

Event: Accessible Instructional Materials: The Process with GaDOE

Org: Center for Inclusive Design & Innovation – Tools for Life

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TORI: I'm going to go ahead and record so we can begin. First, I want to ask my cohosts are we ready to go?

GUY: Yes.

TORI: Recording. Good afternoon everyone my name is Tori Adamson the Outreach Specialist for Tools for Life Georgia Assistive Technology Act Program. I want to welcome you today to our webinar to talk about Accessible Educational Materials AEM.

A few things as far as housekeeping everybody is aware. This webinar is being recorded. That way we can share it to those who were not able to make it today. Also we do have live captioning. I want to thank our captionist Idellah for providing our captions today. In order to access you will go to the bottom toolbar of your screen and press CC button closed caption and you should be able to adjust as needed within the captioning settings.

If you have any questions or comments, please use the chat function to type those out and we will gladly have someone answer any questions or comments you might have. Without further ado I will pass it over to my cohosts so they can introduce themselves and we can start.

PAULA: Hello I will begin. This is Paula Gumpman. It's good to see you Guy this afternoon. I am here today to talk about accessible education materials and really I believe our goal is to give everybody a better understanding of the process involved requesting something and getting something.

Guy and the people in Tools for Life are the people who know that the best and are handling that for us at the Department of Education. We have worked with them to get the information out to you so these are the ones in the know because they do it daily. I will turn it over to Guy. Thank you for being here and thank you Tori and Martha and Idellah thank you for the captioning. Here it is turning it over to Guy Toles.

GUY: Thank you Paula. I appreciate the introduction. I appreciate the opportunity to join all of you and talk a bit about our project. To get a little more detail about the piece mentioned what name is and how to go about getting it. Requesting it. AEM. Paula will go into that.

We will go right into some slides. I the production manager for the braille unit part of CIDI. Here at Georgia Tech and home to Tools for Life. The high point I plan to hit and I apologize for the train in the background. This is not the office that didn't have somebody in it next to the railroad track. But hopefully it won't cover me up too much.

I want to start with a recap of our project. A bit more about CIDI for those of you may not know. Then speak a bit about the project and where AEM came into the contract with Tools for Life. Why we were a good fit to be that partner. Going from there.

I will also cover a bit about what we have learned thus far. Completing the deliverables that are part of the project. Then go a bit more into detail about GIMC operations the previous name for the center that we are charged with managing operations of.

Then go more into depth with accessible education materials and hopefully enlighten everyone or give more information about what's available. What's available from the center and who is eligible for it and how to go about accessing the materials.

What all goes into the process. We will touch on a bit of future goals for the relationship and the plans we have for next year. We will also touch on how you might play a role in helping us succeed and reaching some of those goals.

CIDI is the Center for Inclusive Design and Innovation. There is a picture that you see on the right our building in Atlanta. It's on the western edge of the campus close to the campus recreation center. We are basically a research and service supercenter that is made from two centers combined.

We have several units within CIDI now. Tools for Life being one of those. Captioning & Described Media, e-text, ICT and of course braille. That is to name a few. That is certainly not all. With this specific partnership, most of you probably know but it started out the original partnership was with Tools for Life.

Providing AT training and technical assistance services. AT universal design software program and assistive technology lending library. In year 3 of the project, they added braille and AEM services and management of the operations of GIMC.

What we focus on with our side was using our model for my unit and how we have grown and became a national model that we provided braille for agencies and school systems and government agencies, K-12, and colleges around US. Also transitioned the operations of GIMC over to CIDI. Smoothly without interruption.

The goal was for us to increase access for the K-12 system in Georgia. We went a long way with some of these. But we will touch on those more in detail as we move forward. With increased access, CIDI and the braille unit in the braille department as I mentioned provides braille for braille readers around US.

