

The ABILITY LINK



Picture Description: James Turner, Bosede Yasin & Erica Chatman sitting in front disability LINK office

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Social Media



@disabilitylink

www.disabilitylink.org

Advocating for human rights,
not special rights



Homebuyers Workshop

On June 17th, 2021, our center partnered with Metro Fair Housing to host our annual homebuyers Workshop. Presenters shared key information detailing the steps to homeownership all the way to closing on your new home. This was inclusive of Credit Management & Budgeting, the mortgage loan process, What to Expect from your Real Estate Professional, Why you Need a Home Inspection, Homeowners' Insurance, The closing Process, and of course, Fair Housing Rights.

The purpose of this workshop is to equip our community members with the necessary skillset(s) to make wise decisions related to their purchase of a home. It is also a precursor-Or requirement-If you will, to qualify for most down payment programs. We don't stop there- If you still have questions or need further assistance, you are presented with the opportunity to consult with a qualified representative in your area of concern.

Want to learn more about this program or other opportunities at disABILITY LINK? Don't hesitate to reach out to me at (404)687-8890 ext. 117 or by email at awilliams@disabilitylink.org

Article by Angela Williams

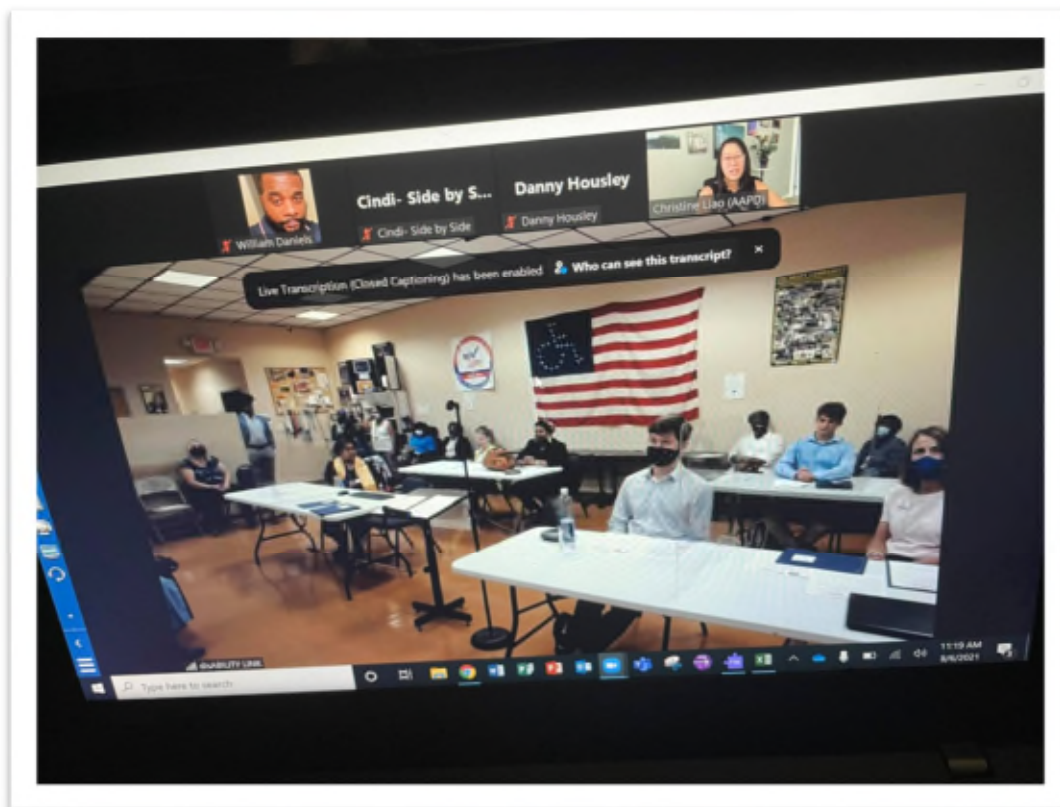


Picture Description:
Consumers sitting in
disABILITY LINK activity
room some around tables,
others in chairs or
wheelchairs. All are wearing
masks.

