APRIL

Rural Conversation Community:

Supporting our Communities through COVID‑19

March 24, 2020

3:00 p.m. EDT

Captioning/CART Provided By:

ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES, LLC

P.O. BOX 278

LOMBARD, ILLINOIS 60148

\* \* \* \* \* \*

This transcript is being provided in a rough‑draft format. Captioning or Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) is provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim records of the proceedings.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

>> Folks, we'll get started in just a couple minutes here. If you need closed captioning, that's available now opinion you should be able to just click the CC button for it to pop up on your screen.

Go ahead and practice muting and unmuting yourselves if you want to. There will be lots of us here. I see folks introducing themselves in the chat. That's awesome. Feel free to do that as well. We'll get going here in just a couple of minutes. I just want to make sure our captioning is working. I don't see it on my screen.

>> It's on my screen.

>> Oh, you have it working on yours? Oh, great. Again, please, if you're not the one speaking, just practice muting and unmuting from home so that we can try to keep background noise low.

I'm going to go ahead and mute a couple of folks so we can keep it down. There we go.

>> MARY OLSON: Awesome. We're really getting close to the top of the hour here, so let me just run through this quick information so that we can just spend as much time as possible just hearing from the group and sharing what's going on.

So, thank you again for joining us for our rural conversation series. We actually pulled this one together in really short notice. We decided that we were going to add a community conversation to address some of the information going on in this wild time that we are in. Everybody working from home.

So, first of all, I just want to apologize ahead of time if ‑‑ I'm working from home like many of you are, and my husband and I are fighting for bandwidth. So hopefully this meeting will run smoothly and no dogs or children will run in front of me, but if they do, I apologize.

If ‑‑ this is your first time using Zoom, just a couple things for you to know. Feel free to turn on your webcam so we can see and hear you. You can do that by clicking the little video icon on your screen. Also up there is your mute and unmute. You can select mute and unmute. It's a microphone. To talk and to mute yourself when you are not talking.

If you are using captioning, you should be able to push the CC button, and we do have a captioner with us today. Thanks, Larry.

>> Thank you.

>> MARY OLSON: If you are using just the phone and not using video, you should be able to mute and unmute with \*6. If that doesn't work, just try the best that you can to keep background noise down. And if you have any issues, feel free to email me at MOLSON.APRIL@gmail.com. Or you can text my or my colleague Sierra Royster. You can get a hold of us in the chat box as well.

If you don't mind just saying what city and state you're in when you speak, it just helps us to kind of orient to who is on the call and say your name. Again, just try the best you can to keep background noise down or muted, but we all know that we are ‑‑ most of us are working from home. So we'll just all give each other lots of patience today. With that, I just want to address today's agenda. It's really a loose agenda today. Really, we just felt like this might be a good opportunity for you to connect with your peers from across the country who are dealing with a lot of the same issues that you are. We're talking about COVID‑19 and all the issues that that brings, whether you want to share information about how you telecommute from home, how you're serving consumers, policies you have written, any information you might want to share. This is a great time to do that. Or if we just want to give each other some love and support, we can do that, too.

So with that I'm going to kind of open the floor up. Again, if you need to unmute, you can push your microphone, but just kind of asking the question, you know: How is it going out there? What are folks doing? How are you serving your consumers? What ‑‑ are you moving to working from home?

If you need help finding the participant list, it's ‑‑

Sorry. Let me just mute a couple folks here. All right.

So, is there anybody that would like to kind of jump in and start it off, or Billy, if you're here, if you wanted to get anything going.

>> Hold on, Char. Hello?

>> Hi.

>> Okay. I'm on a video.

>> MARY OLSON: I'm trying to find you and mute you. All right. Again, welcome, everybody, to today's rural conversation, talking about COVID‑19. Is there anybody that would like to get us started and just kind of talk about, I guess, first off, what is your center currently doing, and how are you supporting staff at this time? To either work from home or to take time off.

>> Mary, this is ‑‑

>> I can ‑‑ I can jump in. This is Brian Hollander. I'm from Independent Living resource center in Santa Barbara, Ventura and San Luis Obispo Counties in California. So initially what we did was we ‑‑ before we were all kind of sent home by the Governor, we had closed our offices to the public and were working from the office remotely and helping people over the phone and through internet and email, and now what we've done is all of our staff are working remotely, and that's been interesting just because prior to this we didn't have work at home policies even, and so we set all those up and procedures and are just kind of ‑‑ we've had to provide a lot of support to people just to be able to kind of figure out the physical logistics of working at home and how to really adequately serve our consumers. Some of that has been related to technology and some of that has just been related to people not being used to sort of not being face to face with their consumers.

Should I keep going? Because I can talk about a couple of things that we're doing.

One of the things we're doing is we are doing a daily Zoom check‑in with all of our staff. In addition to doing individual check‑ins with people, we're doing a daily entire agency Zoom check‑in so that we can share ideas, challenges, information, and that can lead to other sort of cooperation and resources. So, for example, later this afternoon we're doing ‑‑ we created a committee to ‑‑ we're checking in with every single consumer we have served within the last year. And so we are providing sort of ‑‑ we're creating a list of questions that should be asked of all those consumers and then in addition to that we have in each of our offices, we have four offices, somebody in charge of maintaining a list ‑‑ or actually lists, four lists, of different types of resources so that we can easily access those so if a consumer needs a specific resource we can connect them with that easily and quickly by having those categorized. There are a lot of resources that are being activated specifically in response to COVID‑19 in our counties, and so keeping those together has been a little bit of a challenge, but really initially we had just sort of one big document, and now we've decided it makes a whole lot more sense to separate those out, not only by category, but also by geographical area.

