

Webinar: CDC Cat 3 Webinar 4 - Mental Health

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>> Carolyn Philips: All right. It is 2:00. We will go ahead and get started.

>> Carolyn Philips: Welcome, everyone.. Thank you for being with us today as we take a closer look at mental health and resilience within the disability community during COVID-19. This is an extremely hot topic and a timely topic. We're very excited to be able to bring this information to you. I often say time is the most valuable thing we've got. So thank you for spending this time with us as we move through this important conversation and share resources. My name is Carolyn Philips and I'm the codirector of the center here at Georgia Tech. The center for inclusive design and innovation within the college of design. I also have the great privilege of working with your awesome presenters today. Danny and Kate and Susanna for a wealth of information. I've been working with all of them for many years. I have learned so much from all of them. I'm going to have each of them introduce themselves. Danny.

>> Danny Housley: I'm the assistive technology acquisition manager within Tools for Life within center for inclusive design and innovation. I work a lot with individuals throughout the state when it comes to acquiring assistive

technology to actually get some of the things we demonstrate. I work a lot within the community outside of my work in a lot of different roles. So I'm happy to be here today to share resources and things that I've learned throughout this time.

>> Carolyn Philips: Thank you so much Danny. Kate I'm so glad that you're with us today.

>> Kate Brady: Thank you, Carolyn. We're so excited to be joining you and Danny and Susanna in this webinar. We value Tools for Life and the CDC as partners. I work at the Georgia council on developmental disabilities. I manage public policy transition employment and self-advocacy work. I look forward to talking with you more.

>> Carolyn Philips: We are lucky to have you in our state. I know you have done all kinds of work on a national level and I'm thrilled you're back in Atlanta. I'm going to turn it over to Susanna.

>> Susanna Miller-Raines: Hi, I'm the operations coordinator at the center for leadership and disability at Georgia State University. One of the hats I wear is I'm a social worker by training, clinical social worker. I'm the social work coordinator at adult disability medical home -- we're on a mental health call. Sorry. I support our patients who have intellectual and mental health disabilities with community resources. I'm a youth mental health aid instructor. I've been doing that for the last 3 years. I've been

coordinating the COVID-19 calls for [indistinct speech]. I'm excited to talk about resources and share information.

>> Carolyn Philips: Thank you so much.

Congratulations again on being the board of AUCD. On the national board. I'm so impressed with Kate and Susanna and Danny and the work that they started working on getting right into action and seeing it was back in February that you immediately were like mental health and started jumping in on this. I have a deep respect for folks who are there at the right time and right place. I want to spotlight the good work you have done. I wanted to also thank Hannah for being our ASL interpreter. So talented. Also Heather. We believe in as being as accessible as possible. So you're going to see that as something we don't just talk about, but we actually do. So as we move through this I want you to be aware that we have both of those ways that folks can engage. I'm going to turn it to the fabulous Liz Persaud who will talk about tips for this session.

>> Liz Persaud: Hey, everyone. I'm the program and outreach manager at Tools for Life and CIDI. I'm excited to bring all of you this webinar. Quick tips for today's session and then we'll jump into the content. Today's webinar is being recorded. The webinar recording, transcript and accessible presentation and anything else that needs to be wrapped up in this package will be made available to you. That will be posted

on a Georgia Tech website focused on this project. We'll get some of our cohosted to type that in the chat area. We have Heather providing captioning today. You can select your captions within zoom by selecting show subtitles or click on this link to pull up a separate window. If you're not actively speaking, please mute your microphone. We have our cohost keeping track of everything as well too. We have a lot of people in the room which we're excited about and we want to make sure our presenters are able to be heard by everyone. Please utilize the chat window to post questions and comments. We're hearing from a bunch of you already. Thank you so much. If you have any questions, comments, feel free to pop them in the chat and between myself and other co-hosts and presenters will keep an eye on it. There will be dedicated time at the end of the session focused on Q&A. So you'll have the opportunity to use the raise your hand feature to unmute your microphone and talk to any of our presenters as well.

Thank you. Let's jump to the next slide. I want to let everyone know we're offered continuing education credits for this webinar and all the other webinars in this series. That is also true if you are unable to make the live session, your colleagues, your community members and you're able to view an archive you can access those. We're offering CEUs and CRCs. If you're interested in receiving CEUs or CRCs I believe you already indicated that on registration but please feel free to

reach out to the training e-mail. That's training @ gatfl.gatech.edu. Of course eligible participants will typically receive credits 2-6 weeks after the webinar. I'm turning this back over.

