

The ABILITY LINK



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@disabilitylink

www.disabilitylink.org

**Advocating for human rights,
not special rights**



**disABILITY
LINK**
the center for rights & resources

Georgia State Capitol

Did you know there is a low percentage of people who actually know how to and do communicate with their legislators? disABILITY LINK is trying to change this for people with disabilities by providing trainings and events around advocating.

disABILITY LINK, consumers, and different community members consumers participated in "Our Voices, Our Votes" Days of Advocacy at the Georgia State Capitol. These events were held to communicate and educate Georgia Senators and Representatives, during the Legislative Session, about important issues for people with disabilities with emphasis on Transportation, Housing and Employment.

disABILITY LINK provided Advocacy Training classes prior to the visits to the Capitol so individuals had an opportunities to be prepared to talk about the issues as well as encouraged to share their own stories and experiences with the different topics.

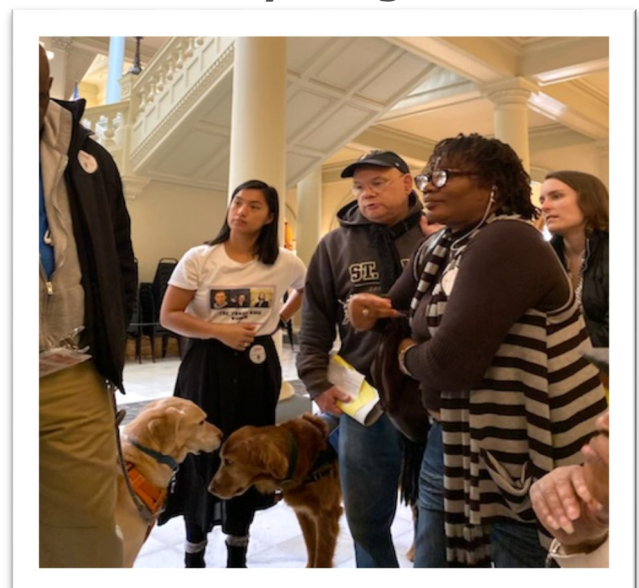
This was a great experience and even with the cold and wet weather individuals showed up to have their voice heard. This was the first time several consumers and community members had participated in this type of advocacy and reported the feeling of empowerment of having their voice heard.

Join us each month for our "Nothing About Us, Without Us" class that provides information on advocating. For more information contact Margo Waters at mwaters@disabilitylink.org

Article by Margo Waters



Picture Description: "Our Voices, Our Votes" sticker



Picture Description: disABILITY LINK's staff and consumers at the Georgia State Capitol

Empowering our Youth

Locating Avenues of Employment through Peer Support

EOY-LEAPS

disABILITY LINK provides a variety of trainings for students and young adults to gain skills to take with them while deciding on their future goals.

This last quarter, the young adults studied topics on how to complete an application and how to make friends. Students learned that they have to be a friend as well in order to have friends. Discussion was centered around the movie "Charlotte's Webb". The students engaged in discussions about their future based upon concepts from the movie. These type of activities help develop a strong foundation on relationships as they venture out into the world both socially and as it relates to employment. The more familiar each of the young adults become with the different dynamics of friendships, the quicker they will be able to distinguish between outcomes that are and are not positive. Overall, this improves the young adults ability to work towards their own independence.

Impact of COVID-19 on students and young adults:

In March, schools closed due to COVID-19, leaving students without their daily connections. disABILITY LINK responded by hosting two EOY-LEAPS hour long virtual classes for young adults to join in. We had a variety of individuals including teachers, young adults, and others join in on these events. We covered topics such as peer support, advocacy, time management from home, fact check and more. These classes are due to end in May, but will be replaced by our summer EOY-LEAPS programs. For more information contact Garrick Scott at gscott@disabilitylink.org.

Article by Garrick Scott

Picture Description:
Empowering Our Youth
Logo



Transition Fair

disABILITY LIINK participates in many events in the community providing outreach and information to people with disabilities, family members, and the community. The youth transition team had the opportunity to participate in two different transition fairs; one in Rockdale and one in DeKalb County. The fairs were geared towards sharing resources available to parents who were looking for information and resources available to support their student transition from high school to adulthood. There were a variety of different agencies there including disABILITY LINK, parent support groups, Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation, and other State agencies. The transition fairs also provided breakout sessions that were designed to give parents more detailed information as it relates to their particular student's goals as related to employment, education and social development.

The events were well attended and we (William Thomas and Garrick Scott) enjoyed providing information that supports youth with disabilities in achieving their own independent living goals.