So that's a couple of things that we're doing. Again, I think the most important thing is we are checking in specifically with each consumer that we've served in the ‑‑ at least within the last year right ‑‑ right now that's how far we're going back. And asking them a series of questions related to what they need, what their just particular situation is right now, suggesting a couple of resources, and then also just because we are doing this anyway, we're plugging 2020 census and asking if they need assistance with completing their census form. Because, yay, 2020 census. So that's a quick overview of what we're doing here in ‑‑ along the central coast of California.

>> MARY OLSON: Awesome. Thank you so much, Brian, for sharing that.

Does anybody have questions or thoughts for Brian? Or anybody want to share what they're doing?

>> This is Donna Potter from Granite State Independent Living in New Hampshire. Can you hear me okay?

We are doing some similar things as Brian mentioned. Some of our corporate staff is working from home, but then again, New Hampshire hasn't totally shut down yet. So we are ‑‑ some are working in the office. We have received notification from DHHS that we do not have to abide by the face‑to‑face visits as long as we have electronic or telephonic visits and are documenting that. So our staff has been informed that if the consumer or the staff member do not feel comfortable meeting face to face, they can do that documentation of their meetings telephonically.

The other piece is our workers have been amazing. We are keeping track of our workers that are not going in related to anything to do with the COVID‑19. We are reaching out to our workers on a weekly basis and also to our consumers and keeping track of all our consumers and their level of risk, which we also need to notify DHHS in New Hampshire about. So that's about it that we're doing. If anybody has any questions, I would be glad to answer them.

>> Mary, this is Karen, Karen Carney from the Blue Ridge Independent Living center in Roanoke, Virginia. We are all teleworking, which for us is a new experience, and some of us are in very rural areas, like me, and are having a difficult time maintaining an internet connection that is reliable. I'm sure nobody else is experiencing that, but ‑‑ I'm kidding. We have, unfortunately, heard from some of the home modification programs that we offer that all work is to cease, which is very problematic for our consumers, but we certainly understand that we don't want to risk consumers' health and/or the contractors' health, but that's been a little bit disconcerting. So some staff are in the office on certain days. We made up a schedule so people that were concerned about being with other people we could ease those concerns for them. So we have a schedule. Somebody's in there in the morning, somebody is in there in the afternoon. We have people checking our voice mail messages remotely and then emailing staff about consumers they need to contact. And so we're just trying to do as much as we can for our consumers. We also did get notice from our department of medical services that face‑to‑face meetings did not have to occur, that we could do those things by telephone. So we're taking advantage of that. But just trying to adjust to the new reality that seems to be changing every hour. I don't know if anyone has any questions.

>> This is Sarah Martinez from access to independence in the eastern Iowa corridor in Iowa city, and to our last speaker, I am also having technical difficulties at our center. We ordered laptops to be able to transition everyone home from ‑‑ by today, and I learned that they got returned to sender. So we had to restart our order all over again and have a couple staffers with technology to work from home. Which I hope that other people's transitions are going a little more smoothly.

We have decided to keep kind of same check‑in and staff meeting schedule as we did when we were together in the office. So we're doing one‑on‑ones with staff during their scheduled time and then we have a two‑hour staff meeting on Fridays that we're going to maintain. And staff and I ‑‑ I'm a very small staff of about four‑and‑a‑half, so we use Google Chat and text messaging to kind of maintain communication and email to help share any kind of resources that we see and use. We have been compiling all the resources that we get on our website which makes a really nice landing page for community providers and our consumers to go through and see what they need. So that could be, like, financial resources or unemployment insurance, and we've also tried to provide, as I know a lot of advocacy has been done in our state and across the country press conferences and any kind of informational meeting has ASL interpreters.

We're also working on rolling out programming virtually through Google Meeting and then also phone conferences so that we can continue to provide peer support and our self‑advocacy groups, and we're also working with local small businesses, yoga studios, to help provide recreational activities. We're also exploring [ INAUDIBLE ] that are being deployed for emergency response to COVID 19. If there's an opportunity to get people the technology they need to access these virtual services, so whether [ INAUDIBLE ] cell phones or getting maybe some like maybe Chrome books but as everything is going to on demand, I'm really concerned about isolation, being sure there is adequately technology to access these services.

>> Thank you so much for sharing that. I think ‑‑ if you don't mind, I would like to ask the group a question. From the chat, Steph is wondering, has anybody ‑‑ sorry ‑‑ has anyone done a telehealth appointment for a consumer who wasn't already doing telehealth appointments before COVID‑19?

>> Can you resay the question?

>> MARY OLSON: Sure. They're asking if anybody has done a telehealth appointment for a consumer who wasn't already doing telehealth appointments before COVID‑19? Are you having difficulty ‑‑ are you wondering about getting them to use ‑‑ to use the service, or ‑‑ can you he can spanned, Seth?

>> Hi. This is Aubrey from the Center for Independent Living accessible resources for independence serving counties in Maryland. I'm not sure if I'm understanding the question totally, but I wanted to respond. That.

>> MARY OLSON: Thank you.

>> I'm not sure in what ‑‑ maybe it's just ‑‑ maybe our center is in the minority, but, I mean, we're not a Medicaid provider or anything like that, and we don't provide any health services that would be billed through insurance or anything like that. So, no, we haven't done telehealth, although we are trying to do video chat and stuff like that for peer support.

>> MARY OLSON: Awesome. And how is that going?

>> We're still getting up and running with it. Google Hangouts has like a free service now for like their premium version. We also have pre‑employment [ INAUDIBLE ] which is where most of our income comes from. So not being able to meet with people one‑on‑one, because things are pretty much shut down here, is going to be really challenging for our budget. So we're working with Google Education Suite to try to ‑‑ which is free right now as well to try to get some kind of online training that we could bill for.

>> Audrey, have you considered like doing a Facebook page for your students and maybe doing like Facebook Live videos since that might be a platform they have access to?