AAPD

Well, here is another one in the books, disABILITY LINK has done its part to make sure that students with a disability get a chance to hold meaningful internships over the summer. This summer was no exception. Nakia Kidd, who interned at Side by Side Brain Injury Clubhouse, stated that she loved being able to research and determined where Georgia ranked among other states that provide services for those individuals who have experienced a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) or an Acquired Brain Injury (ABI). Another intern, Derec Mackiewicz, was also a part of the summer internship program and stated that if he had to talk to someone who was considering applying in the future, he would recommend they do it. He met a lot of people in the disability community and made some great contacts for the future. This is the 4th year that disABILITY LINK has taken part in the AAPD program; they are only second to the program in D.C., where the program began.

Article by Garrick Scott



Picture Description: Zoom screenshot of the AAPD Interns at their graduation. The screen shot shows participants around tables in disABILITY LINK's activity room and others joining in on Zoom.

Resource Fair

disABILITY LINK has participated in many neighborhood outreach events to help inform individuals about COVID-19, the services we provide, and maintain contact in the community. We have been invited to many different events. Darnell Johnson and Jake Key attended one such event that provided resources and information to the community and various organizations. The resource fair held by "Cam and Madi's Promise Inc." in Kennesaw, GA, allowed for disABILITY LINK to set up a table and distribute information about the services we provide, hand out masks and hand sanitizer, provide information on voting as well as information on COVID-19, vaccinations, and testing. The event was well attended, and along with providing information, Jake and Darnell made many connections in the community that allowed for additional resources for consumers.

Article by Darnell Johnson & Jake Key



Picture Description:
Jake key sitting down with a mask on at the Resource Fair in front of a table with flyers on it and a tablecloth with disABILITY LINK's logo on it.

Annual Consumer Picnic

On July 16th, despite the challenges of COVID and the pandemic, we were able to host our Annual Consumer Picnic. The picnic was loaded with food, fun, and games! Some consumers provided entertainment by singing songs and getting everyone to participate.

We hosted a 50/50 raffle and raffled off several tickets to the Braves game scheduled for Sunday, August 8th, against the Nationals. The winners were beyond excited and yelled in cheers.

Yes, COVID is still here, but we were able to gather in our masks safely and use hand sanitizer to enjoy hotdogs, chips, sodas, cupcakes, cookies, and best of all....one another's company!

We had a wonderful time, and turn out that filled the building with joy and laughter, love and support!

We hope that disABILITY LINK will continue to be your outlet for Independent Living today, tomorrow and for MANY MORE days to come!

Continue to be safe, and we will see you soon!

Article by Angela Williams



Picture Description: Angela Williams sitting outside of disABILITY LINK's office smiling in behind a table with flyers on it

Empowering Our Youth

Many parents find it challenging to find things for their children (young adults) to engage in after they turn 22 and are no longer a part of the k-12 school system. They often want to consider day programs and group homes as a replacement for social interaction. What may be an alternate solution would be to have them engage in the community as a whole. disABILITY LINK offers various classes and activities designed to educate, inform, and promote peer support to the disability community. These events are found on our webpage and in our Dates to Remember monthly reminders.

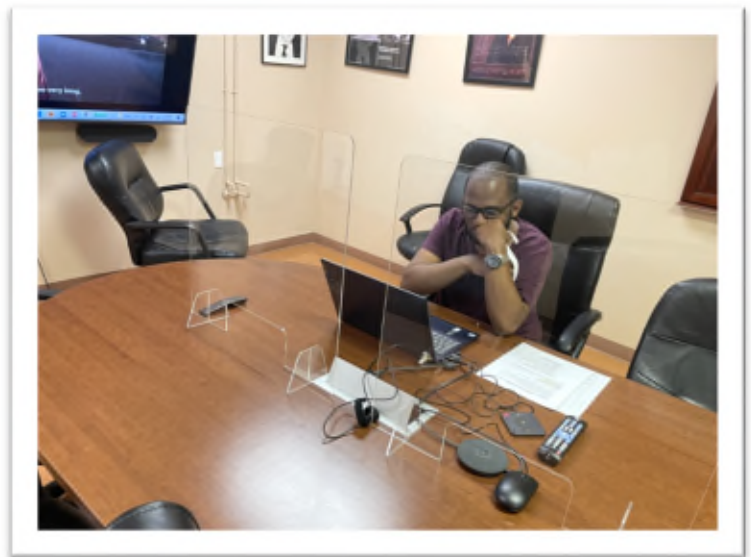
The classes and workshops are an excellent way for individuals who have moved beyond high school and falling in the gap to be involved daily while they, along with their circle of support, make a plan for the future.

