

Workplace Accommodation Webinar

Work ACCESS Tools for Life

12:30 pm - 2:00 pm

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MODERATOR: It is we can take a couple of more minutes to see who else will join if you would like. I think we should wait another minute or two.

>> Two folks who are already in, just really quick, you will not have microphone rights. We will take a brief pause to allow other folks to join us, we will get started in probably two to three minutes. For those of you joining we were just talking about Hurricane Zeta and damage in Atlanta, a lot of us are moving through.

MODERATOR: It is 1:03, would we like to go ahead and get started? I think so. Go ahead. Tori, you want to get us going? Sure. I will go ahead and start recording.

TORI HUGHES: Good afternoon everyone, we are happy to have you join us. I am in Georgia's Assistive Technology Act Program, Tools for Life Program accommodation series. We are introducing Work ACCESS tool we have been developing to help people find accommodation solutions in workplace. A couple of housekeeping things, we do not have microphone rights for participants, if you have any questions or comments please locate

chat box in bottom of your screen, it is little purple tab you can click on and type away any questions or comments that you have. This is also being recorded and will be available on Tools for Life website -- excuse me, webinar archives within week or so, so you can go back and watch.

We were very excited to say we are offering continuing education credits for this webinar. We will have that information for you at the end. We are so excited to offer CEU's and CRC's. On that note, I will toss over to our presenters Carolyn Phillips and Karen Milchus. Thank you.

KAREN MILCHUS: Hi, I am Karen, I will be talking about this project we are working on to develop tools to help employers and employees to make more decisions.

>> This is part of our webinar we have been conducting up until this point we have been focused on assistive software knowledge. With today's session, we are shifting our focus to another project we have, which is Work ACCESS project. These projects are funded by grants of National Institution on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research, which is part of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. We would like to thank them for their support.

>> Today, we are going to be talking about what Work ACCESS is, a little bit about what problem that we are trying to address. Carolyn problem presenting overview of system and talking about some of our design specs. I will be talking about how we develop this system and some of our lessons learned as well as some other steps.

We will finish off with some other related resources that you might find useful and learning objectives. Participants will be able to identify three things that make Work ACCESS

unique, and participants will be able to identify three accommodation scenarios. With that I will turn it over to Carolyn

CAROLYN PHILLIPS: Thank you for that, thank you Tori for setting us off. I appreciate doing captioning for us. I want to applaud writing grant proposal for Work ACCESS, it is much needed. I am excited to service [Inaudible] with you and excited about what we are doing with this important and incredible project that really is going to be helping so many people. What we know, when we are talking about, you know, what is big question, why is this even out there? You know, there's we reached out to employers and employees and talked about several things with them because we wanted to look at what's really needed and also got some good information as to how are people making determinations and how are accommodations being looked at, and who makes decisions.

In survey we got some interested results, one of those points is one third of employees received accommodations through rehabilitation. As we go through this presentation, you will hear us use some acronyms, VR is one. 46% through employer supports programs and 19% identified their own accommodations. Great thing about this tool, it meets people where they are. As employers are trying to support their employees and make those informed decisions with them, this tool will ultimately be that solution site, which is great. Same thing with helping VR, but also helping individuals. I am one of those individuals by way. I have learning disabilities that absolutely affect me in pretty much every aspect in my life, definitely workplace. I understand 19% is coming up with their own accommodations.

>> After this 47% of them asked for additional ones because of changing needs. Being one that adapts and understand

that technology needs involved and employees we change, just being aware of that right there. 47% of respondent asked for additional.

>> Additionally, employees receiving services seldom run. Understanding who is making decisions, where is decision being made, and also how it is not just one decision, it is ongoing conversation, ongoing accommodation process, if you will. So, when we are talking about what is the need, what would help solve, and what would help meet people where they need to be so they can be as successful as possible in the workplace. Ultimately, this took a lot of creativity and listening that Karen and our team has done. An online web site can be mobile app also, worksite accessible tool for employees to use together is where we landed. We are talking about what is Work ACCESS? It is support system, definitely going to be that tool, making as simple as possible and you are going to get to see some of what that layout looks like and get to see kind of how we incorporated universal design principles and corporate feedback we are getting from focus groups, and we what learned along way.