>> That's a good idea. So a lot of the people that we serve don't use Facebook, but stuff like Instagram I've considered or they use Snapchat, but that's kind of a seedy platform sometimes. So I don't know if I want to use that. But I think that that would probably be effective. I just don't know what our requirements are in terms of confidentiality, if HPPA applies or anything like that.

>> We made, like, a base of information for virtual teleconferencing that is simply a "yes" or "no" that they need to respond to that our consumers understand that we're trying to uphold confidentiality through virtual platforms but we can't guarantee there aren't other family members or persons in the household while these services are being delivered.

>> Awesome. Would you be willing to share that?

>> I would be happy to.

>> Great. I'll put my email address in the chat.

>> Thank you.

>> MARY OLSON: Wonderful. Sarah, if you don't mind sending that to me, Mary, I'd be happy to also send it out on the listserv as well. We can stick it up maybe on the ILRU stuff and the APRIL stuff.

>> We'll do.

>> MARY OLSON: Awesome. Thank you so much for sharing that.

I wanted to double back around for the ‑‑ for the question that we had around telehealth. He is really wondering what they're trying to do ‑‑ sorry, I lost my ‑‑ they're going to try and roll folks into their provider's telehealth program for video appointments. Is it Leigh Ward? I see you are helping consumers now. Do you have any advice for Seth as they move forward with that? And if you press your microphone, you can unmute.

>> I was just looking for just some feedback, too, from the group if anybody has had barriers or had any recommendations for navigating that process. I haven't had any ‑‑ it's something I anticipate we're going to be doing because pretty much all of our providers are ‑‑ they've shut down to actual face‑to‑face patient visits. So how else are people going to access their doctors. It has to be done either by video or over the phone. So I'm not really sure.

>> No, that's why we're here. That's awesome. Let's keep asking the question, and if somebody has thoughts, please feel free to throw it in the chat or pipe up.

We can also collect all these questions and try to find answers to them as well throughout this process. This is all new to all of us. So...

>> Mary, it's Karen again. I was going to suggest that if we could put together a list of the different platforms that people are using to do some of the things that they're doing, that would be extremely helpful.

>> That is a wonderful idea, Karen, and I don't know if I'm even ‑‑ if I should even say this yet, but we are working with Judith and some folks at IL net to put together an FAQ on telecommuting, and so I think that's going to be ‑‑ that's a great idea to add in there. I know a lot of people doing Google Hang and Zoom, and we'll definitely start to try to pull that together.

>> Appreciate it.

>> MARY OLSON: Yes.

Josh Whitmer at Disability Rights and Resources in Birmingham says they tried really hard to keep resources available through social media. We're also trying to develop peer support groups to keep in touch with needs. And then we've got Sue ‑‑ just one second, baby. Sorry you guys.

We've also got Sue who says part of our staff are working from home with remote connections to their office computers. We do have staff in the office working also. contacting consumers, assessing their needs, finding community options and resources. We're using Zoom for staff meetings. We're using Google phone numbers and emailing back and forth to each other. Internet connection is a concern but it's functioning pretty well. Offering options to consumers, et cetera. That is such a great idea.

Sarah actually figured out how to drop it right into the chat. If you guys see that, she has her authorization right there. You can download it right from the chat.

They mentioned Google phone. I just wanted to throw throughout while folks are getting together, people have been asking me how do I telecommute from foam. That's one thing I suggested. A Google phone number is a way your folks can call consumers from home, but it's not actually traced back to their personal phone number. It's a nice way to kind of keep those boundaries. Also, I don't know if folks have heard of Digisign or Docusign, but those are nice ways people can sign paperwork. So a couple techie tips for you guys. We're going to work to pull some of those together and send out.

Who else would like to share either a question that they have for the group or what they're currently doing?

>> Mary, this is Beth with Walton options in South Carolina. We have two offices, one in north Augusta and one down in the low country, which is the office I'm in, and I know that our staff in the North Augusta office has been alternating days where there's no more than two staff members in the office, and they're in various parts of the buildings. So, like, one works in the back part of the building and one works in the front part of the building so that there is, like, total space and distance between them, and then in my office, I live two miles from the office, so I've just been going in because there's nobody else in my office. We've been doing, like, our staff meetings via GotoMeeting, we have been doing those and we have a group text going. We actually forward our phones from the office ‑‑ like they are forwarded to my cell phone and we're also using the Google number so if I have to call consumers back then we have that option to do that, but my question that I would like to ask ‑‑ I mean, a lot of what we do is we go into the school systems and we're working with students doing career boost programs and transitions, and we just got hit with the Governor of South Carolina closing our schools through the entire month of April. So they won't even step foot back into a classroom, and the area that I'm in is very, very rural, and a lot of the students don't have the resources or internet connections at home to be able to access any materials that we were to send them. So if anybody has suggestions on how to go about getting the information so that our students can continue on their curriculum and that we're not ‑‑ because we teach one 13‑week program one semester and another 13‑week program. So we don't want to lose the progress that we're making with these students or with our other consumers that we're working with transition.

>> MARY OLSON: Great question. Does anybody have thoughts for Beth?

>> My name is Sharon that I'm calling from Madison, Wisconsin. I work at access to independence there. Can everyone hear me?

>> Yes.

>> Okay. Good. I thought I was muted for a minute. Our schools are also closed, and we just found out that some students, maybe not all of the schools, and we're looking into that, they're doing remote learning where the kids are issued, like, an iPad or tablet or something like that, and then they're exchanging documents through Google Docs, and we wanted in on that because we also do transitional classes like a skills to pay the bills type of class. We also have like 13‑week courses, and all of that was put on hold when the kids were done with school. So we just got word yesterday that a couple of the students, and we have something called Project Search up here for transitional students, they are also going to be doing the telelearning, and you might be able to find out if that is an option in the different areas. It couldn't be the only place. Madison isn't that gifted.