What happens is parents and their children (young adults) now have the freedom to include the community as a whole to support in the endeavor to create opportunities for increased independence and connection. After all, peer support goes along with the old adage "it takes a village." This is so true, especially with the disability community, in that there are those who have lived through what the students are embarking on, and the support of their peers will go a long way in helping them in this process.

Article by Garrick Scott



Picture Description:
Garrick Scott sitting in a
chair looking at a TV



Picture Description:
A youth consumer sitting at a
table looking at a video on a laptop

Atlanta Braves

Take me out to the ballpark! This is one of my favorite events we do each year! disABILITY LINK sold tickets to the Braves game held on August 8th, 2021. The Braves played the Nationals and Won! What an exciting time! It was a bit hot, but the covered area allowed most of our group to relax and have some cooling.

Leading up to the game, disABILITY LINK staff members sold tickets, donated tickets, and had tickets sponsored. The goal was to raise a little money while bringing the community together. We had 150 seats that were filled by staff, community, consumers, and youth. It was fun social distancing while being able to socialize and spend time with family. I especially like eating the ballpark hotdogs or maybe even two of them.

I know everyone had a great time, and I look forward to next year!

A special thanks to those who made it possible for youth to attend and others who normally could not afford to go.

Article by James Turner



Picture Description: Erica Chatman, Kim Gibson & Shikha Desai at the Braves Games smiling in the food court

CITY OF CLARKSTON

"BACK TO BASICS"

Engage, Empower, Employ Career & Resource Expo

The City of Clarkston Job Fair took place on August 11, 2021, from 10 am-2 pm at the Clarkston Community Center in Clarkston, GA. It was well planned and very professional. disABILITY LINK participated with at least 26 vendors that were heavily involved with assisting people looking for jobs from every walk of life. Clarkston was partnering with WorkSource DeKalb to hold the event to make it more successful for those looking to be back in the workforce again after the effects of the coronavirus.

In addition, attendees could also receive free first-dose injections of the COVID-19 vaccine at the career expo. In Clarkston's new vaccine incentive program, residents who had a 30021 zip code received a \$50 gift card to use for local businesses.

Friends of Refugees, a Clarkston non-profit, provided educational materials and resume review services for career expo participants. The requirement was that you had to schedule an appointment with a career counselor to get further assistance.

disABILITY LINK was one of the 26 businesses. Others included Marta, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Grady Hospital, UPS, FedEx, Home Depot, and many more were at the career fair. Face masks and temperature checks were required for everyone entering the building.

"Clarkston's goal was to provide quality career opportunities for Clarkston and DeKalb County residents that connect unemployed workers with employers that are hiring and allow people to receive a livable wage," according to Mayor Beverly Burks.

"disABILITY LINK's goal was to provide career education and to support people with disabilities to use their skills and talents to become successful in their job search. We will continue to advocate, provide peer support, and make everyone aware that people with a disability have a voice.

disABILITY LINK laid out every resource we had to make this an awesome job fair. We even asked people that were searching for jobs, tell us your 30 second "Elevator Speech" (the time it takes to ride an elevator) to tell someone who you are and what do you do.

In a job search, an employer might ask questions like: What type of computer skills do you have? Or, what is your weakness, and are there any barriers that might prevent you from getting this job? Are you aware of how to set up a virtual interview? Have you done any research on the company?

These are some things you need to think and do in advance, whether it's going to a job fair or just applying for a job online, to "BE PREPARED."

Article by Michelle Watkins & Katrina Parsons



Picture Description: A black clothed table with flyers , Masks, & Candy on it. The picture was taken at the Job Fair.

What Use is Peer Support Training?

disABILITY LINK, as all Centers for Independent Living (CILs), understands that Peer Support (people with disabilities supporting one another) is fundamental for Independent Living (IL – people with disabilities working for choice and control in our everyday lives). Who better to provide support, ideas, resources and encouragement than others who have, “been there, done that?”