The book contract we had with the National Library Service; the University System of Georgia were we provide braille for anyone who requests from Disability Services. This is part of the system. Also colleges around the US and other government agencies and more and more K-12 systems around the country.

Our specialty is tactile graphics and STEM content we are able to convert because of the expertise on staff. Also the relationships we have with prison programs and the main one being the one in Texas. We also partner with Georgia Department of Corrections where we work or run and operate a program in a facility in Swainsboro, Georgia.

You see a picture here of the team. That was when we did a tour of the Academy, I believe. On that team, we have someone with one certification and all the certifications are represented in the industry from formats to music.

Many years of producing braille experience. Mass-producing and also tactile graphics are represented by somebody in that photo. With the project, we have had some successes from the AEM side. We were able to transition GIMC operation smoothly without interruption the services.

We have improve timeliness of AEM delivery. Definitely have provided more STEM content materials. In a timely manner. We've done this for schools around the State of Georgia. In talking with vision coordinators and teachers for the visually impaired and all the players around the state and providing these deliverables, what we have learned is it might not hurt to take a step back.

Speak in more detail and communicate as far as what has been or what is available from the center and has been available. How to go about or who's eligible for those services. How to access and go through that in more detail. That is what the next few slides I hope will do at least a bit. Also we are continuing to look to improve the online ordering experience.

Our IT team has been meeting with some of the teachers with the visually impaired around the state. They have been working on getting close to an application that can be released at least from a beta standpoint. So we can get user feedback.

The end goal of making it easier for teachers to see what's available and to make requests and help their students. The main part of the project from the AEM standpoint and braille standpoint, if the operation of the Georgia Instructional Materials Center. It has been around for many years. Of course, it's within GaDOE Division for Special Education Services and Supports.

They have provided accessible education materials and access to a clearinghouse for districts to excess quota funds. Much of the operation has and will continue to be operating out of the Georgia Academy for the Blind down in Macon. On the right you see some photos from the repository. All of the braille books and some of the AT that is available that Justin is holding on the right.

In taking on the operations, we thought it was important to be able to bring in some of the expertise that was at DOE. Because these folks are the ones who have been doing the work for years and years and have been doing an awesome job. The teachers around the state know them and have worked with them.

Eddie Burley is the warehouse supervisor. Justin Harris digital media specialist. Both of those young men are down in Macon the majority of the time. To come up on occasion when we have a lot of production and help us in that area. Yanique Norman some of you may have spoken with her. She has done a lot of assistance with the ordering APH and utilizing the quota funds.

What the center, it's important to notate there are 2 main funding sources. They fund the operations IDEA in the federal quota fun. Going along with that, there are 2 types of registrations. They have 2 sets of rules for eligibility and 2 processes to make requests.

In both of those funds the main function is to provide Accessible Educational Materials and serving as a clearinghouse for the federal quota funding. Paula will continue to serve as the ex officio trustee for the quota funds. But I and those 3 individuals Yanique, Eddie and Justin service ordering assistance when it comes to that funding. How are we doing on time Tori?

TORI: You've got about 15 minutes.

GUY: Okay. What you see here, let me back up a bit. How can I access the services? Patrons as in you all, Georgia public and charter school employees serving students are eligible for GIMC patron accounts. Parents or guardians or homeschool students and representatives from private school serving students are also eligible for a patron account.

The patron account is the beginning, the first step. Accounts are established and district administrators are contacted once the registration is received. There you see a screenshot of the current online ordering and registration system. The first step is to follow the link. You see the highlighted portion that you complete that is required information.

This can be done anytime throughout the year to request an account or update an existing one. The forms can all be asked six access bear from that webpage. I sure will be sharing the slideshow in here is the link to get to the online ordering page.

With the federal quota funds, that registration or request for that account can be done at the other page but the actual registration has to be tied to a student that was registered as part of the census which takes place from January 1 through I think mid-February or maybe into March.