>> I do know that one of our counties is probably, I think, rated one of the most impoverished counties in the country. So they're very, very rural, and I don't even know that they have internet service as far out as they are. I mean, that would be the one thing, because I taught in Georgia prior to coming here, and we were able to do at ‑‑ we were able to do that and the Google classrooms was a great way but I am trying to reach out to the teachers of the classes to see what they're doing for the other curriculum besides the curriculum that we present, how the regular learning is going about that.

>> That's a great question. Leigh in the chat said, in New York our broadband internet and cable company expanded free service to families with students who didn't have internet, and I think justice dropped a link in the box as well that might be going on in lots of areas. Perhaps that's something the CIL could help these folks get access to internet.

The other thing, I just wanted to mention, I know it's real old school, but maybe the teachers, if you printed out your slides, maybe they would send them to the students and then you guys could just meet on telephone and talk about the slides that they're each looking at on their own if they don't have access to internet.

>> Okay. That was something that we'd actually thought about doing, and because the school districts here are sending buses out every day to the students to deliver lunches and food to them, sending the packets out with the bus drivers as well so those students are getting that material that we have to make sure that it's in a format that they're ‑‑ that's accessible to their needs.

>> Real quick, just from the chat, I wanted to go back to talking about some of the ways we can connect. [ INAUDIBLE ] said they're using Discord to keep employees connected from home in the office. It's super simple. Is that kind of like a Slack or an information channel? I'll see if he types anything. And Sarah says she's from New Vistas in Santa Fe, New Mexico. At New vistas we are using increased telehealth. Platforms include Zoom, Skype, Google, Hangouts, and face time. All these platforms have problems based on connectivity, but we have successfully used them for telehealth visits for our early intervention program and are looking to see how we can expand it for our IL advocates. Thanks, Sarah. That's info, I think.

>> This is Molly from disability action center about Discord. So we have a young Gallup in our Spokane office who is a gamer, and this is also a gaming platform that gamers use, but it's super stealth and super simple and super easy to set up. So our offices, each person ‑‑ we have three ‑‑ well, four offices. So we're all set up, and at any time we can post ‑‑ let me read you a couple cat gores ease here. We have a questions section. We have a general section. A request section. CIL suites information. A resource section. So we're sharing stuff all the time between individuals who are working from home more still working in offices, some of them are still able to come in. What I found really nice about it because ‑‑ I'm not a gamer, I'm a little older, it's super simple. I caught on super quick. And there seems to be no streaming issues with how fast it works. So it's just Discord app and we all uploaded it. Somebody was, of course, the main person, but you can chat at people in the whole group or whole office can chat with each other or we can reach out and just say @so and so and personally talk back and forth to them. And there is a voice video option.

>> Awesome. Thank you for that info. I also just want to ‑‑ our youth coordinator reminded me we'll be having one of the IL net youth coordinators connect calls on April 7th and you can find that info on our website and on ILRU and that's going to be all youth coordinators brainstorming ways to engage youth through this time. So that might be something to consider as well. Great.

I have Mary Reynolds from SKILL in Parsons, Kansas. They said they're not on a state or city order to shelter in place. They're taking precautions by keeping doors locked. Many staff are working at home. A few are still coming into the office. We're basically on a safety plan.

I also wanted to mention we had some folks from Ann Arbor that said they're using Blue Jeans which is HPPA compliant and it's been working very well. And then Seth mentioned that Group Me is also a good communication app. You guys, I'm learning a lot right now. That's great.

I wanted to go back up also, not to completely switch gears, but Bret is from CIL DRC and they serve northwest Florida and hurricane season is around the corner for them. Has anyone considered where people should go in the event shelters are closed during a hurricane or other catastrophic events such as fires in California, tornadoes in the Midwest, et cetera, due to the coronavirus. I haven't even thought that far ahead, but has anybody else thought about what that might look like?

>> No. I think we've been so focused on the ‑‑ you know ‑‑ I mean, we've really been focused on the coronavirus response as sort of an emergency response issue, and so, I mean, for example, our ‑‑ you know, all of the ‑‑ the emergency shelters that open during disasters are open now. So it's sort of like the infrastructure that would be in place in response to a disaster like that is in place currently. If it were to get blown away by a hurricane, I mean, I don't know ‑‑ I guess they would just have to move it. Right now that stuff here ‑‑ it's, you know, it's set up, it's erected, it's there. So, yeah, it's an interesting question. But I guess they would do whatever they would do in a situation where they were ‑‑ had ‑‑ like, let's say there was a hurricane and another storm or something. I don't know.

>> I think your point is taken well that, I think, we're right now kind of focusing just on this, but I think that's definitely something we'll have to start considering moving forward. Thanks for bringing it to our attention.

I also wanted to just mention quick a couple of things about technology in rural areas. One is that Leigh says, have you thought about utilizing the lifeline benefit and applying that ‑‑ and applying to that a mobile hotspot? I actually don't know what that means, but they said that a lot of cell phone providers are waving unlimited fees and maybe a smartphone hotspot could help in some of those situations of those rural areas. And Jean Hall says they are reaching out to ACL to let them now how big a problem the lack of broadband in rural areas is affecting people with disabilities during this time. I bet you ACL knows that, but it's good to reach out.

Hotspot jetpacks. Brian says. That's great.

All right. I think ‑‑ bill says in Montana all four CILs have closed their doors and are having their employees work from home. I'm not sure how well that is working. For teleconferencing they're using Zoom. They have's hosted list inning sessions for SPIL. The SILC operates primarily through phone calls and teleconferencing. Since I am employed by the state as the SILC tell manager we're using Skype for business. I'm still working out of the office but I'm preparing to work from home shortly, which means setting up a home office and getting secure internet access for my home computer.

Wow. So what else, folks? What other questions are you wondering about that you want to ask for your peers?

>> Mary, I have a quick question. First, where are you? Because that looks amazing.

>> This is a picture that I took from the top of waterworks back when we could go outside and things.

>> Good to know.