“Peer Supporters offer the benefit of our experiences, passing along encouragement and support for others to develop their own strategies to meet their own goals”

If the concept of peer support is so obvious what is the point of peer support training? Experience has taught us there is a big difference between trained and untrained peer support. The disABILITY LINK Peer Support Training Program covers a lot of ground:

- What is Peer Support?
- Why is Peer Support Important?
- What Knowledge and Skills Do I Need to Become a Peer Supporter?
- Listening and Communicating
- Supporting Self-Determination
- Supporting People in Finding Community Resources
- Supporting People in Finding Work Resources
- Supporting People in Developing Relationships
- Setting Boundaries as a Peer Supporter
- Knowing How and When to Ask for Help
- Peer Supporters Supporting One Another

While all aspects of the training are important, listening and communicating are essential. What we say and do as peer supporters can make all the difference!.....so we need to do it to the very best of our ability. Peer Support is not about telling someone what to do, it is using the best listening and communication skills we can, to support someone to determine their own goals and plans.

This is where Ken has a Star Trek story to share - because of the unique fashion of speech using their own mythology, the Tamaran people's communication could not be translated by the Universal Translator (5th season, episode called Darmok) – until the basis or mode of communication was understood, conversation could not occur

this is an illustration that not everyone communicates the same way, and that peer support works because there is a common point of reference, a commonality – that shared context leads to greater understanding.

Peer Support Training provides support, encouragement, ideas, time and attention (just as Peer Support itself does) for Peer Supporters to review our own biases, assumptions, misunderstandings, etc., and pay careful attention to what we say and do as Peer Supporters. The training gives us the opportunity to practice our skills, support one another, learn from one another, discuss best practices, share peer support experiences and much more, to ensure that our peer support skills are the best to serve our peers and the disability community.

This is where Ken has an army story to share – every group of people have their own particular language, jargon, labels, or acronyms, etc., (we don't think we do, but we do) - for example, in the army if you said PFC, everyone would know that you meant Private First Class, although those without a military background would not understand – peer support is about having a shared background of living with a disability, a shared understanding, and consequently connecting with one another in a way nobody else can.

The disABILITY LINK Peer Support Training Program is appropriate for people with all kinds of disability labels and experiences, for people with and without prior peer support experience, and for allies (family, friends and professionals) who support self-determination and Independent Living.

“Since we are the best experts on our needs, we need to show the solutions we want, need to be in charge of our lives, think and speak for ourselves - just as everybody else.” Adolf Ratzka Learn more about Peer Support at <http://disabilitylink.org/peer-support/>. Learn more about the disABILITY LINK Peer Support Training Program <http://disabilitylink.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/disABILITY-LINK-Peer-Support-training-info-flier.pdf>

Article by Ken Mitchell and Linda Pogue



Handling Emergency Situations at Work

First Things First

- **Remain Calm** – this may seem obvious, but it can be challenging to stay calm in the middle of an accident.
- **Communication is Key** – The old adage still holds true. If an accident occurs at work, inform the employees and emergency services immediately.
- **Create and follow Emergency Action Plan** – Have a plan ready in case of an emergency.
- **Use Your First-Aid Training** – there should be at least one first-aider on each worksite, along with any necessary first-aid equipment.
- **Practice** – Work through emergency scenarios with employees so that if the time comes and there is an incident, they are properly prepared.

Types of Emergencies

- **Natural emergencies**

Natural emergencies are the hardest to plan for and predict due to their very nature. A natural emergency could occur as a result of flooding, severe weather such as hurricanes or tornadoes, or forest fires. When planning for natural emergencies you should consider that they will likely not be limited only your workplace, which could affect logistical responses.

- **Work-related emergencies**

These are the biggest group of emergencies that a workplace may experience, these emergencies are caused by factors relating directly to the work conducted. Work-related emergencies could be things such as chemical spills, explosions, machinery malfunction, or dangerous gas releases.

- **Civil emergencies**

This final group of workplace emergencies are emergencies that stem from civil factors. These emergencies are likely to be rarer than work-related or nature emergencies, but that doesn't mean they are any less serious. Civil factors could be things such as protests, strikes, or workplace violence or harassment, either employee-to-employee or client-based.

Regardless of the type of emergency your workplace experiences, it's important to be prepared so that the damage to your employees, your customers, and your business is minimized as much as possible. Making decisions during a crisis can be tough even for the calmest level-headed among us, so having a well-thought-out emergency plan that clearly outlines the steps and actions to be taken is crucial, and also a legally required.