>> Carolyn Philips: Thank you, Liz. A huge thank you to our funder. The CDC foundation is the whole reason why this webinar series is made possible, along with technical assistance from the Centers for Disease Control. You'll hear us refer back to the guidance from the CDC because there's such excellent guidance there and continues to move the whole conversation and keep us up to date. So thank you so much to the CDC foundation. We'll move to the next slide.

We're going to talk today about COVID-19 pandemic as it continues to have an impact on our lives and mental health. No doubt about that. Many people are experiencing a heightened anxiety, social and physical disconnection. We're concerned obviously. Some of the unique challenges and surprising outcomes have emerged within the disability community. A lot of solutions happening there. While many folks with disabilities have faced considerable social and mental health challenges, others are reported experiencing increased inclusion and more connectedness than before. That's a very exciting moment to pay attention to and what lessons can we learn and there have been great articles about that in mainstream media.

So, our session description. This webinar, what we're going to do is explore various factors for understanding mental health and resilience of folks with disabilities during COVID-19 pandemic from their perspective, from our perspective. As a person with disabilities, how does that manifest and look like and I'm glad we have folks that are here with us. I'm happy to share and other folks are too.

Discussion will also center around how service providers can access resources to support their services while learning how to recognize the signs of mental health difficulties within the disability community. Participants, you, will actually receive tips and resources and guidance from improving mental health and resilience.

Our learning objectives. What we want you to get from this is identify 3 impacts of COVID-19 on mental health from the perspective of those of us individuals with disabilities. Be able to describe 3 tips for building resilience and 3 resources to support mental health and overall health for folks with disabilities and recognize early signs of mental health distress.

As I said, we are happy to be here with you today from the center for inclusive design and innovation here at Georgia Tech. We are all about accessibility. We say accessibility made smart focused on accessibility consulting and braille services, captioning services, obviously looking at

e-text and all kinds of work in that space of assistive technology. There's so much intersection there when it comes to working with individuals with disabilities and really moving that forward to help everyone have mental health addressed and also give support wherever we can in building resilience. I'm going to turn it to Danny who will talk about Tools for Life and a whole lot more about some of the solutions. Danny, take it away.

>> Danny Housley: At Tools for Life we are a part of the center for inclusive design and innovation. Up here is our mission statement. Tools for Life we are the assistive technology act program. We're dedicating increasing access and acquisition of assistive technology devices and services for Georgians of all ages and disabilities so they can live, learn, work and play independently in the communities of their choice. We take a person-centered approach. We focus on the individual and identify the barriers that they're encountering to help find solutions for that. There's an image here of Tori on the left, myself in the middle and Liz Persaud on the right. This was during another webinar that we were giving clearly a while back since we're sitting beside each other. So that's Tools for Life and we're going to introduce you to our partners that will be working with us today.

>> Susanna Miller-Raines: This is Susanna Miller-Raines and I work at the Center for Leadership in

Disability within the school of public health. We are one of two centers of excellence on disabilities. We're at Georgia state. Our mission is to translate research into sustainable community practices for people with disabilities and their families. We are all charged to do different areas of work to support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities throughout our state and we also are excited to have the opportunity to have great collaborations here in Georgia. I'll turn it over to Kate to talk about the Georgia council.

>> Kate Brady: Thank you, Susanna. So the Georgia council on developmental disabilities is a part of the federally mandated DD network. Our mission is to bring about social and policy change that promotes opportunities for people with developmental disabilities and their families to live, learn, work, play and worship in Georgia communities. DD councils and ours in particular does its work through individual advocacy support through the development of self-advocacy. We also are the legislative arm of the DD network. So we have a role in educating policy make makers about the issues that are important to the community and function in a role to disseminate information through quarterly magazine and newsletter and other publications and also function as a grant maker. So DD counselors fund and seed new innovative practices that meet the needs of people with disabilities.