I had a question for folks. Are consumers receiving accurate information about COVID‑19? And how service providers are responding to that.

>> You know, actually, that's an interesting question, because we had initially ‑‑ I don't know if you recall when I first started talking I was talking about how we had said up a list of resources, and initially what we did was we took the information that had been put out by the different ‑‑ you know, we have three different counties ‑‑ different health departments, but then what we realized is that information is fluid. So it's changing every day. So instead what we have is we've created a link to that information because, you know, it changes in real time. And so that link is available for both us to provide to consumers that have internet access or for our staff to be able to look up while they're con‑‑ contemporaneously while they are on a phone call with a consumer. So, now one of the other things I was ‑‑ that came into my head when people were talking about some of the challenges of reaching students who are more rurally located, so students with disabilities ‑‑ there is an argument that could be made they could overnight any written materials to students with disabilities that don't have access to the internet and then do the class ‑‑ the class discussions over a conference call as a reasonable accommodation, because they do ‑‑ they do have that obligation to provide a free and appropriate education, and that's why they're continuing to provide instruction at all. I don't know. I was just throwing that out there.

>> MARY OLSON: Great. I think any ideas are good ideas at this point, Brian. Thank you for sharing that.

>> Mary, can I talk?

>> MARY OLSON: Yeah, go ahead.

>> This is Scott from Minot, North Dakota. I am going to let my co‑worker who is on here talk in a minute because she is the one doing all the work and I don't want to take credit for it, but I think we have done a lot of the same things a lot of people have talked about. We have 80% of our staff working at home and the other two ‑‑ you can figure out big our office is, kind of rotating in the office so we can still get in there access some of the stuff you maybe don't have at home, like, maybe, a copier or things like that. But with that being said, we have been pushing really hard to provide our community with as much information as possible as well, and Taylor, I'm going to let her talk and she can talk about some of the things she has done. And also we decided last week ‑‑ we were supposed to begin last week by doing education to kids in elementary schools in our area and that all got changed when the schools shut down. So we decided to be a little bit creative. So I'll let Taylor talk about that.

>> Thanks, Scott. Hi, guys. As Scott mentioned, our community education kind of came to a screeching halt as far as face to face and large gatherings go. So we had to get pretty creative and think outside the box. Especially when it came to reaching our schools with our elementary Ed programming that we have. So we decided to use Facebook Live because right now we wanted to capitalize on the opportunity that we have to connect with more people than ever before, and so we did a Facebook Live or a Facebook video that premiered. So it showed up on everyone's timelines ‑‑ not their time lines, but their news feeds. So they were notified in real time. And then we read a book to kiddos. I don't know if you're familiar with the new children's book that just came out called "all the way to the top." It's a about Jennifer Chapins that's participated in the capital crawl back in the 1990s. So it did a great job of describing the movement and how she really influenced the Americans with Disabilities Act. And it really put things ‑‑ broke things down for kiddos into digestible pieces so they could really understand it, and it had beautiful illustrations. So shameless plug here, if you guys are interested, go to our Facebook page, independent Inc., resources Center for Independent Living and we make sure to try to make it as accessible as possible. So we fried to audio describe. I'm not the best at it yet. Our ‑‑ one of my colleagues, he has a visual impairment, and so he has been training me, but slowly but surely I'm adapting. Anyways, so, we also have it closed captioned, and we wanted kiddos and their families while in this transitional period where the school districts are implementing their education, their distance learning, we really wanted to put out those resources in different educational opportunities for those parents to keep those kiddos occupied throughout this time. And so we read the book and encouraged kiddos to ask questions and we responded to those questions, and we've had a great turnout with it. So we really want to encourage all of you guys to get involved with that, too. And if you can purchase it from your local bookstore, online right now, we certainly encourage you to do that, or go on Amazon. I can drop a link in the chat for you to access that. But that's been really great. We've also been collecting resources and pushing those out on our social media as well. For seniors and people with disabilities to have access to those essentials. So for right now we just recently put out a [ INAUDIBLE ] for early shopping hours for those people that might be immunocompromised and for those seniors. We found out unfortunately Walmart is only providing it to seniors right now, which is very unfortunate. So we did a lot of advocacy last week, been in contact with our headquarters as well as our local Walmart to try and get them to extend those services to people with disabilities as well. So if you guys are interested, please go and contact Walmart headquarters so they can extend that service in your community as well.

Let's see. What else do we have going on here? So that's where we're at with resources. Also meal services. A lot of our soup kitchens are continuing to offer that service in our community. So we have been getting that out as well and updating that daily, and that's been really well received. So, I think I kind of covered all the bases here, just getting very creative and thinking on the go here to get out our programming and fulfill our mission throughout this time.

Do we have any questions?

>> I was wondering what kind of ‑‑ I have to imagine that ‑‑ because, like, we're planning and doing a couple of, like ‑‑ we're trying to bring Facebook Live into this process, and it's actually kind of funny because the one silver lining in all of this is that it's really sort of causing us to be creative in terms of thinking about how we're using our ‑‑ I'm sorry, my computer is beeping. I think someone is trying to call me. I'll come back. About how we're using social media and technology to reach large amounts of people, and I have a feeling that we're going to end up using some of this stuff on an ongoing basis even after this crisis is over. So ‑‑ I have to check something.

>> This is Amanda. I work at ACL, and I wanted to make sure that everybody is aware of the resource page that's located at ACL.gov specific to this topic area. And I really want to highlight that because ACL is very much involved in everything they can and should be involved in throughout this process, and so it also is a live resource page. So they're updating it constantly. And it's a really good resource with factual information, and if you want ‑‑ it's not just about the government. It's about resources that you can access as well. So I really encourage you to take advantage of that, and if you just go to ACL.gov, you'll see that web page.