>> Some of general specifications, as this whole project was evolved, and we are getting to this tool, assessment questions is where we start collecting information about individual, environment and external factors, trying to keep as simple as possible. There's simple models out there, looking at individual environment, activity and external factor.

>> Rule set, decision tree links basically difficulty with performing activities to accommodations suggestion. Developing that tool when it comes to looking at back-end, rule set and decision tree has been really cool aspect of this project in getting folks involved in that and really coming up with

excellent solutions as result. Considering broad range of accommodations, they include looking at assistive technology, home modifications strategy and universal features. Recommendations definitely prioritized are based on individual and environmental activities, and also external factors as well as evidence of effectiveness. I think that's important when we are talking about, and I have heard that from folks and I know Karen has too, is being able to have something that's, you know, based on some evidence of effectiveness and what really does work.

>> Also, something that's consistently identifying same problems and solutions as would be identified by accommodation's expert, making sure it is reliable, consistent and something you would find when you are in that space of making those decisions. I think that's very important.

>> There are various scenarios we were looking at. I could be new employee who needs new accommodations, we see that all time. It could be exiting employee's abilities or that their work tasks have changed. We see that scenario happen all time, and then of course technology changes. Our accommodations, could they improve? Is there better options available? I can tell you from personal perspective that absolutely has happened, and that's something that has continued to help me evolve in my own work assistive technology accommodations universal design implication, being able to make all of those changes, based on evolution of technology. Also, employee and employer would use together to choose options. We see this definitely as collaboration. That's great way of looking at how you can have a guided conversation. Accommodation expert uses it for suggestions. Sometimes I know, as somebody who's been practitioner in field for years, I often wish I could have somebody who knew a little bit more or give a

little more input, this tool absolutely confers in that way, and employer using to prepare for meeting with accommodation expert just thinking about all different ways this tool can be used, different ways it can be used and how it can be used.

So, when we are thinking about Work ACCESS and the initial activities and looking at, you know, this through lens after office focus, there are various tasks and actives that we looked at and a lot of this was determined by asking folks, okay, what's most important? We needed a place to start, and we wanted to make sure we could get answers to folks in way that would be meaningful. Some of top things folks wanted to know about and where we were starting looking around moving around workplace, that's issue, not as much as it has been because a lot of us are working virtually due to Covid. That's definitely still issue. How do you deal with door, stairs, how do you handle exits and entrances. Yes, Karen made great point, when we were first working on this it was preCovid, now a lot of our life is during Covid, post Covid. I do think it is extremely relevant, and we got some great information around that when it comes to accommodation. Like I said, there's a lot of people still in workplace and need to think about how we move around.

>> Also using workspace, we have folks who have years of experience helping us use workstation, communicate face to face. What are some accommodations that can assist. Looking at reading and writing when it comes to print and all of those things, using a computer, obviously a lot of accommodations and things to think about.

>> Planning workday, remembering appointments sequences, some of executive organizing, those things. Learning work tasks and thinking about some of these.

>> You are some of first folks to actually get to see this. This is interface, and there's lot of thought that has gone into this. We want to make sure it is something easy to navigate and even fun, that's some of feedback we have gotten, this is actually fun. So simple, clear intuitive and making sure that you would be able to get answers that you need.

>> So, on the menu, the main up top, it is very simple. We have home, log out, about and contact. There's basically you know, it is very friendly interface, which we would expect, you know, folks to have account if you will. You can start new assessment and also see previous assessment. Say, you are HR professional and you have several folks you are working with. You can look at old and new assessment. You can complete follow up; reason why that's so important, it helps us in making more informed decisions and choice moving forward with accommodation, thinking about that.