Article by Garrick



Picture Description: William Thomas and Garrick Scott at the transition fair in Rockdale talking with a young adult and their Parent about services.



Picture Description: disABILITY LINK's booth at the transition fair in Rockdale

Martin Luther King, Jr. Parade

On January 20, 2020, disABILITY LINK staff, consumers, and community members joined many other organizations as we participated in a Parade/Peace March downtown Atlanta.

The parade was more than just walking down a street, it was about honoring and celebrating Martin Luther King, Jr as well as celebrating the civil rights movement. For disABILITY LINK, it also brought forth the opportunity to draw attention to the fact that "disABILITY Rights are Civil Rights", which we did through our chants and through our signs.

As one put it " Martin Luther King, Jr., said 'I have a dream' which resides within me as a person with a disability". What did that mean to that person? When asked they said" I have a dream that we are equal, that I have a choice to live in the community of my choice with the supports I need."

The march was well celebrated. The weather was beautiful. As I held the banner high and chanted about disABILITY Rights, I thought about where we have come from and where we need to go to make sure our rights are moving forward and not rolling back.

In this we honor and celebrate the life works' of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Article by James Turner



Picture Description: disABILITY LINK's staff, consumer, friends at the MLK Parade with some holding a banner that says disABILITY LINK the center for rights and resources and others standing behind the banner

Experience as Intern at disABILITY LINK

disABILITY LINK has given me professional opportunities and knowledge in-practice as a college student. I have learned skills such as communication, leadership, and marketing that are vital to my future career as a Social Worker. The confidence I have gained interning at this non-profit will allow me to more easily adapt to jobs in my career. I have learned how to be culturally humble and use respectful language when connecting with people with disabilities. I have had the opportunity to lead groups, such as the Independent Living Skills class on service animals and "Our Voices, Our Votes" Advocacy training. My experience working with the marketing department to help organize events such as Doggie Days and the annual gala have taught me the importance of fundraising within the non-profit sector. Other important aspects of internships are the professional network and relationships established, which relay into future opportunities for my academic life and work. My internship has been a growth experience where I have learned how to adapt to new situations and take on various responsibilities. I definitely recommend an internship to anyone looking for work experience in a field that interests them.

Article by Ava Cotliar



Picture Description: Ava Cotliar & Katrina Parsons standing next to our Gala Goal Thermostat smiling

Assistive technology

Assistive technology like AIRA and JAWS helps blind and/or visually impaired individuals to be independent. AIRA is a free app where a live agent can help an individual with living an independent life. In addition, JAWS (Job Access With Speech) helps an individual to use the computer. I, myself, use my cell phone and laptop everyday which has voice over and JAWS. Both voice over and JAWS are two audio software which allows me to use my computer and cell phone independently. With both voice over and JAWS, the individual can play with the settings and increase or decrease the speed. An individual can download various apps on their phone like Uber, Netflix, and YouTube.

We have computer classes every Wednesdays, and our computer lab is open Monday to Thursday. This quarter, the social media specialist and I assisted individuals on how to type and how to navigate the internet. During the computer class we also assisted consumers on how to download apps and how to look up various websites on the web. Another consumer is making progress on their business. We assisted them on how to make an excel sheet where they can track their expenses. We have promoted our computer class on social media and in our dates to remember.

As the Community Independent Living Specialist in training, I met with three different health care providers. They brought flyers and both disABILITY LINK and these health care providers were able to have a strong relationship. We continue to have strong relationships with our consumers at various classes and also in our community. I was able to look up more information about these health care providers on the computer with the assistance of JAWS and AIRA.

Article by Shikha Desai



Picture Description: Shikha Desai & Daurice Pearson sitting & smiling at our computer 101 class

Respectability Report:

Stimulus Package Becomes Law - Here's What It Means for People with Disabilities

The following is a summary of how the stimulus law will affect persons with disabilities and disability organizations. The report was published last Friday, March 27, by Respectability's policy lead, Philip Pauli. The Respectability website describes Respectability's role as "...ensuring children and adults with disabilities receive the education, training and employment opportunities they need to succeed."

The hard news reporting comes from a disability rights perspective, which many readers will accept and appreciate. The below report includes a call to action. CILs, SILCs, and other recipients of federal funding are cautioned to observe prohibitions against the use of federal funds for lobbying.

The text of the Respectability report is included below.