>> Danny Housley: So today we're going to be covering a lot of resources and don't panic. All those resources will be found at the end of the presentation and you're going to have access to this as well. So if we go quickly or jump over something, we'll make sure you have access to all the wonderful resources that we're going to be discussing. First, I want to talk about tools to support mental health. This information comes from the Mayo Clinic. It details impacts that stress can have on different parts of our lives. You know, your body. There's physiological effects like headaches, muscle tension, fatigue, problems with sleeping. It can impact your mood, feelings of anxiety, sadness, anger, feeling overwhelmed. There's behavioral effects. It can be over or under eating, outbursts withdrawal. There are techniques available to help. We look at some of these impacts because stress during these times can really impact our relationships and impact our enjoyment of things that we normally took pleasure in. We're going to look at some things that are unique stressors to the disability community. These are items identified both by individuals that I work with the credit able program and in my advocacy work and the DD network calls. Some of the barriers are increased isolation. That's a result of transit cuts. That's mass transit. Here in Atlanta we have MARTA. I think it was 80% of the bus lines were cut. And train service was impacted. So some people can't get on a fixed route

bus to go to the grocery store. Safety of ride share, and inaccessibility of ride share are a concern. Not everybody can get into an Uber a Lyft. Because of disability mobility or impact of income. A low ability of care attendants. That can be in your home setting or a hospital or lots of different areas. So sometimes the attendants weren't available because they had an exposure and that can put the person they're working with at risk. So that's a big issue. Lack of internet and phone access. We look at that in rural communities where there was already issues with getting connections, but then you look at the financial impact. There's a lot of different increased costs with living during a pandemic whether that's attendant care or having to pay for grocery delivery. Then lack of assistive technology. Not everybody can afford the technology they need or maybe they were relying on the library service or another option to have access to the technologies they needed to check e-mail and stay connected with friends and family.

>> Kate Brady: Danny, I can add a little bit about the impact on care attendants. Would that be helpful?

>> Danny Housley: Yes.

>> Kate Brady: One of the things we've been looking at the counsel is the impact that the pandemic has had on care attendants or direct service professionals. We're finding that the burden of PPE, the risk of infecting one another, the demands on a caregiver who isn't always paid an

excellent wage to be aware of their activities outside of work such that they don't put at risk a person they work for and with. These are tremendous new and different stressors. We've also seen a difference as Danny mentioned in the availability because the job presents its own complexities. It requires a lot of proximity. So it can be perceived as a difficult role during a pandemic. I think there's been a tremendous impact on that very critical part of people's lives. I'll turn it over to Susanna to talk about the next bullets.

>> Susanna Miller-Raines: The next few are just really important things to think about because these things were already hard before the pandemic and the pandemic made them much harder. The lack of affordable and accessible nutrition. A lot of individuals who are marginalized live in areas that are food deserts or don't have access to healthy nutrition. So, it's been really difficult for people to get the nutrients they need. The lack of safe and accessible communication, especially for people who don't use formal language and use assistive technology and other means to communicate has been definitely an extra stressor. Complications to educational supports. We hear about this a whole lot. It is very difficult sometimes to have the educational interventions that individuals need through IDA or their 504 plans in order to get the supports that they need in a virtual environment, and if there's lack of internet and

phone access then it has to be in a distance learning environment which is a whole other arena on how to figure out educational settings and at home settings with other supports that aren't being done in real-time with teachers and paraprofessionals. So its caused a lot of strain on students with disabilities.

>> Danny Housley: And there are a lot of really good online resources when we look at these. A lot of these were difficult barriers when there wasn't a pandemic going on. Now we have a whole different layer of complications. A really good resource to explore is from the CDC. It's their coping with stress resource page. On here they have some specific resources for dealing with stress during an infectious does he see outbreak or pandemic. They also have coping with stress in a healthy way so yourself and the community are stronger. We talked about the impacts of stress and how to mitigate that. On the resource page you can find mental health and stress management resources. There's also resources for people who are currently in crisis. You have suicide prevention resources and also information for recovering from COVID-19 and ending home isolation which is a whole different can of worms to get into.

So, check out that resource page. Again this is at the end of the presentation when you do get this that's a hot link to click on.