>> Awesome. Thank you. I also just wanted ‑‑ this is Sierra, by the way. Mary is using the rural internet right now, which is also why it's maybe helpful to do thing as a team. That way between two rural areas you could probably knock it out, then. But I wanted to capture some of the comments. There was something on here that said they're doing a coffee chat via Zoom. We don't talk about work. We're missing our office interaction. So I think that is to address how you are supporting your staff through this as well and self‑care. I know that was one of the questions that had come up in the chat earlier. So I love that idea of the coffee chat because we do, when you're in an office and you can chat about how your day is going or what frustrations you have or sometimes just the system in general, so that's a great way to do that. Thank you for sharing that.

And does anybody else have anything that you're doing for self‑care for your staff and making sure they are taking care of themselves beyond just the idea of physically distancing ourselves from one another? That mental health piece as well.

>> This is Seth from Beaumont. We've been sharing a lot of yoga videos. I know our family has been doing cosmic yoga with our son, and that's been a really good chance to kind of break our ‑‑ reform his idea of what screen time is. Just ‑‑ it's for health. It's not just for fun. And another simple thing we did just for our neighborhood, and I'm thinking about trying it for some consumers that live in the same neighborhood, is we ‑‑ my wife worked at an events center and she had a bunch of short wave radios that she used at the complex to talk within a quarter mile of each other, and all the kids on my neighborhood street I gave one to. So every day we meet up and we have kind of a low‑

>> VIDEO TECHNICIAN: Meet‑up and we talk about what's going on on their street and their house and we just kind of meet. It's a fun way to take their mind off, if you're looking for any family ways to self‑care and just something fun to do, but yoga has been the big thing we're trying to push out and the veterans yoga project, ways for people to start interacting with the technology to get off the technology and then kind of restore themselves. So that's just some of the ways we've been working through that.

>> I love that.

Did anybody else have anything else you're doing for your staff? Thank you for that. I think that's a great way ‑‑ and there's so many programs that are offering stuff free right now as well, from little kids all the way up, and as we're talking about things to do with youth that has to have an internet access, of course, but if you do very any younger people following any of your social media, making sure they're thinking about mental health as well, putting out some of those things, but that's for all ages and that could be helpful for us. So thank you for that.

>> This is Amanda again. One thing that we have been recommending is meditation, and there are quite a few places that are offering free guided meditations for each, 10, 20 minutes. One of them is J. Shetty. If you just Google him, you will find his. He is doing a 20‑minute guided meditation every day at 12:30 eastern. And then there is also ‑‑ I can put it in the message, but there's one at Yale University called the happiness project that everybody can access for free right now, too.

>> Awesome. I love that.

>> It's really powerful to be ‑‑ J. Shetty is doing it worldwide. So you're doing a guided medication with a whole lot of people around the world at the same time, and it's quite an experience.

>> I bet that's just a cool energy to have on that, even being disconnected.

So, I also see some people have dropped in some links for different resources, and that's something else that we ‑‑ there was a call that Mary did last week, I think, and there was a lot of recreational activities that were listed, and we have dropped those on our website if you want to give a check out to any of those. Of options, just to play games with somebody else, there's ways to do that over the internet as well, even by phone sometimes. So just keeping some of those activities going are really great ways to keep us a little bit in check and also provide us that break.

Oh, Mary has dropped it into the chat, the electronic resources. So, perfect.

What has everybody else done ‑‑ what are some other programs that you're doing and that you're running and you're still able to keep up and going? Or what questions do you have right now that we can maybe troubleshoot to the group?

>> While folks are thinking, I just wanted to say aloha. I'm reading from the chat. They said they're using this time to catch up on staff development or individual training related to our programs. And that is a great way to do it. I did see a message come out from ACL that said take this time, if you can, to have staff do some development time. There's tons of archived presentations on the ILRU website and I know APRIL and NCIL has done them. This might be a good time also to go through your policies and procedures and put down some of the curriculums you're teaching, put them down on paper. Take this time to do that work. You have been pushing off to the side for the last several months, which I know many of us have been doing.

>> What else ‑‑ go ahead.

>> This is Susie Malloy. I'm in Arizona. I've been noticing some really interesting ‑‑ been noticing some interesting things. One of them is that the situation is emphasizing and reemphasizing the alienation that people with chemical and electrical sensitivities feel from the Independent Living Centers and the rest of society. People are just isolating and scared or isolating and mad or things like that. Most of our communication tends to be over land line phones. Or some of us have computers and we can do old‑fashioned email. But we don't have Facebook and we don't have a ‑‑ a lot of us have lived for years without computers, and it's ‑‑ I'm really happy for the people for whom the computers are working so well. It's just really great. We can't use them that way. So I'm feeling that divide sort of between the rest of the Independent Living folks and us. It's just deeper than ever.

On the other hand, there have been sun really fascinating bridges built that I wouldn't have expected, like, one of them is that, oh, I've had to stay in touch with some judges and attorneys down in Phoenix on behalf of consumers, and they're people who have never been outgoing before or shared anything about themselves and so they really value their professional distance, and it's ‑‑ since we do so much on paper and pen or things like that, or just by plain old‑fashioned mail, it's been just unique that some of the judges and attorneys have been giving us their home addresses and saying, well, don't write to the office. Just send me this or that at my house and I'll get back to you. And it's been such an icebreaker with so many people who had ‑‑ you know, I felt kept us at arm's distance or something before. So that's been really fascinating to me.

>> Thank you. That's great. I also just wanted to add real quick from the chat somebody had a question about whether or not Zoom was free. I just wanted to tell you that Zoom does have a free plan. It only allows you to do 45‑minute interval meetings and then it will kick you out. And then ‑‑ sorry ‑‑ and then after that they do have some basic plans, and I just wanted to recommend to everybody if you don't have a Tech Soup account, you can get Zoom through Tech Soup and it's way cheaper than just purchasing it. I know Scott just did that. Do you remember about how much it cost through Tech Soup?