Handling Emergencies

• Chain of Command

Having a clear chain-of-command will help to prevent any confusion during an emergency. The response plan should include details of the appointed coordinator and a backup option. The coordinator's job will be to oversee the emergency response, communicate and liaise with internal and external emergency response and service teams, ensure that any operations or areas are shut down and secured where required, and ensure that all at-risk personnel are notified and evacuated.

• Emergency Response Personnel

Listed within the plan should be a number of designated emergency response personnel, their designated roles, and backup personnel in the case of the primary appointees being unavailable. Emergency response personnel will be responsible for dedicated tasks such as fire safety or medical assistance.

Depending on the work environment and its hazards, they could also include personnel trained in special tasks such as the handling, control, and clean-up of toxic or hazardous chemical spills.

• Emergency equipment

Being able to respond quickly to emergencies is crucial in limiting damage. The details and locations of any and all emergency equipment should be clearly listed for the benefit of both emergency response teams within the company and emergency service personnel. The location of items such as automatic external defibrillators (AED), fire extinguishers, chemical containment equipment, machinery controls/shutoffs, and water mains access points should be included here.

• Evacuation procedures

The plan should include the details of any evacuation procedures that may be required during an emergency. This section of the plan should include the details of emergency exits, the location of stairs to avoid lifts, and the location of rally points where employees should congregate once evacuated to prevent interference with emergency personnel and allow for easy head counts.

- Alarms

Another core feature of the plan should be details of the alarms that will sound during an incident, what they mean, and the expected action from employees. This is important as different actions may be required for different types of emergencies; for example, employees will be expected to evacuate during a fire, but during machinery malfunction, they may be required to lock down their area and stay in position to prevent further injury.

Sample Checklist to Consider

- **The following is a checklist to help you learn what to do in the event of an emergency:**

- Find out who to contact to get help in an emergency. Emergency numbers should be posted at each telephone. In many areas dialling 9-1-1 puts you in touch with a number of emergency services, but find out if this is the case in your work area.
- Know the address of your workplace - and how to give directions to get there - in case you have to call for emergency help. The emergency responders will need your name and the phone number at your location as well. When called to a large plant, fire fighters or ambulance crews can waste valuable time searching for the exact location of the emergency.
- It is a good idea to direct the emergency personnel to a main entrance where one of your employees can take them directly to the incident.
- Find out who to contact within the company in case of an emergency. Do you have an Emergency Preparedness Manager? Is there an internal fire brigade, Hazmat team or emergency response team? Who is in charge of medical responses?
- Know the location of emergency equipment. This may include fire extinguishers, break-glass alarms, first aid kits, safety showers, eye wash stations, chemical spill control materials and others.
- Learn how to operate any emergency equipment which you may have to use. Know which kinds of fire extinguishers to use on various kinds of fires. Make sure you know how to use the safety shower and eye wash station - even if you are frightened and temporarily blinded by a chemical splash.

- Learn CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation), as well as basic first aid. These skills sometimes make the difference between life and death when incidents occur, both at work and off the job.
- Make sure you know where to find the MSDS (Material Data Safety Sheet) for any chemical used in the workplace. These sheets provide valuable information which you will need in case of an accidental chemical exposure or spill.
- Know the evacuation route from your work area. Find at least two exits ahead of time. Also find out where you are supposed to assemble with your co-workers after you have left the building.

Article by William Thomas and Darnell Johnson



Picture Description:
A logo that says Emergency Plan

Covid-19 and Outreach

This quarter we continued focusing heavily on Outreach. Outreach events are held Tuesdays from 10:30 am to 12:00 pm in front of disABILITY LINK. We have also been going to counties covered by the DCA to spread awareness of the DCA application for rental and utility assistance. (Coweta, Rockdale, Newton, Fayette, Douglas) These outreach events are held every Wednesday from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm. At these events, we provide information about upcoming workshops, COVID-19 programs, vaccinations, voter registration, SNAP benefits, community resources and strive to connect people with our Independent Living Specialists. We have also been sure to keep up with the Coping with Coronavirus: Daily Check-in. It is held every day Monday to Thursday from 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm. During these meetings, this peer-led group provides an opportunity for individuals with disabilities to come together and gain information on the latest updates on the Coronavirus, share experiences, receive support, and learn skills to address stress and anxiety during this time. In addition, we have continued giving out limited supplies including gloves, facial masks, and hand sanitizer during all outreach events as well as in the office.