Stimulus Package Becomes Law – Here's What It Means for People with Disabilities

Washington, D.C., March 27 – President Trump signed into law today the \$2 trillion-dollar emergency stimulus aimed at propping up the economy during the current crisis. This law is unprecedented in its scope and is meant to help our nation respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Even now, government agencies are going to work to implement the new law.

Millions of Americans living with disabilities are wondering what this new law means for them and whether they will see any benefit. The short answer is yes, but how far the law will go to help people with disabilities who are uniquely at-risk to the impact of the virus remains an open question.

Checks for Individuals With and Without Disabilities

Individuals with and without disabilities who are struggling right now will be receiving a Recovery Rebate. This rebate will be a one-time cash payment sent from the government to all U.S. residents with adjusted gross income up to \$75,000 (\$150,000 if you are married), with a phase-out for incomes between \$75,000 and \$99,000 (\$150,000-\$198,000 if you are married), who are not a dependent of another taxpayer and have a Social Security Number.



The amount of that check will be \$1,200 for eligible individuals and \$2,400 for people who are married, plus \$500 per dependent child. This is being characterized as a rebate, which means it will NOT be counted against the asset limits faced by people with disabilities if spent within 12 months of receipt.

However, people with disabilities who are on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) will have to file their taxes. This could create a major burden for many of the poorest people with disabilities and other low-income communities, many of whom may find access to filling out the forms a challenge.

Unemployment Support for More Workers

This bill includes major changes and supports for the unemployment insurance (UI) system under the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). Unemployed workers with and without disabilities will receive \$600 increase in their weekly checks. The bill also creates a Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) that expands UI coverage. Critically that coverage has been expanded to include self-employed workers, gig workers, and independent contractors.

This is great news for many people with disabilities who engage in the gig economy, drive for ride-share services or run their own small businesses.

Support for Teachers and Students With Disabilities

Teachers and special educators are facing significant challenges around how to provide a free, appropriate public education to students with disabilities when you can only connect through a computer screen. The bill will give states more than \$30 billion dollars to provide Emergency Education Relief grants to help teachers and students with and without disabilities to make the switch to online learning and virtual classrooms.

These grants will specifically help teachers meet the needs of students with disabilities in these trying times. Likewise, some of those funds can be used to provide summer learning, supplemental after-school programs and online learning for students with disabilities.

Disability advocates had been very concerned that the original bill included several provisions waivers from the explicit requirements of laws such as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The new version of the bill requires the Secretary of Education to report to Congress within 30 days about where, how and why waivers are being used and students with disabilities are accessing online learning.

The Stimulus Package Helps Organizations Serving the Disabilities Community

The bill will distribute \$955 million for Aging and Disability Services Programs under the mandate of the Administrative on Community Living (ACL). That money will support nutrition programs providing people with disabilities and older Americans with food deliveries as well as direct support for family caregivers.

That amount also includes \$50 million dollars for aging and disability resource centers across the country as well as \$85 million dollars for Centers for Independent Living (CILs). Further, the bill invests \$15 million dollars to support housing specifically for people with disabilities.

Addressing the critical issue of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) who help people with disabilities, the CARES Act will now allow state Medicaid programs to pay for DSPs to help people with disabilities who end up in the hospital. This should provide some reassurance for people with disabilities who need support for activities of daily living, but many other needs regarding DSPs and maintenance of the DSP workforce through this crisis remain undressed.

What Is Missing From The Bill?

The CARES Act does not address the life or death issue of medical rationing facing the disability community in this moment of crisis. As the crisis intensified in Italy, the government rationed healthcare away from people with disabilities. This approach already is illegal under American law, but it still happens, nonetheless. In this time of crisis, the state and local leaders making on the ground decisions need to hear a clear message about treating people with disabilities equally.

The Stimulus Package Leaves Out Paid Sick Leave

Unfortunately, this bill does not include any additional provisions to help workers who do not already receive paid sick leave or who are now receiving sick leave through the earlier Families First Coronavirus Response Act.

People with disabilities must know they are secure in this time of crisis. Thus, further advocacy is needed to cover these gaps in coverage and ensure that family members who need to take leave in order to meet the critical needs of their loved ones are covered.