So some other tips to look at on how to cope with

stress. One is to avoid media that invokes it. Taking a break from the news, social media, podcasts that may focus on that. Find time for yourself. Just quiet time can be wonderful because often times we tend to fixate on things that make us more anxious. Here lately we've had not only a pandemic but an election and a lot of other factors that have invoked a lot of anxiety. So avoiding the media. Focus on your physical health. Looking at incorporating workouts. Starting an exercise routine. Focus on mindfulness. Thinking about meditation and expressing gratitude. Then changing up your eating habits. Planning healthy meals and snacks. A lot of us are working from home, learning from home and it's really easy to go to comfort things, but when you focus on changing your eating habits it can impact a lot of different areas in life. And getting enough sleep. Making sure that you're going to bed at a reasonable time. Turning off the media so you are not fixating and can go to sleep. Make sure you're making time to connect with others and do things you enjoy. Our stress and anxiety often take us out of the things we love to do. So take time to crochet or draw or listen to music. Do things that bring you joy. This is from the national institute of mental health. This is reinforcing some of these items. This is good to print out and post in places you can see it. Take breaks from the news. Make time to unwind. Set goals and priorities. Take care of your body. Connect with others. Focus on the facts. Those are things

that sometimes we need a little reminding of. Looking over and seeing "take a break from the news." Great. Let me turn that app off and turn on music that I like. That's a resource you can download and print out and you'll find that at the end.

So, refocusing things towards gratitude. Often times it's easy to focus on the negative. Gratitude requires practice. It's a skill. It's more than just a buzz word. I took that directly from the resource here from the American Heart Association. There's a link for thankfulness. The page is called thankfulness how gratitude can help your health. Often times there's a negativity bias. If you practice on looking at things you're grateful for, you can have increased physiological effects. Things like lower blood pressure and reduced stress. That's what we want. You can also share your areas of gratitude in a journal or with family and friends through a zoom call or at the dinner table if you're living with folks. Think about what did your body do for you today? What are you grateful for? I went out for a walk and I was able to clock a mile or two when you were out there. What did you do that you enjoyed today? There's always things we like and are proud of. Whom do you look forward to connecting with. That could be now, a week from now, via zoom or on the phone or through a letter. Thinking about what -- who do we look forward to connecting with.

There's a lot of things to be grateful for. It's

a matter of practicing the skill and making it part of your everyday routine. There's additional resources on the How Right Now on Gratitude. You can get tips and tricks on practicing gratitude. I'm going to talk about tools for relaxation as the AT act we want to share some of the wonderful technologies and things that are out there to help with our mindfulness and gratitude and doing those things that you enjoy.

So the following slides as a reminder contain a variety of options but they are not an exhaustive list. This is not an endorsement of any particular product, service or organization. Our goal with these upcoming resources are to let you know what are broad categories and options out there.

So first up is music. This is one that is very near and dear to me. I love music. It brings me a lot of comfort. There are other effects with music. There's effects on the memory. People with dementia have been calmed by this. The part of our brain that associates memories and music is not impacted by dementia.

If I'm out for a walk and listening to something that's up beat, I tend to increase my pace. If you listen to something slow and relaxing you'll go slower. That could be good for meditation or gratitude. It can help reduce anxiety. Music impacts our moods in a lot of different ways. Some options up here there's Apple Music. There's Spotify. You can use that through the app or a web browser. Then there's YouTube

music as well. They have playlists already established. To the right of the text we have the icons for Apple, Spotify and YouTube.

Another option is drawing. Positive effects of drawing are improved mood, concentration, reduction of anxiety. It can lead to an emotional release. Sometimes working through our anxiety, putting that into art can make a difference. There's often -- think of artist throughout time. They created their pieces to release emotion. I love to draw with pen and paper and ink and car coal and all that. I also enjoy using drawing apps on my iPad. To the right here there's an image of Eeyore from Winnie the Pooh. This is something I drew. The text says could be worse, not sure how, but it could. I used the procreate app. The great thing about using an app is you don't have to shell out money for art supplies and you get all the positive effects of drawing. Sketchbook pro is another option out there. It has a small fee associated with it, but you have a lot of variety when it comes to the medium you're replicating on the screen, as well as for someone who has low vision like myself. I enjoy this because I can zoom in and I don't have to spend extra money on resources when I'm already spending extra money on grocery delivery. So a good way of unwinding.

Aside from drawing there's coloring. Benefits it can help you work on motor skills. It relaxes the amygdala. It can help you sleep. There's an image of someone using an iPad

and Apple pencil and they're coloring in a mandala. You have options. You can have an app where you tap the area and it will fill the color in or you can swipe back and forth as if you're coloring on a piece of paper. Sometimes different people depending on their physical ability prefer those different options. So some examples to look into are happy color, color by number. Colorfy and the mandala coloring pages. So you have a lot of ability to change the interaction with these apps. It can really be a comforting things to take part in.