Not to be forgotten, our COVID Team Talk workshops are still being held every second and fourth Monday of the month. Many topics have included managing addictions while staying at home, the differences between the three vaccines, the Stimulus Bill, traveling safe for the holidays, and much more. We recently partnered up with the DCA (Department of Community

Affairs) to support individuals in housing applications for those who have late bills for rent and utility due to the impact of COVID-19 and the pandemic in Rockdale, Douglas, Newton, and Fayette.

As we continue to move forward with addressing the impact of COVID-19, we will continue to set up vaccine drives here at disABILITY LINK. We can even support individuals in getting vaccinated in the safety of their own homes. The COVID team here at disABILITY LINK has stayed focused on helping individuals who have been impacted by COVID in all avenues!

Article by Jake Key



Picture Description: Jake Key sitting outside of disABILITY LINK's office in behind a table with disABILITY LINK's table cloth and Logo and flyers, masks and hand sanitizers on the table.

Executive Director Message

Dear Family and Friends,

This summer has flown by, and while many have returned to live close to normal. While the COVID-19 pandemic continues to threaten all members of society, it has impacted individuals with disabilities disproportionately due to attitudinal, environmental, and institutional barriers resulting from the response.

Many individuals with disabilities have pre-existing health conditions that increase the possibility of contracting the virus, experiencing more severe symptoms upon infection, leading to elevated levels of death. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, many individuals with disabilities who are dependent on support for their daily living found themselves without support. Those living in institutions are vulnerable, as evidenced by the overwhelming numbers of deaths in residential care homes and psychiatric facilities. Barriers for individuals with disabilities in accessing health services and information have been intensified. Individuals with disabilities also continue to face discrimination and other barriers in accessing livelihood and income support, participating in online forms of education, and seeking protection from violence. Employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities have decreased due to fear of the employee with a disability having a higher risk of getting COVID-19. For many individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, neurodiverse or on the Autism Spectrum, and more, it became challenging to communicate with those wearing masks.

Yes, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted everyone, especially the overall inclusion in the plans for people with disabilities. The best approach to ensure that people with disabilities are included in talking about the inequity or differences in the COVID-19 response, ensuring that disability is part of the conversation and hearing it from those with the lived experience. Secondly, is to ensure that each of us does our role in public safety by completing the following if we are not limited due to reasonable accommodations related to disability or sincerely held religious beliefs:

1. Get vaccinated
2. Wash your hands
3. Use hand sanitizer
4. Disinfect areas
5. Wear a face mask when in public or around others
6. Stay home and away from others when sick and get a COVID-19 test if you have symptoms
7. Quarantine when needed.

Here at disABILITY LINK, we continue to provide opportunities to learn about COVID-19 and vaccinations, share in experiences, have access to masks and hand sanitizer, and offer services that include advocacy. We have limited in-person visits for a while to ensure the safety of staff, consumers, and the community, but we are only a phone call, email, or letter away.

We have all had to make substantial changes in our daily lives, such as working from home and adjusting to how we connect to others. It is up to us to ensure that policies are made with input and guidance from people with disabilities. In the end, it is my aspiration that COVID-19 will bring more understanding, inclusion, and opportunity to the disability community.

May each of you and your family members continue to be safe. We look forward to seeing you in the near future.

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://us02web.zoom.us/j/4046878890?pwd=dm9WTjA5aTBmMldscVplVTBqUzFSZz09>

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 and password is 1901. Please note: All video conferencing is recorded. You can join in without signing up.

For additional information and accommodations please contact our office.



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

Upcoming Events

October 9-Doggie Day

For more information about these events contact our office at 404-687-8890

Holiday and Office Closures

February 15th- President’s Day
May 31st- Memorial Day
July 5th- Independence Day
Sept. 6th- Labor Day
Sept. 26th through October 1st- Office paperwork catch-up
Nov. 2nd – Election Day
Nov. 11th – Veteran’s Day
Nov. 25-26th – Fall Break
December 20th through Jan. 2nd- Winter Break

disABILITY LINK is now an application site for SNAP (Federal Nutrition Assistance program). If you would like to learn more about SNAP, to be screened for eligibility, or to apply for food stamp benefits. Please contact our office at 404-687-8890 or visit our office.



Wish List:

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

Youth Support for conferences – please contact staff for information!

Contact Us:

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