>> Also, various scenarios, over to right, there's statement, suppose an employee with low vision is having difficulty with reading, so thinking about that and considered that. As I said, the interface is very friendly and within this slide, move to next slide, it has completion percentage that's something that people had asked for. Also, it asks very simple which activities need accommodation? Let's say it is about facility access workspace communication using tools. You can go in and say the issue that I need to think about could be reading and writing, printing text. You can actually select next or go backward. Once again, just trying to keep interface very simple and very interactive. Once again, you can see that we have the completion 27% is what it says here. It gives you that bar and so, simple again. I need supports four. So seeing even with

glasses and contacts, that's the little piece that we have here and it gives some choices here, where you would actually select. That helps narrow down those accommodations and gives the tool and even more information so it can help with analytics. So choices here would be can see clearly, but sensitive to light. So we know that's issue. Can see clearly, but difficult to distinguish colors that would give us other options or accommodations. Can see some what, but has difficulty seeing details. Those are whole bunch of other accommodation solutions as we are fine tuning and getting more of that information, if you were to select that.

>> Last one, person is blind and has very limited use of vision. That would take you to other solutions.

>> The selection very clean would get you to next phase and then you can just hit next. So, when we are looking at, once again, this screen shows 45% completion just giving you where you are at this, looking at what problems do you have with this? Can see somewhat, but has difficulty seeing details is what we selected on last one. So, when you are looking at, okay tell us more. What exactly, we are just fine tuning here. First is color contrast makes it difficult to see. Next when we selected next two, glare lighting makes it difficult or strains eyes. Next one we selected text size makes print difficult to see or strains eye. This tells us more about individual, and ultimately more about accommodation and helps us form what solutions are selected.

>> Next other options would be document texts or graphics cannot be seen, it can be abundant reasons why that would be. We did not select that one. (See Board). That might be important, that would take us to another line of thought what would be going on with this scenario. Very simple click, click, click answer those questions and we get to 100% completion that



you see on top and solutions. So 12 were identified when we are talking about task of reading print here, and some of things folks selected, specifically looking at glare and or lighting levels, make documents difficult to see. So, there are these very important and very helpful suggestions, solutions. You can change amount and direction of lighting. A lot of people don't think about that. So, you know, having this, okay, let's try that. You can also change the text or image, color contrast. A lot of people are not aware you can do that. You can also shade employees' eyes. We have seen where some folks just wearing hat, ball cap, changing and allowing some of that change over employees eyes can help with glare. Thinking about some of those solutions.

>> Next option, what are some of issues with reading print; text too small. Some of options, change text sometime or increase text. Increasing it can really make a difference and present information with sound or speech. Sound/speech: As I said this is awesome for this clean interface. It is shown for each problem, that's important when we were talking to folks about what is it that you need, very specific associated with problem. Also, solution can be filtered by adding other factors. Remember back a couple of slides ago, I was saying you could select different factors, and sure enough it will come up with other options and other solutions. I just absolutely love this interface and really love how effective this tool is. Just thinking about, you know getting the solutions and answers so quickly it is very, very cool.

>> So then, when we are talking about the task and looking at the approach, present information with sound/speech, remember that was one of our options. You can get more detailed here, use recording sound material, there's whole bunch out there.

Use built in screen reading features, use dedicated screen reading software, use OCR to listen to document, use computer OCR, character recognition to listen to document. Listen to text descriptions of graphics or use auditory graphing software.

>> Thing that's so powerful about this tool, a lot of times people don't realize this exists. I have a lot of colleagues in HR, they say I wish we could have a lot of informed in solutions as we try to help employees figure out what's best solution. Being able to go through this and find solutions quickly, it's powerful. Once again, some are low cost solutions, also thinking about what's built in. A lot of people don't realize what is built in. For this tool in particular, we took a deeper dive just even bringing it up, like Oh, here's things built in.

>> So using built in features is one of big things that was recommended there, and once again fine tuning where you can use electronic document and screen reading feature built into computer. We even give you example narrator is example of that. Once again helps employer, HR folks and what we are talking about previously.

>> If person has not used before it may be helpful. When we were working on developing this we wanted to make sure folks understand importance of assisted technology from specialist and knowing when to refer and just knowing, hey there's whole bunch of folks out there that can help.

>> Another recommendation, get training on how to use software. If not, if person has not used before, another simple kind of solution and just reminder, just headphones for privacy to avoid disturbing other workers. I know sometimes we forget, if you have not used these kind of tools you may forget or not know,

I need to think about that. If I'm using screen reader software, and it is reading everything out loud that can be problem.