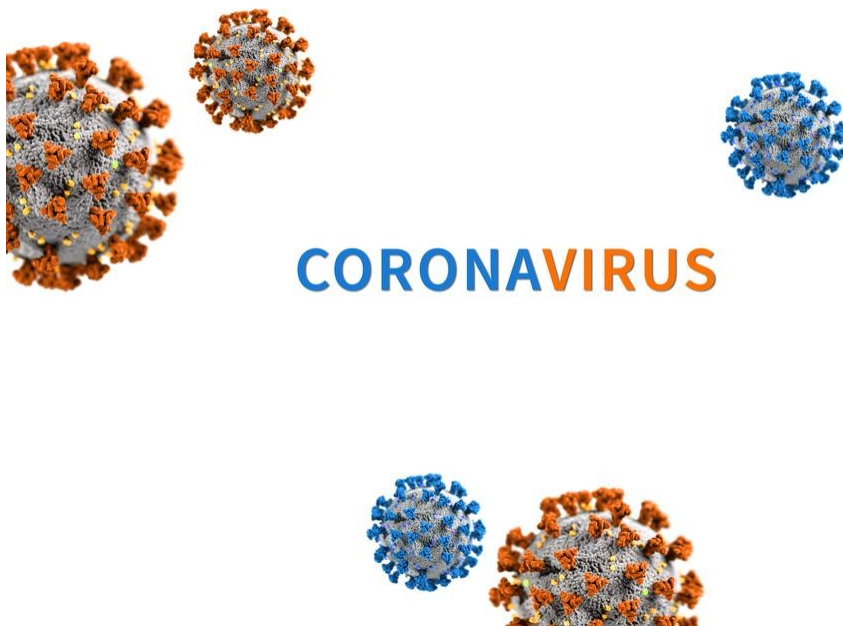
The Stimulus Package Does Nothing for Immigrants and People in the Justice System

Lastly, the bill does nothing to support some of the most vulnerable people with disabilities in America today. The bill contains no mention whatsoever about immigrants (with or without disabilities) or people who are incarcerated. Census Bureau data shows that there are more than 44 million immigrants living in the United States and out of that number, up to 6 million are probably living with a disability. How are they going to be helped or harmed by this bill? There are no clear answers yet. Likewise, there is no relief or support for the estimated 750,000 people with disabilities who are currently imprisoned.

If you would like to know more about how COVID-19 is impacting the disability community, we encourage you to review and make use of the following resources and materials:

<https://www.respectability.org/covid-19/>

<https://acl.gov/COVID-19>



Picture Description:
CoronaVirus
picture in Orange and Blue

Facts from Georgia Department of Public Health

Contact COVID-19 hotline

The State of Georgia has a new COVID-19 hotline. If you believe that you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to the novel coronavirus, please contact your primary care doctor or an urgent care clinic. Please do not show up unannounced at an emergency room or health care facility.

Hotline:

(844) 442-2681

What are coronaviruses?

Coronaviruses are a large group of viruses that can cause illness in animals and humans. Some coronaviruses commonly circulate in the United States and usually cause upper respiratory symptoms such as cough or runny nose, although some can cause more serious illness. The 2019 novel (new) coronavirus causes the illness coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

What is COVID-19?

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a disease that was identified in Wuhan, China, and is now being spread throughout the world. People are encouraged to take common-sense precautions to prevent the spread of all infectious diseases, including COVID-19.

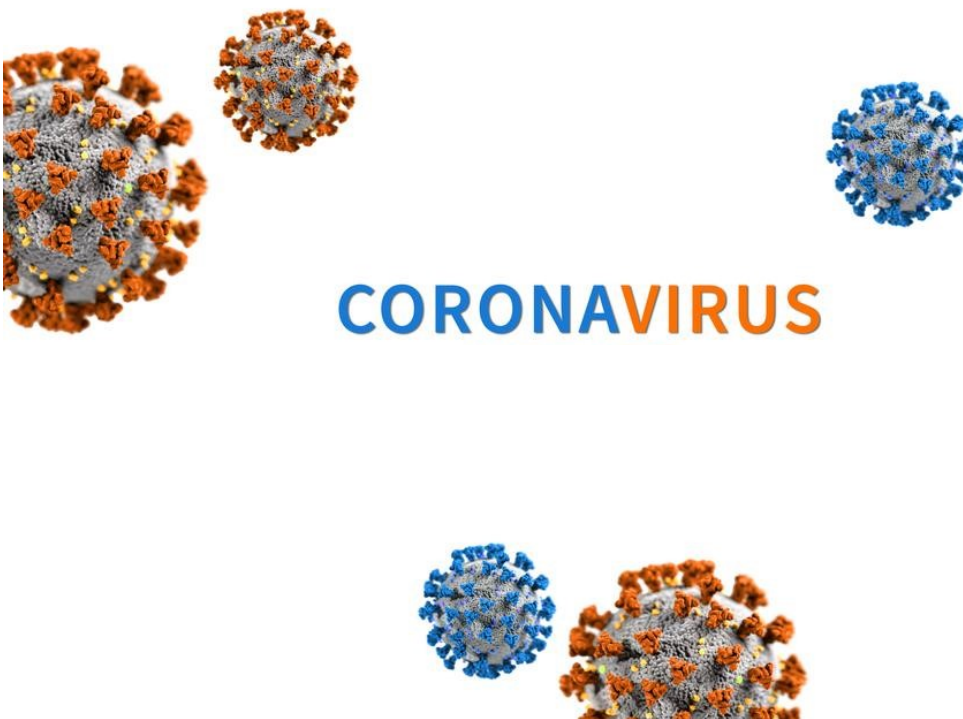
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds at a time.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are ill.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Do not reuse tissue after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched.

