney

The Sekmet Group

amandaadamsbarney@gmail.com; 301-693-6861