>> Also, this is solution for print and computer access. Very cool, solution and fine tuning it. The whole piece here, when is expert needed. Very, very, good. This can also include links to additional information. We heard that would be very very helpful for a lot of folks and add to printable favorite list, which I think is another very important feature, and one we have been absolutely thinking about and wanted to make sure folks were aware of.

>> Some of other specifications that we wanted to consider and that we have been thinking about when it comes to looking at the design specification, warning whoever user is when it becomes too complicated and expert needs to be involved. A lot of folks have asked that, that old saying if we don't know, we don't know. This Work ACCESS tool is one of those that can help you know and alert that even though we are not making recommendation, it is there to give you guidance and also hey, you need to involve someone else at this point. I think that's vile.

>> Links to articles and videos that are accommodations and information about specific products, we know that's important and there's whole bunch out there and also having vetted so you are not having to do just a general search. Some people said they were not sure what terms to use, so this helps, and research to help with funding, acquisition is important, it is not just knowing solutions out there, but how do you acquire and implement. We want to make sure solutions are not abandoned so that helps us get closer to solutions folks really would need if making sure it is utilized.

>> Prompts and information appropriate for users

varying degree of expertise, that's another specification. You can actually be prompted and information comes in that's appropriate that helps you as you are moving through.

>> Also, interface is designed for maximum use. So much thought has gone into this. It is great to have input from various folks across country.

>> Karen, you are making a great point, you know, I guess in chat, you said in general, basically not providing, we don't provide details when it comes to pricing on individual products. I just heard that with my screen reader. Thank you for putting in chat. We focus more on product type and also features to look for.

>> So, that's very important point. Thank you Karen. Keep that in mind too, as you are searching and looking for this. As I said, often a lot of times we are finding it is strategy along with assistive technology solution.

>> As I said, it is awesome system and I am very excited about. I will turn over to Karen so she can talk about development and lessons learned.

KAREN MILCHUS: I want to emphasize this is assessment tool to figure out what kind of problems you are having, and what solutions will work better, point you in that direction. It is not product catalog. We don't have that specifics, mostly because it disappears really fast.

>> What I will be talking about next is how we develop the system and some of lessons that we have learned along way. We had two tasks: First we looked at develop content and decision tree and how we were developing interface and programming in. If for content we drafted initial set of problems and solutions using our AT experts. Thank Carolyn and her Georgia life experts.

>> As we go along, and once we think we have most of problems and solutions covered we upped up for crowd sourcing. That's idea of using that we don't have all answers ourselves, let's open up to other people who might have additional information they can contribute to problem. For that, we have two steps; first one, we have been holding group interviews with national experts. We bring them together for about hour and half, give them section of our decision tree and ask them to let us know what did we miss? What should have been included? Does it work? Is there additional points that we convey to people they might need to think about when trying to choose one thing v. another? We do all that. Then our last step, we go and -- I should mention for that activity we've recruited a lot of people from ATX program, thank you AP3 for advertising. We have had many people participate, we also had a lot of people who are sort of repeat customers, if you will. If you are one of them, thank you very much. Our last step there has to do with validating what we get. We want to make sure what we end up with really does fit.

>> So we are conducting online surveys and asking people to provide some of that information. Problem that we run into, just looking at our decision tree for moving around the workplace, between moving through hallways and across rooms and between floors, unlocking doors and going through, dealing with elevators and all that, it is about 40 pages long. We are breaking this up into smaller parts and asking people to take a look at particular task assigned to them, and let us know did we miss anything. Then within that task we assign a couple of problems and again ask them did we miss anything. For solutions we did have listed, we ask them whether it is appropriate to include or whether we need to do anything about it's clarity,

whether it is understandable or whether we need to reword anything?

>> There is one other bullet I probably should have listed in here and Carolyn sort of alluded to it. We are asking people after they complete an assessment with us, come back three months later and tell us how things went, was accommodation successful? We will be using that information to form our algorithm. That is what makes this system unique. We have not ran into anyone else doing that.