About a year or 2 ago adult coloring books became very popular. So this is another way of practicing some different mandalas and not having to shell out extra money for paper and pencils.

Changing up your environment and design can also make a difference. Smart home technology can help make a relaxing environment. We have an image of a room that has different colored lights in it. They're watching a TV. They probably have smart speakers set up there. Lights can really play a big impact on your mood. Smart speakers again whether that's in Amazon echo or a Google Nest or an Apple home pod. Having those to control your lights and smart thermostat. If you go through your energy agency they sometimes have discounts. My apartment when I wasn't normally here during the day gets very bright and hot is something I learned. So I invested in curtains. I was able to adjust the natural light

and I have smart lights in my home as well. I was able to adjust those to a color pallet that reduced eye strain and provided comfort when I needed it during the pandemic.

Next up we're going to look at resources for resilience. I'm going to turn things over to Susanna because I'm sure you have heard enough of me for a moment.

>> Susanna Miller-Raines: Thanks, Danny. Coloring and crafting are some of my favorite ways to distress. Today we wanted to talk to you, so you are aware of signs and symptoms of mental distress. It's important to think about these things within yourself, within your loved ones and seeing how they're doing and what the impact of the pandemic on isolation and other factors that are weighing on all of us and how they're manifesting themselves. This is not an exhaustive list. Feeling sad or down. Someone having confused thinking or reduced ability to concentrate. Excessive fears or worries or extreme feelings of guilt. Extreme mood changes of highs and lows. Withdrawal from friends and activities. Significant tiredness, low energy or problems sleeping. Detachment from reality, paranoia or hallucinations. Inability to cope with daily problems. Trouble understanding or relating to situations. Problems with alcohol or drug use. Major changes in eating habits. Sex drive changes, excessive anger, hostility or violence and suicidal thinking. We want to think about how they impact someone's ability to function in the world. We all have

moments when we're sad or down. It's natural to feel that way. When it impacts your ability to live, love, do your job, go to school someone of these that might seem minor it's the impact that they have on your daily life. So be mindful of these things. When you have some of these things cooccurring, they can be greater.

>> Danny Housley: This next slide is a quote from Dr. Adolf Ratzka who started the independent living institute. He brought the independent living movement to Europe. He worked with Ed Roberts. This quote says since we're 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 does.

So in a time when we're facing greater restrictions, people with disabilities are feeling even more as if things are out of their control when it comes to -- we talked about the availability of attendants and nutritious foods and things. Turning to working with other individuals with disabilities and getting peer support can be really important.

So peer support is the foundation of independent living philosophy. At its core, independent living philosophy is people with disabilities being in charge of their lives. Decide how the services are going to be provided, having

community access and having the same rights as someone else. There's an image to the right that are two people that are manual wheelchair users and a gentleman using a white cane and they're connecting and having a conversation. This is a group from California. Being able to connect with people with disabilities can be a powerful experience. The national federation of the blind and the American council of the blind are two of the bigger organizations for people with low vision. I sit on the board for the NFB. It's an important resource for our community to share information, to share loss, to grieve together for some of the folks we have lost in the community. To share strategies and what worked well for you. The national association of the deaf is another organization specifically focused on people with hearing loss. Being able to come together and communicate in sign language. To share resources. It's about connecting with other people with similar disabilities or life experiences. A.

>> Kate Brady: Some of the others you'll see here are people first and people first is a national organization of folks with disabilities. Also the autistic self-advocacy network. Both have Georgia chapters. ASAN is known for recognizing the interest of adults and children with autism who refer to themselves as autistic and want to be connected and supported in a way that doesn't incorporate cure modalities. ADAPT. AADAPT was critical in the independent living movement

and is known for organizing action -- action style advocacy. Such as showing up at the capital and really helping the public understand issues on the community. And uniting for change folks may be less familiar with. I'll plunk the link in the chat for everyone. That's a Georgia specific consortium that the Georgia council provided funding to so advocates can organize around the state and connect with one another and have the opportunity to set their own priorities. So all of these entities have a little bit different identities but are wonderful venues for connecting with peers and articulating one's needs and participating in advocacy. I'll turn it over to Susanna.

>> Susanna Miller-Raines: I'll talk about the national alliance on mental illness. They do a wide variety of things. Peer support is one of them. They do a lot of education. There's affiliate organizations based within states and communities. They do a lot of different advocacy around things such as public policy. They have a help line that I'll share in a bit. They put out public awareness campaigns to demystify mental illness.