>> I'll look quick, Mary, and I'll drop it into the comments. It was half price, so ‑‑

>> Great.

Anybody else have questions or thoughts? This has been such a useful call, you guys, by the way. I'm going to record this and save the chat and try to compile as much as we can and put some materials together for you all.

>> Mary ‑‑

>> Go ahead.

>> Mary, this is LouAnn Kibby with Southeast Kansas Independent Living and one of the things that we're working on doing kind of falls in with what Susan was saying about technology. I mean, I guess a lot of people have been talking not having internet service for customers and such. So in Southeast Kansas is probably one of the poorest, if not the poorest area of the state, the state of Kansas. So one of the things that we developed that we're working on is, and I've shared this with other centers, and I'm happy to share it with others, I've shared with it Paula McElwee. It's a questionnaire. We're going to call every one of our customers ‑‑ working on doing that actually now ‑‑ calling every one every our customers just to check in on them to see if they live alone, you know, do they have the food they need for a few weeks, medical supplies, prescribes, do they feel safe, are they scared, and a lot of that ‑ or are there any other resources that they know of because we cover such a large area. There may be resources even we don't know are occurring. And so we felt like if we find individuals who ‑‑ attendant isn't showing up, we can help them find attendants. If they tell us about resources then we can share those resources with other people. I mean, it's just a huge win. If we have individuals that are alone at home and isolated and scared, we know we need to follow back up with these people. You know, there's going to be others that are doing okay that have more informal supports that we may not have to follow up with as often. So we're just working on going through our customers and doing individual contacts. Majority of our people do not have internet service. And so ‑‑ we even have people that unfortunately do not have phones. So those, of course, would take a snail mail service. But we're doing our best to try to reach people, have emergency contacts for them. Another thing that we did, Amy High 10 and myself, Amy is the director of Topeka Independent Living center, we worked up a document who self‑direct their own care, just a tip sheet with tips on it. You might want to share personal care attendants with individuals or you know, what have your attendant about the contacts they make outside community. As soon as they come into your house, go directly watch their hands, just different kinds of tips and we also did ‑‑ attached to that we did two different forms. One form is for the individual customer to fill out with all their personal information in case they do get sick and have to go to the hospital they've got that information compiled and ready to go, and then the second form is a document so that if essential workers are established in certain ‑‑ in your area, and unfortunately attendants, personal care attendants are not on that list, law enforcement could potentially stop your worker. This form documents with your signature and your contact information as the person that they work with ‑‑ work for that you need them to be able to have access to get to your home to help you with your daily needs, period. And they can then, in my situation, they can call me and say, is this your personal care attendant and such. So those are some documents that we've developed here in Kansas that we're ‑‑ we have been getting out. So I just wanted to share that.

>> LouAnn, thank you. That is so important. There anyway you would be willing to share those with us that we could get to the group?

>> Sure. I'm not sure I'm Aztec savvy as Sarah dropping that document in there that I already downloaded, but ‑‑

>> If you don't mind emailing me, I can drop it right in there.

>> Yep, I can do that.

>> Thank you. Great.

Speaking of other important services, we've got some questions going on about transportation in the chat. Some folks are wondering, from Arlington, Virginia, how is paratransit services and public transportation running around your area? Some individuals with disabilities must make trips to their medical appointments. And Leigh answered that in her area public transit has just scaled back fixed outs temporarily due to the recent orders issued by Governor Cuomo. And Seth says buses are still running there. So I think that's a good reminder ‑‑ you know, and how are the paratransit keeping folks safe. Are you guys helping to consult with folks on that?

>> I know the paratransit in Cedar Rapids has installed plastic shields in between seats so that if you had tried to reach out that there would be a barrier between someone if they were to sit too close to you, and I know they're controlling how many people they can take on shared rides. So definitely encouraging people to spread out and not kind of group together. And then there are a lot of buses in our area that are completely closing just because I think there's low ridership and they're concerned about financially keeping the buses running. So we're a little concerned about the options for transportation slowly dwindling down for people.

>> Great. Thank you. Luke from Washington is saying that they're also encouraging spaces between seats. For those able to enter the back door on the bus, if needed for accessibility, you can still enter the front door. And Scott did get us that answer from Tech Soup on Zoom. It was $161 for a year, but that was for two licensed hosts. So it's half that for one. Such good info, folks. What else do we want to share or ask questions about?

>> I did want to share a possible partnership with your local area agency for aging. So you may want to reach out to them to see if you're serving any high‑risk consumers that may be food insecure, if there's any way that your area agency for aging would consider dropping eligibility for home meal delivery. We have our local agency who is willing to waive that to get people the food they need to their home with like a [ INAUDIBLE ] day supply of meals and worrying about the financials later. I know that doesn't necessarily apply to everyone but it is a possibility to reach out.

>> Thanks, Sarah. I think at this time any resources ‑‑ any resources are better than none. I was also wondering, has anybody been using transportation vouchers in response to a limited transit? For example, to pay friends or family for transportation? Maybe not. Leigh said that's probably something we could work with our other local charities to obtain from town to town on a case‑by‑case basis. Great.

What else do we need to talk about, folks? I'm so glad that we're doing this, by the way. I knew there would be such a wealth of information out there.

Diana says ‑‑ Diana is in Montana in the Flathead area and she said that their food bank has a drive‑up line today. Workers are taking the food and putting it in trunks for folks. Oh, that's nice.

Seth said he just called their transit office. As long as the regular buses are running, the paratransit system must also run. This doesn't mean they can't be scaled back, though, however.

How are your CILs doing as far as engaging your employees? Are you guys finding the transition to working from home is going smoothly? Are there things you're still working out?