How does COVID-19 spread?

Coronaviruses like COVID-19 are most often spread through the air by coughing or sneezing, through close personal contact (including touching and shaking hands) or through touching your nose, mouth or eyes before washing your hands. Learn more from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) about how COVID-19 spreads and how to protect yourself and your community from getting and spreading respiratory illnesses.

Exposure and symptoms

Symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure.



Picture Description:
CoronaVirus
picture in Orange and Blue

Executive Director Message

Dear Family and Friends,

I hope everyone is safe and healthy! We are continuing to provide support to individuals with disabilities as we all navigate during these unprecedented times of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. In addition, we continue our advocacy efforts to ensure that people with disabilities are not put to the back of the line for care, support, and benefits.

As disABILITY LINK continues to monitor the information from health officials about the coronavirus (COVID-19), we are working to maintain a safe work environment and protect the health and well-being of our consumers, staff, and community. Our offices are closed to all face to face contacts and drop ins. However, all of services are continuing, just in a slightly different way. Staff are working remotely but available to provide services and supports through telephone and email. Our scheduled groups and meetings, which were always available by zoom, still are continuing that way. You can join in just by following the directions on our website, dates to remember, and this newsletter. All zoom meetings are available through video and audio, through telephone, pc, laptop, or cell phone. If you need a reasonable accommodation, please contact our office so we can ensure it is met. In addition, we have increased youth options and Health check-ins.

During this time, it is especially important to check in on your loved ones. As increasingly stringent measures are put into place to slow the spread of the coronavirus, so does the increased risks of mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. While these are often times things that individuals with disabilities face each day, it does pose an increase likelihood of higher levels during the pandemic. We live in an age where we have unprecedented communication capabilities. I encourage each of you to use these communications.

We have had to change different dates including our annual GALA. We plan on the event to be in April 2021. This will be a great time for us to come together as a community as well as a time to celebrate the ADA.

Together we will all get through these trying times. I wish you all the best and remember to stay at home when possible and be safe!

Kim Gibson

Executive Director

zoom

We are excited to announce that all of our classes held at disABILITY LINK are available through video conferencing. To participate outside of disABILITY LINK office join in from your computer, cell phone or landline phones. Webcams are not required but can be used for participation.

Join from a PC, Mac, Linux, iOS, or Android: <https://zoom.us/j/4046878890>

Or iPhone one-tap :

US: +16465588656,4046878890#

Or Telephone:

US: +1 646 558 8656

Meeting ID: 404 687 8890

Or by going to <https://zoom.us/> and click on join a meeting. Meeting ID is 404-687-8890. Please note: All video conferencing is recorded. You can join in without signing up.

For additional information and accommodations please contact our office.

Please Note: Our computer lab is open every Monday-Thursday from 10:30 am to 2:00 pm.



Please review the following list of dates for office hours, annual events, and office closings.

Normal Business Hours

Mon. – Thurs. 8:30 AM-4:30 PM
Fridays by appointment only

We will be closed on the following dates:

Please note our physical office is closed until July 6th, 2020 but we are available through phone and email.

Join us through audio and/or video conferencing for all our workshops

Join us
From personal computer, cell phone or landlines
By calling 1-646-558-8656 or by going to
<https://zoom.us/> and click on join a meeting.
Meeting ID is
404-687-8890



Picture Description: Office closed picture

Wish List:

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>QUANTITY</u>
Laptops	3
Youth Sponsorships	2

Youth Support for conferences – please contact staff for information!

Contact Us:

1901 Montreal Rd. Suite 102 Tucker, Ga 30084

404-687-8890 Voice

404-381-8117 Video

404-687-8298 Fax



@disABILITY LINK

www.disabilitylink.org