Federal quota funds must be requested for student that was registered as a part of the census. What you see here is the distribution map or the map of the US and how the census came out. It was directly impacting how much each state receives and can be utilized to purchase items from APH or quota fund eligible. As mentioned, Paula is the ex officio. She has the management of accounts 40 and 41 of quota funds.

As far as who is eligible, from a student standpoint, students who are blind, have a visual impairment or perceptual reading disability which cannot be improved to visual function. I won't read it word for word. Or is otherwise unable through physical disability to hold or manipulate a book or to focus or move the eyes to the extent that would be normally acceptable for reading regardless of any other disability.

That would be those who are eligible for GIMC services. And again, that registration can be done throughout the year. With the federal quota, the registry students who made meet eligibility criteria that were eligible for GIMC services, but then also what the additional registering as part of the census are eligible for the quota funds. There you have the specifics as far as the level of blindness that is required as part of the registration in the census.

PAULA: Guy let me interrupt for second referencing the federal quota funds for the annual meeting is coming up October 1. We may be hearing more information about those folks that will be eligible for quota funded material. As soon as we hear that information, we will be sharing that. I think we will hear more about it at the annual meeting. I will find out October 1. So please watch for information to come out in reference to eligible students if there has been a change. Again that change will come from the federal government

JENNIFER: This is Jennifer Ro. Just to confirm and clarify a few questions in the chat, as guy mentioned I think there are 2 different types of students. All students have a print disability can be registered for GIMC as a patron. There are the students who are not blind or who do not have low vision who do not qualify for quota funds but can still register for the repository. Is that correct?

GUY: Yes for this first page, that is for GIMC services. Not being registered as a census would not impact them being able to access the fees from repository that are readily available. Available down in Macon.

JENNIFER: You guys.

GUY: Did you have another question?

TORI: I think Jennifer just answered the questions in the chat. Never mind please continue.

PAULA: I would register your students. We just need students to be registered. Register them if you feel like the Georgia Instructional Materials Center could be a support in reference to getting materials. The other side of that is they may be eligible for APH funding until you register in we don't know.

There's another step we have to do to get them into APH funding stream. Do not overthink the issue. We want everybody to register GIMC and if they need digital text or large print or a wide variety of thing, maybe they may not be eligible for APH tools but register them. We will follow-up if we need to.

GUY: Right that is the main thing in the first step that opened the door. There is no harm in it. Get the students registered. That was early on in the discussions that they wanted to help as many of you help your students and as many people as we could.

That is the main goal. As Paula said the key is to get the registration out of the way that way you have access to the system and can make requests. That gets the ball rolling with everything. What is available? Accessible Educational Materials that can be braille, larger in large print, audio, and digital text.

With items from APH, educational support items, vision related accessible technology or access technology. They are all production toolkits and equipment. Both of those items can also be requested for someone for student who did not qualify for APH funds. If it's something we have already obtained in previous years that was available when they requested it.

We have one available in the library. That could be low vision devices and embossers and Pix Blaster which I will talk about later. As well as some of the other equipment. Also software training. In the last few weeks we have been informed that braille can actually be purchased using quota funds from APH and there are certain stipulations on that.

But that was another way for Paula and us to be able to stretch the funding as far as it will go. Basically mirrored information to remember for ordering materials. Again, quota funds can only be spent on students. Be on the lookout for the communication around the time of the census in January, working with Justin and Paula and getting that process completed. It is a very important thing.

It let Congress know how many students out there and how much funding are is needed to operate the program and grow it. I mentioned about the items previously acquired. With the things that we've loaned out we want them returned of course once you're finished with them.

We have some items where the intent was a limit of six months. But we have been talking and changing some of these to allow you to keep them longer. We want the equipment out there and wanted to be used. We want to support the students. There is no win for us to have it in the repository. But again, if you return them that is a big thing that we run into. Please return the items to the Academy and not our offices in Atlanta.