>> Kate Brady: The respect institute I'm familiar with through work. They provide support to folks who are in recovery either from substance abuse or mental health disabilities to reflect on, capture and tell their stories in powerful ways. I've had the privilege of listening to many

institute graduates who offer to their peers and also to the general public a slice of their life experience. I'll put that in the chat also if you're interested in inviting a Respect Institute speaker to an event.

>> Danny Housley: In Georgia, we helped with expanding their focus on cross disability. The focus on one point was primarily mental health and recovery. We saw a great need and opportunity for expansion. So disability link here in Atlanta helped with expand some of those focuses.

>> Kate Brady: That's wonderful.

>> Danny Housley: Yeah. So the power of connection. There have been good things that have come about when it comes to making connections. So tools that people with disabilities especially in rural communicates have used to stay connected are now commonly being used. Video calling platforms are now being used more often. Teleconferencing platforms. With the NFB we've been using conference calls way before it was cool to connect with each other both across the state and the country. When it comes to things like cooperative gaming. Connecting with someone through the internet to play a game together. That could be in an NORPG or anything where you're working together. A lot of people are playing Uno online. There's a service called Jack box games. You can connect with people within your household and within abroad. We're also including a link to an article from the New York Times called

when the world shut down, they saw it open. An advocate here in Georgia talks about the opportunities that we listed using those video calling, teleconferencing platforms to make connections. Now that it's not just a niche thing. We want to make sure even after this we want to be able to stay connected.

So state support agencies. There's a lot of different things we have listed here. The great thing is the things that we're going to list here we're going to talk about the ones for Georgia, but these are applicable to other states. Every state will have a Technology Act. Some version of an organization that serves people with visual disabilities. I'll let Kate talk about DD councils.

>> Kate Brady: So there's a developmental disability council in every state. They all act to provide funding for new innovative practices. They all do policy work. There's likely a department of aging and a state agency for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. I can turn it back to you Danny and then I'll grab the end there.

>> Danny Housley: So a lot of states also have those centers for the visually impaired. These are organizations that are designed to provide supports to people with vision loss. That can be vocational, daily living, independent living. When you look into protection and advocacy programs, those are available widely and they're there to make sure people's civil rights are being protected. Sometimes they

have programs to move people out of nursing institutions and back into the community. It's making sure that our rights as people with disabilities are secured. Here in Georgia I have worked with our protection and advocacy programs in regard to voting and getting people the ability to live in communities of their choice.

>> Kate Brady: Someone mentioned centers for independent living and the Helen Keller institute when provides leadership around issues of deafness and for folks that are blind.

>> Danny Housley: Yeah. Every state and territory has a state-wide independent living council. In Georgia we have a very large swath of the state that is not covered by any particular center for independent living. You look down to Florida and they have full coverage in their state. Every state will have the state-wide independent living council that looks at the broad coverage and then coverage will be a little different depending on where you are.

>> Kate Brady: A few things you see on the list are state agencies that provide publicly funded services. In Georgia we have the department of behavioral health and developmental disabilities. They provide services such as individualized placement and support and supported employment. Of course Department of Education has responsibility for our public education system. As is the case in many states, that

functionality is driven a lot by local school systems. And the Vocational Rehabilitation agency that here in Georgia is called Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation agency or GVRA. It provides support for individuals of any disability to return to work, to get a job, to transition from high school or to keep a job. And those supports can be in a variety of forms. They include technology, job development services, job seeking services, explorations of what your job interests may be, and they can engage as early as the age of 14. I'll turn it to Susanna to talk about UCEDDs.

>> Susanna Miller-Raines: Every state has at least one UCEDD. I work at one of the two university centers. We try to be the bridge of academia and best practices to the community. That can play role in direct service or through information dissemination, through research projects, research to practice, model demonstration projects. So we want to help influence best practices in the arena.

>> Kate Brady: That last one is work incentive planning and assistance programs. If you're not familiar with those, they provide grass roots one on one guidance to individuals who receive social security benefits to anticipate and plan for the impacts of benefits when returning to work or with earned income. So they're a wonderful resource and are available nationally.

