

Yale SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

YMA Virtual Staff Breakrooms: Instructions for Managers – Education

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Scope

This document is applicable to all Managers of Staff reporting to Yale Medicine Administration (YMA)

Sections

What is a virtual Breakroom?

- A virtual breakroom is a dedicated online meeting space where remote workers can informally chat together via video. Think of it as mimicking a breakroom in a physical office, for instance a communal kitchen or sofa area. It can help to re-create 'water cooler' conversation for remote workers online.
- Virtual breakrooms can be created using video-meeting platforms like Zoom or Microsoft Teams.
- Breakrooms, or common spaces where staff run into their colleagues, are important for socializing, company culture, employee wellbeing and even productivity. While onsite staff should continue to utilize physical breakrooms, remote teams can utilize virtual breakrooms to reap similar benefits.
- This guide will walk you through creating a virtual Breakroom through Zoom or MS Teams for your staff.

What are considerations when creating a virtual Breakroom?

- Have an assigned organizer (e.g., team-leads, or appropriate staff member assigned by the manager) who sends the invite from their calendar
 - They can utilize Zoom or MS Teams video-meeting platforms
 - They will oversee creating the invite and inviting all staff members to it
- Invitees should include staff only.
 - For larger teams, it should be decided whether there are separate breakrooms designated for smaller pods within the team, or if there will be one breakroom to all in the team
 - Managers/supervisors who are interested can create their own virtual breakroom to help promote socialization with each other.
- These are considered optional, not mandatory for staff to attend. With that said, staff should be encouraged to drop in at least monthly to take advantage of the social benefits.
- No set agenda – conversation should simply flow. Informal, casual, chit-chat is encouraged.
 - Teams can use these sessions as they prefer: some prefer to label them as "coffee/tea breaks" where everyone can sip their drink of choice together while chatting, while others utilize them as meditation sessions where they can do a group meditation together through YouTube.
- Duration & Frequency:

- Duration: 15-30 minutes
- Frequency:
 - i. How often depends on the staff members' work schedules. It is recommended to have a few options in the same week so that staff with varied break times can join in when it works best for them. Example: Wednesdays at 10am, Thursdays at 2pm, Fridays at 11am, etc.
 - ii. It should be a recurring invitation that staff can expect to see on their calendars on a regular basis (weekly is recommended).
 - iii. Consider timing – the days of the week should work with the rhythm of the area and the time of the breaks should be not too early or late in the workday. Coffee/tea break at 10am/11am and post-lunch break at 1pm/2pm are popular.

Step-by-step instructions to create a virtual Breakroom:

1. Assigned meeting owner to create a recurring meeting in Zoom or MS Teams based on days and times that work best for team members.
 - Weekly recurrence is recommended, with multiple options per week for larger teams with varied shifts. Example: Wednesdays at 10am, Thursdays at 2pm, and Fridays at 11am.
2. Example titles for meeting invitation:
 - [TEAM NAME] Virtual Breakroom
 - [TEAM NAME] Virtual Coffee/Tea Break
 - [TEAM NAME] Virtual Meditation/Reset Break
3. Example message in meeting invitation:

- Hi Team!
I've created this recurring meeting invitation for a virtual "breakroom" to give us an opportunity to socialize with each other in an informal manner during our work breaks. Think of it as an opportunity to engage in 'water-cooler' conversation that would be common if we were in a physical work environment.

Drop-in as you please when it works for your schedule. These breakroom sessions are optional, not mandatory. But it would be great if you could attend at least one session per month as it's a great way to stay connected with your colleagues. There will be no set agenda – you can join with any topic of interest in mind (something you are looking forward to, funny stories about your pets or kids, your hobbies and interests, and the like). We can even do an activity together like a quick meditation or game. I hope to see you there - we can learn more about each other and enjoy our breaks together!

Contact Information

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