◼️AT³ CENTER COVID RESPONSE & RECOVERY BRIEF:
STATE AND TERRITORY A.T. PROGRAMS SUPPORT ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a heavy toll on vulnerable populations, including older Americans, those with underlying health conditions, persons with disabilities of all ages, and especially persons receiving or providing long-term care services and supports. **In response, State and Territory A.T. Programs are playing an increasingly vital role in this public health crisis**.

As individuals with disabilities, seniors, families, and caregivers across the country work to keep up to date on the latest COVID-19 guidelines, restrictions, and opportunities for vaccination, **State and Territory A.T. Programs are providing expertise to ensure COVID-19 information and other resources are accessible to individuals with sensory, physical, cognitive, and developmental disabilities.**

Information that is accessible allows equitable access; it means no one is excluded because of a disability. Inaccessible websites and documents lock out the very users most at risk from COVID-19. The pandemic has spotlighted the need for accessible information and communication technology (ICT), inspiring new collaborations and a greater role for State and Territory A.T. Programs nationwide.

Program Spotlights On Accessible Information:

Georgia:
GA Tools for Life (TFL) has a contract with the CDC Foundation to create accessible CDC guidance on COVID-19. Since June 2020, TFL has worked with the CDC Foundation to provide access to digital and embossed braille, ASL videos, Easy to Read text, and a series of webinars. The project developed a Georgia Tech microsite to disseminate the materials widely and to accept requests for embossed braille. New content is being added to the site rapidly as more ASL videos and Easy to Read products are approved. Visit: https://cidi.gatech.edu/covid

Guam:
"We are currently working on printing plain language material for individuals with disabilities regarding what to expect when getting the COVID-19 vaccination as well as working with our Department of Integrated Services for Individuals with Disabilities (DISID), the Guam Developmental Disabilities Council (GDDC), Guam Legal Services, and the Division of Senior Citizens to assist us with the dissemination."

Idaho:
"We have been working with the state from the get-go with the COVID-19 response: on website accessibility for information and on COVID-19 infection numbers and vaccination information."

North Carolina:

The NC AT program began working on COVID-19 response a year ago, providing technical assistance to the Department of Health and Human Services on state website accessibility for COVID-19 information. The program's work has since expanded to engage private health systems to remediate the accessibility of vaccine registration sites and work with the Department of Public Health, NC Emergency Management, and other state agencies on the accessibility of the vaccination process.

New Mexico:

"We are in a collaborative group of many stakeholders working to make sure COVID-19 information and vaccine websites are accessible. We are also ensuring that A.T. and ASL interpreters are available at vaccination sites, and all alerts have ASL interpreters, including televised Governor's Executive Orders. We've adapted written information into concise wording or pictures for those with cognitive challenges. In addition, we are focused on video accessibility across the state, which is especially vital during stay-at-home orders."

Oklahoma:

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a revamping of Oklahoma ABLE Tech's accessible information technology training. Early in the pandemic (last April) the program conducted a webinar on digital accessibility to respond to the increasing reliance on digital communication. Since then, ABLE Tech has also collaborated with the Special Education Department of the state's Department of Education on a webinar on accessible digital information, trained municipal government and higher education entities, and generally updated their ICT accessibility resources pages to meet the needs of the era — renewed interest and increasing demand.

Maryland:

"MDTAP has been involved in the COVID-19 response from the very beginning with IT accessibility. We've conducted evaluations of both the Google and Apple contact tracing apps before public release, remediated the Governor's Executive Orders, and provided training to the governor's communications team. We have worked to ensure the accessibility of individual state agency COVID-19 response websites and have been closely involved in ensuring that the state's mass vaccination websites are accessible to all users, including options for requesting on-site accommodations and access to vaccination site maps in accessible formats. We've also coordinated with our agency's Director of Emergency Preparedness to provide alternate formats of all documents made available at the mass vaccination sites and ensured that each of the mass vaccination sites includes a range of assistive technology for consumers, along with signage indicating the availability of A.T."

Wisconsin:

"Located within the Department of Health Services, WisTech has a range of COVID-19 collaborations and partnerships. With other state programs and agencies, we have been working on equitable access needs, including the accessibility of the governor's executive orders. We are also focused on the challenges presented by the vaccine registry, which has revealed gaps overall for IT access, procurement practices, and content creation. These efforts and what they've revealed, have snowballed to the point we are now hiring a contract staff person to address ICT at the state level in general."

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