>> Danny Housley: So our next slide here this is

going to be one of those quick slides because I want to get into the good stuff. This is good stuff too. We look at Georgia interagency efforts. This is a list of organizations that during the pandemic have really come together to create something wonderful. We have our DD council, Arc Georgia, Center for Leadership in Disability, Georgia advocacy office, spectrum support, Tools for Life, FOCUS and the down syndrome association of America. We have come together, and Susanna and Kate were some of the master minds of our COVID-19DD network calls. I'll turn it over to them to go into details.

>> Susanna Miller-Raines: We took a card from the play book of Arizona. They started off this idea. We saw a need to have a contracted information that people could understand in plain language to get away from the noise and speculations and the facts. Our DD act programs here in Georgia have worked well together on a lot of different projects. So this was one where we were able to mobilize quickly and bring on partners that respect other disabilities in other arenas to host. We were doing weekly calls and as the pandemic has gone on as information has slowed down when it all started there was a barrage of information. So we wanted to help people through that. As things slowed down, our calls slowed down. We talked about issues related to COVID-19 and people with disabilities and their families. We really wanted to provide clear information and resources to community. If you're interested in

learning more about our calls, GCDD has a landing page. It's GCDD.org/GADD-network. Kate anything else you want to say?

>> Kate Brady: No. To the focus in the chat, thank you. Someone put it in the chat.

>> Susanna Miller-Raines: As we talked about earlier, I'm a mental health first aid instructor. It really is -- /WHRAUT we're trying to do is made mental health first aid just as common as CPR. Mental health first aid is a skills base training course that teaches people about mental health and substance abuse issues. It helps you reach out and provide help to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem or experiencing a crisis. You can find out more at mentalhealthfirstaid.org. There's also a youth mental health first aid as well and for those who are Spanish speaking. I'm the point of contact for this training. I'll put my e-mail in the chat box.

>> Danny Housley: So this I'm going to go over quickly. These are just going over how some of the different organizations have utilized connection options to make sure that as a community we're still being informed and staying connected with one another. Disability link has done a lot of peer support events. The national federation of the blind has had a successful conference. Also the independent living organizations have come together to have inclusive spaces. I want to touch on grief and loss. We're running out of time.

>> Susanna Miller-Raines: I can do that. I'm good at talking quickly and concisely. In general, there is no road map for grief or loss. Everyone grieves differently. This unique situation we found ourselves in many people are experiencing grief and loss during the COVID-19 pandemic and it also looks different than if it would if we weren't in the middle of a pandemic. I attended my first funeral via Facebook live and it was very different. There are resources through the CDC on coping and grief and loss that there's a link to. Just ideas of what individuals can do to honor and remember the death of loved ones during this time especially now. So make services available via Facebook live or other streaming means. Have a virtual gathering to share memories or slide show. Enjoy a favorite meal, snack or drinks that the loved one enjoyed. Light a candle or have a picture at the table during a holiday or come up with a tradition to honor your loved one. My mother died about 15 years ago and I buy yellow roses every day on her birthday and death day.

>> Danny Housley: We want today include some mental health resources. We've got really good stuff from NAMI and the suicide prevention line. Then the SAMSA distress help line. Those are available for you to explore.

>> Susanna Miller-Raines: I want to say something real quick. If people don't feel comfort using the phone calling there's the text line and the GCAL has an app that

people can use. It can be people that you text or write to in an app.

>> Danny Housley: All right. We have a slide of additional resources that you can look into for stress management, mental health. Especially COVID-19 specific resources. So definitely check those out after the presentation. I'm going to turn things over to Liz to wrap it up.

>> Liz Persaud: Thank you so much Danny, Susanna and Kate. This webinar was chalk full of awesome resources. We wanted to remind everyone that we have two more webinars in this series. We'll launch in January; we have making social media accessible for people with disabilities and in early February we'll take a deeper dive of employers considering needs of people with disabilities during COVID-19. We have our cohost that typed this into the chat. Thank you Sam for doing that. Please take a few moments to fill out this survey. Thank you for the thoughtful conversation. Awesome sharing of resources asking questions and sharing comments to everyone in the chat in today's webinar. Just want to thank our presenters. Thank you to Hannah for providing our interpreting and to Heather at CIDI for captioning as well too. Carolyn, anything you want to wrap up with?

>> Carolyn Phillips: No. Thank you all. I learned so much and it's been great to see everything that's going on

in the chat. I'm glad to hear this was right on track. Thank you Kate, Susanna, Liz and Danny and I appreciate Hannah and Heather. Everybody stay safe and be well.