The address is there at the bottom of the screen. Ordering books. Again the online ordering page student registration online ordering page which was shown earlier, is where you can login and go to the ordering page. Textbook search by ISBN. If it is supplemental material, you would just use the title. But most will probably be specific to your school.

But again it could be something that is used in multiple schools in the state. But again used the title to search those. Equipment and supplies. Search by APH catalog number. That means you must be familiar with going into access the catalog and finding the number. Or if you have ordered enough you may know the number. That is something we are looking at improving and making it easier for you to request those without numbers.

Some of the equipment that is available either in the library repository or from APH. Low vision is Jupiter Portable Magnifier and MATT Connect also braille teaching and writing devices pick these may be on back-order Polly and braille with Mantis Q40 and Chameleon 20.

As you saw in the previous slide reproduction is the Perkins Brailler a lot of those in the repository. We order them every year and the Page Blaster is the embosser that APH partnered with a group to customize as an APH product but it's like an index. In the Pix Blaster is it makes the embosser's elite 100. I think that was modeled after the Columbia. Software includes JAWS and Zoom text which can be requested from APH and quota funds eligible.

Special request. If there is a request that is made. If it's something that hasn't been indexed or exist in the library, it means will have to be special request and that is not part of the process when entering the online ordering system. You will be notified via email once the request has been processed.

Especially with braille, we ask you do your best to try to get access to a copy of the print and especially the older books. We have run into a lot of issues that allow us to purchase the book ourselves but even with some older books they are not available. They're not available online. The more types you can provide the faster we can get that process going.

As you know it takes a lot of time and is time-consuming. Special requests for braille. Every project we have a production timeline. I do not ask for pacing guides that still on the website has been asked for in the past. Pacing guides are not helpful for braille producers. It's more about the content and how much time the teacher should spend in each area.

What we need is very simple. If you're covering any sections in numerical order or out of numeric order we need to know. Any kind of basic estimate as far as when you will hit 2 or 3, etc. It's pretty simple and we want to be sure the materials are completed before it is covered in class. As much of that information as you can provide, the better.

I will say orders that are placed at the end of the school year for the next fall, you probably will not get a lot of questions from us about the timelines. Because we consider it an early order. We will get a large jump on producing it. Those that are placed in mid-June or closer to school start dates, we need more help as far as expected turnaround time.

PAULA: I absolutely agree that the earlier the better. If you know we are doing a specific ELA reading series in high school and you know the student will start in August, let's make those requests in January and February so we can be on the upfront. They may want to know if they are reading *The Scarlet Letter* first or whatever another book is that you would be reading in high school. I cannot think of it off the top but going to that process earlier is better.

We are at the state money to note that our kids have looked in a timely matter but we can get that turned around in a matter of 3 weeks. We have to think about what it looks like from beginning to end. I appreciate with guy had to say that he doesn't need a pacing guide but we must have in order. What chapters are you doing out of order so they can ensure what you get what you need.

GUY: Thank you Paula. Especially those we can get in February and March; those are times when our capacity we have a lot more capacity during that. We can really get ahead of the game when we get orders for the following fall at that time period. That is very important to consider.

With special requests, I want to touch on our internal process. When it gets to the special request point, what we are actually doing is checking the repository and if it's not indexed we know does not exist there. CIDI has a repository as well whether it large print or braille.

We have the Louis Database and we were checking to see if another agency has produced a book. We are looking and it's better to get it faster if you can purchase it already transcribed. All that has to be done is the embossing part.

In any one of those steps if we find it's already been produced, we will begin the procurement process to get the funds in the purchases made so we can get the materials and check them for quality and get them onward to you.

Again it's faster than transcribing something from you or creating the large print version of new. But it still time-consuming process even if it's not necessarily braille. Just making the purchases and being part of the state entity whether it is DOE or USG it takes time. So again the earlier the better.

That is kind of the process we use. We are always working to use the resources out there and available around the country. It works well for a lot of different states and helps ensure we can get the materials to you faster.