Diana says our director is in the discovery phase. I like that. I would say at access to independence we're kind of in that, too. I don't think anyone really knows the right answer on how to respond to this. We are all figuring this out one day at a time, and I think if there's any solace, my staff know that we're all kind of figuring it out together and we're going to see things that work and things that don't and make adjustments, but everyone has been really awesome with how flexible they've been, and I know, you know, my staff have different challenges. Some people live at home with small children or with families, and so I've pretty much told them, you know, if you can get close to eight hours of work done throughout a day, it doesn't matter if you have to sit through it all in one go or whatever schedule you need, just make sure that we know and are updated on Google Calendar so other people can see what you're doing, but I'm really willing to work with anyone to make sure their needs are being met and work is still getting done. You know, I really appreciate all this information out there, and I want you to know that we are all in this together. This is really hard, but we're ‑‑ we're doing it. We're making services work.

>> That's awesome. I was just checking to see if LouAnn sent me that. I forgot to check my email. I wanted to say ‑‑ and Anna Jones says they are doing as much as they can remotely. We Dee have an equipment loan/gift program that is still operating on a limited bays with social distancing precautions. And Lydia was talking about they're using Zoom and their case management system to log all the hours so they can see what's being done. I think that's great.

Somebody asked me the other day what should I be doing, and I think we're all wondering that. What I told. ‑‑ probably one of the best things you can probably do is stay informed. Stay on social media, on the internet. Like, if you can, as an employee, to continue to know what's available in your community. I think that we have a lot of helpers that are showing up in our communities. And so if we can just stay on top of knowing what's available and helping consumers access that information, because they may not be as privileged ease we are with constant access to information. But that's just kind of my way of ‑‑ my way is to stay informed. That's how I get through a crisis.

Sorry. I have a little helper here who keeps trying to talk.

>> Mary, Anna dropped in possibly remoting including intakes. We have an equipment loan/gift program that is still operating on a limited basis with social distancing precautions for pick up. I think that might have been to that COVID accessibility testing.

>> Gotcha.

>> There was a question on the accessibility of COVID‑19.

>> Oh, that was ‑‑ that's right. We kind of skipped over. So the COVID‑19 testing in your areas, they were wondering how accessible is it for people in your areas.

>> It's not.

>> It's not. I think that that's something that's happening nationwide, but I wanted to also just mention quick, Lauren Smith is from the RTC. She dropped in their telecom toolbox. It was created for voc. rehab but it goes through a lot of telecommunication information, email, text messaging, a section about ethics which could be useful when putting together policies. Oh, thank you. That is really helpful. Again, we're going to save this chat before we end, and I'm going to try to sift through as much of it as I can in order to get that out to you guys in a more usable format.

We do have about 15 minutes left. Just to be conscious of the time. Does anybody have any other questions that they didn't get to ask yet?

>> Mary, this is LouAnn. I just sent you those documents.

>> Thank you. I will pop them in.

>> This is Susie Malloy again. I've had this other observation that I'm almost reluctant to share, but that's the way it goes. Despite what I said a few minutes ago about really noticing the digital divide problem between people who can use computers and whatnot and those who can't, there's this other thing I've noticed that's kind of a leveler, a social leveler, and that is, it's something that surprised me, that for those of us who haven't been able to go to use the Independent Living Centers or work in them or go in as consumers or whatever, it's kind of a social leveler that the employees and our colleagues who work in these places are now at home, too. I hadn't noticed the degree to which some of us have a collective chip on our shoulder about the people for whom offices are now accessible and those for whom they're not because of chemicals and office equipment and so forth, and that's just something I'm noticing, and I wonder ‑‑ I guess I'll just keep an eye on myself and see how that develops as we go through this period that of really nobody having an office. It kind of reminds me of Independent Living stuff before there were centers.

>> Thank you. Sorry, I was in the middle of trying to drop some stuff in the box there.

Any other closing comments or thoughts anybody wants to make?

>> This is Sarah Anne. I'm also from Arizona. I work at the SILC, and I just want to say that it's been really helpful that we have an emergency preparedness committee already ‑‑ I apologize. My dog is just starting to bark. And then because we were able to utilize that during this time period and that we already had those connections between our Centers for Independent Living and then with the SILC and then us with our state ‑‑ Arizona Department of Health Services. So if you guys aren't participating in any kind of committee, I thought that ended up being very helpful.

>> Thank you.

>> And Mary, before we jump off, I just wanted to share out loud Seth's comment. He said when I was a boy I would see scary things in the news. My mother would say to me, look for the helpers. You're always around helping. Mr. Rogers, Mary. So keep helping. So I thought it was a good thing to remember.

>> I think that is wonderful. I really appreciate everybody who made the call today. We put this together at the very last minute, and look at all the folks that came and joined us. For me it was one of those, I wanted to be a helper but I didn't really know what I could do. And all that I can do is make sure that we keep having a space where we can share and know that we're all in this together across the country. I mean, I'll be honest, I have been in tears several times over the last week just all the changes that are happening and trying to figure out where we're going to go next.

>> A few reminders ‑‑

>> Oh, sorry. I was just going to remind everybody the youth coordinators connect call meets on April 7th if you want to talk about how this is affecting youth programs specifically, and that information is on the APRIL website. And then also just keep a lookout for the advocacy committee. I think some of these conversations about the accessibility of testing and the different accessibility issues we're coming into play with these new settings and new places really could be discussed there, too, so we can keep that conversation going just as a reminder for everybody.

>> And also we'll make sure that this info gets out on the ILRU listserv with all the resources that everybody has been sharing. I'll save the chat. Luke mentioned NCIL has an emergency preparedness committee. That's another way you can stay involved. Todd Holloway is the one that runs that. There have been so many wonderful resources being dropped in here. We will try to gather as many as we can and get them back out to you. If this was useful to you, please let us know. You're welcome to shoot me an email. I would be happy to hold another one if we think this is something we wanted to continue checking in on as the weeks progress. But, yeah, thanks, everybody, again, and we'll be in touch. Everybody stay safe and stay healthy and let's take care of each other.