>> We started getting input from some of other presentations we have been making ATIA, and CSUN. Another ATIA, we held focus group of what people wanted to see in tool and provide information for our design. We are about ready to start usability testing. I was hoping I could announce today, but we have a few more steps before we are ready. That will be coming very soon. We will be doing some field testing as well. Our plan originally is that people would be comparing their use of tool to a standard assessment. We wanted to see whether or not they came up with same problems, identify same solution and then Covid happened, and what people are doing lately in field is not standard assessment, because it is not in field. We will be doing some smaller. We will be doing more elaborate next year in field.

>> Finally, we are collecting feedback, how they liked tool, what we need to change in interface, things like that.

>> We have learned a number of lessons along way. Some of them had to do with how accommodations are provided. This is lessons that we have learned from talking to our various expert panel. One of things, I should mention these are lessons that impact how we are designing Work ACCESS, but also have implications for practice in general. The first has to do with

importance of examining situation. Many people with workplace accommodation has experience where they have gone out to solve one problem and realized there's several others that needs to be addressed. It is very common for actions for one accommodation to impact other parts of job.

>> For example, if I were adjusting work surface height that's going to have implications for person's chair, how they are seated and impact their reach for material and computer on that work surface. Many of these things are all interacted, all interrelated. In addition, some solutions address more than one problem. That's something else to keep in mind.

>> Another issue that has come up is whole issue of expert input. In the beginning, because we were developing tool for employers and employees to use, we knew there would be times when they really had to call in expert, particularly for safety and medical implications. That's another thing that's unique about this tool, however, we also discovered from our feedback there were times when you also wanted to call in expert for situations that were complicated or expensive. One that surprised us is that our focus group might be needed where there's lot of trial and error going on. They felt [Inaudible] might not have patience when you are trying to find right fit.

>> Overall our panels thought we did a really good job with coming up [Inaudible] assistive technology. Where we tend to forget things is some of low tech. For example, we might forget to include mobile apps that were specifically for disability audience. We might include all of those products. We forget if person has trouble understanding what they are reading that sometimes using Google to look up a word might be helpful, or you might set standard alarm on your phone when break is over. This

is important because we need to remember there's low tech that some people have access to, and we need to remember to include.

>> There's more of push to be able to go to case files to see what people have done in past so we can learn from them. Please document low tech solutions in addition to things you have to pay for to get a complete picture of what people are using

>> Finally, slide, one other lesson that was sort of emphasized is that accommodations rely are complex and not one size fits all. For this tooling one of things we are trying to do that Carolyn mentioned, we are looking at not just person's disability, but other factors, how good are they at using computer? Do they know braille? We are looking at work context, is person sharing a work station, work, in open office? We are using this information to refine our system. That's something we need to keep in mind, accommodations is not one size fits all. You also might need to have need for adjustability and flexibility. For example, a person might need more than one accommodation for particular problem, if they are fatigue during day, they might need one accommodation for morning and another for afternoon. You also need to look at adjusting and customizing needs for individual.

>> We also learned a few lessons related to tool development, examining entire accommodation situation. This has been challenge for us, because question becomes do you address one problem at time and have nice manageable small solutions to review, or do you ask them to do whole story they are dealing with and have much longer list? This is something we are trying to figure out, and hopefully get more feedback during our usability testing.

>> Expert input may be needed. We were expecting to be



yes, no answer. We hit gray zone where expert input may be necessary. If person has used that accommodation before, expert might not be needed. If they are using for first time may be needed.

>> Same thing with some of additional factors that impact recommendation. We thought, example, if we knew person was working in open office that might eliminate some of choices we were provided. When we get into that, what we ended up doing was still listing them but add to description. That little bullet with using screen reader with headphones if working in open office setting for privacy. Again, we have variations on description as opposed to eliminating completely.

>> Language and presentation is important. We spent a lot of time on refining our wording. Getting crowd participant is challenging. I want to do quick poll. What would most motivate you? If you can click on which one of those would be most appealing (See Board)

>> Tori, do we have some responses?

TORI HUGHES: We do, so far in lead is being paid, as well as second option hearing stories how tool user benefits, and third is having my contributions recognized.

>> Can you take that down for a moment, because I am afraid I cannot find my button to get to next slide.

>> I have also gotten response of getting a break from talking to my coworkers.