PAULA: Let's say a district has a digital copy of the book that they need in an alternate format. Would providing a digital copy be advantageous to you as opposed to sending a book that you have to cut?

GUY: Yes and I should've clarified that. Paula, I appreciate you bringing it up. Really the terminology used at the center is in print. But PDF is definitely preferable. Actually it's getting to the point where we are getting PDFs much more than we get print. It does save time because we get to print and we have to top and scan and OCR considered even if it's at the picture of a PDF, it saves us from having to have a new shipment than the manual process. The electronic file is preferable.

I mentioned a few of the resources. Everybody should be familiar with book shares which is a great resource. NIMAC we are checking every time we get a request because those files help us be able to produce the books alternative formats. Faster.

It can help improve quality because a lot of the formatting and the conversion is in the braille translation software that works well with the files. We basically want to look at those NIMAC files and we hope will be able to work with the publisher when the NIMAC file does not exist because they are supposed to be creating this version of their books.

Of course Tools for Life. These are all the links when you get the slides. GIMC has FAQ page APH hive is a good resource to have a lot of information about assistive technology equipment and how to use it. CIDIAccess has a lot of great quick tip videos and things of that nature that you can access on YouTube.

PAULA: Guy I know we are going over a bit but I want to comment on the comment that Jennifer Ro added to the chat. Absolutely we are looking at wanting to support student that may not be visually impaired or blind GIMC can help support that if they have a reading disability. When you think about a reading disability, think about digital text and that is something we want to be able to help and support.

Be thinking about that. It is not highly and wholly focused on low vision and students better functioning at the level of blindness or blindness only. We will support individuals with physical impairments as well and reading disabilities. I wanted to be sure that get out. Thank you Jennifer.



GUY: Definitely. Within the next year as mentioned we are working on the application and we hope to get something out that can be tested and improved and hopefully by the end of next year we will have something functional that will help make it easier for you to see what is available and make those requests. So we can help you assist your students.

E-text, electronic text, and some of the things Paula just mentioned, we are really going to look at trying to bring in and add some products specific to the e-text unit we have at CIDI. They have been providing electronic text, high-quality electronic text for well over a decade for University System of Georgia and colleges around the United States.

I think we will try to look at adding them for different formats. Will send more information out about that as we are ready to release it next year. That is something I hope you will utilize and will be pleased with the end product.

We will continue to look at ways that we can support Paula and her team in areas of training. We want you to take advantage of what is there with GIMC and CIDI partnership. We have enjoyed being part of it and excited to see where it can go. We sent out a survey and those who took the time to complete the survey giving us important information about where to go next and how we're doing thus far; we want to know how we can better serve you.

We are lucky to have Paula and her team putting you all first. They want to make it easier for you to be able to do what you do and want to help them figure out how to do that. We will be a GVEST. Please come by and see us in the exhibit hall. Or maybe just around the event. Hopefully we will see a lot of you out there.

This is our contact information. Online ordering and registration system. There is our email address specific if you have customer support needs for technical support needs. There is the phone number for Yanique Norman and the people down in Macon, if you have questions regarding equipment return or something of that nature.

We will be sharing the slides and you will have this information. Are there any more questions? Other than that I appreciate the opportunity and I thank you for joining us on a late Thursday afternoon.

TORI: I don't think we have any other questions. I think this wraps up. Paula?

PAULA: I think it wraps it up and I think everybody for being here today. I know we went over a few minutes longer than typical but we wanted to be sure you have this information specific to GIMC and Tools for Life and CIDI. How we can better support you and your students. Thank you Tori and Guy and Martha and Jennifer.

GUY: Everybody have a great afternoon.

TORI: Thank you everybody for joining.

Session Ended.

*This is a Captioned transcript provided by CIDI to facilitate communication accessibility and is not a verbatim record of the classroom session.*