>> Well, we haven't asked that question before of Work ACCESS people, but we did ask people for another project, our assistive software knowledge project. Our slide is not coming up with way it is supposed to. What we found there is that for that tool, we were also using crowd sourcing, but asking people to

submit review, it was easier to identify individual contribution. They wanted to hear stories about how users benefitted. As we launch this tool we are going to be trying to provide more information how people are using.

>> High up also, but not quite as high for that group was idea of participating in gift card drawing, which is not guarantee payment, which is why it is lower. We are paying people to take part in our expert group interview. We are using gift card drawing for validation survey as extra incentive and having contribution recognized was lower for this particular group. I'm going to continue on.

>> Next step, Work ACCESS will be free to users who provide beta tester feedback. I was hoping we would make available for October disability awareness month. Well did not quite get done what we wanted due to Covid. We will be releasing before calendar year. For this version we are in midst of doing validation. I have link where you can get more information. Also get ready for some usability testing. If you are interested in participating please e-mail us. We will be looking for both employers as well as service providers to take part in that, people with and without disabilities.

>> However, this is not end of story, because we are Work ACCESS, it is 5-year project and we are just starting year three. As Carolyn mentioned our first round, we looked at office space work [Inaudible], we will be adding to that now in our upcoming years. Related to that in November and December we have number of expert group interview group schedules, looking at restroom, remote meeting, using phone with texting and communication.

>> One of questions that came up is what do you want us

to cover next? I should mention that at the beginning of this year we had just finished a project looking at impact of universal design in workplace. One of our findings was that being able to participate in meetings, access breakroom and interact with people really had significant impact on people's workplace participation and their job satisfaction productivity. We wanted to focus on these activities where people are coming together interacting then Covid happened.

>> One of questions we had, should we look at in person meetings at this time or postpone? Other questions that came up was moving, lifting material, accessing warehouse, other work settings. I will hand this off to Carolyn, she will do a very quick overview of several other resources you should be aware of.

>> Excellent, Karen that was great.

>> I will go over these resources. We do have the Tools for Life app finder and Ciara is actually on with us. She's been one that kept this growing and growing. It was idea that Martha had had on our team when TFL first hit scene.

>> In here there's bunch of categories, you can store by them. A lot are work related. We have been able to find there's great information out there when it comes to prices, and also a lot of people have vetted these. We have vetted these. It is not if 3 million happens here is 1000 that's great for sequencing or reminders. Instead it is here are three best, or here are five best OCR's. We have done a lot of work for you.

>> Additionally, I wanted to make sure you were aware of webinar series. We are -- November 11th we are going to be looking at accommodations for reopening during Covid 19, that's very important topic indeed. We would love for you to join

>> I hope we did not lose Carolyn, and we are running

out of time.

>> I just wanted to point out we are getting to end of our planned webinar series. We have one more session in two weeks and another one in January looking at cognitive aids with workplace. You can go to our archives and get more information about some of sessions that we have already done. You can go through and take those. We are offering CEU's for those that you might have missed for today and ones coming up.

>> One question for you, if you want to add to chat or contact us after session, would you like more of these, love for them to be focused on software app, focused on our decision tree, please let us know. Carolyn, are you back yet?

CAROLYN PHILLIPS: I am and I apologize. Thank you Karen for jumping in. We do have a lot of Covid resources developed by Work ACCESS and TFL software project. They are in Wiki. You can look at Covid 19 resources for people with disability, there's telework matrix we have worked on together, and also accommodations and problems with reopening with Covid 19. You can get to that going to assistive software.gov [Inaudible] any questions

>> If any questions, feel free to put in chat. Also know, this can be ongoing conversation. You can get in touch with us and we are happy to answer questions also.

>> We sure do appreciate it, Karen thank you for Work ACCESS project. Here's our contact information so you can get in touch with me at carolyn.phillips@gatfl.gatech.edu or Karen. Her e-mail address is karen.milchus@design.gatech.edu. Anything you want to say as we wrap up? No, I think that's it. Thank you for joining us today. I know we are a couple of minutes over. If anyone wants to stick around with any questions or chat comments I

will hang out in room for few more minutes. Thank you for joining us today and hope you will think about joining us in next two weeks for next webinar.

>> One more thing, I also want to thank Lorea Spicer for captioning for us today.

>> Excellent.