

Webinar: CDC Cat 3 Webinar 5 - Businesses and Employers

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>> Carolyn Phillips: Welcome, everyone. So glad you're joining us. We'll get started in just a few minutes.

>> Good afternoon, can you hear me?

>> Carolyn Philips: Yes, coming right through.

>> My name is Carmen and I'm your interpreter for this afternoon. I need to be assigned.

>> Carolyn Philips: Let's see here. Hold on a moment.

>> No problem.

>> Carolyn Philips: Thank you. Welcome, everyone.

We're going to get started in just a moment.

William, I'm glad that you're with us as the interpreter.

Heather, so glad you're on with us doing captioning.

All right. We're going to get started. We are very aware of the importance of time. We have a great group and a lot of information. Really a lot of this has been driven by conversations with a lot of you and very excited about this topic in particular. I've been excited about this. It's been on our radar for a while to pull this important webinar as we take a close -- a closer look at guidance for businesses and

employers considering the needs of people with disabilities through the COVID-19 pandemic.

We'll move on to the next slide.

I am Carolyn Philips. I'm very honored to serve as the PI for the project that we are working on in collaboration with a lot of folks here. And also very honored to be the codirector of the center for inclusive design and innovation here at Georgia Tech within the college of design. I'm thrilled to have Pam Williamson with us. Pam, will you introduce yourself?

>> Pam Williamson: Thank you. This is Pam Williamson. I'm the assistant director of the southeast ADA center. I'm happy to be with you today to share on this important topic.

>> Carolyn Philips: Thank you, pam. Liz, will you introduce yourself?

>> Liz Persaud: I serve as the program and outreach manager for Tools for Life which is at the center for inclusive design and innovation at Georgia Tech. Additionally I serve as one of the co-PI's for this project today. I'm happy to be with today's webinar with you. I want to take a moment to share helpful tips for today's session. As we're all in this time together, today's webinar is being recorded. The webinar recording, the transcript, as well as this accessible PowerPoint presentation will be made available to anyone who

needs to view the recording. We'll be posting that probably within a week on the project microcyte. Captions are available within Zoom. Feel free to select show subtitles or you can click on this link for a few view of the captions. We'll have one of our cohost put this link in the chat as well. Also want to say hello and give a shout out to Heather Johnson with the CIDI team who is our captioner today. If you are not actively speaking, please mute your microphone. The host will help you out with that. If you mute yourself that enables everyone to hear the presenters today. We want to let you know that we do have an interpreter on. That video is highlighted. So thank you for being on with us today. Again, you can reach out if you have any questions via the chat. Please utilize the chat window throughout today's session to post questions or comments. We'll have an opportunity at the end for folks to ask questions. We may not get to all the questions. You are able to put them in chat or you can reach out to us via e-mail if you have any questions about today's session or anything we're speaking on at all.

I wanted to share that we are offering continuing education credited for today's webinar. Today's webinar is eligible for CEUs that are approved by the AAC institute and CRCs approved by the CRCC. If you would like credit please e-mail us at [training@gatfl.edu](mailto:training@gatfl.edu). Know that eligible participants typically receive their credits within 2-6 weeks

after the webinar. Always reach out if you have questions or need more information. I will pass it back to Carolyn.

>> Carolyn Philips: Thank you so much. I want to give a quick shout out to our funder. Thank you to the CDC foundation. This is made possible due to the CDC foundation along with technical assistance over at the Centers for Disease Control and prevention.

We are from the center for inclusive design and innovation. We provide all kinds of accessibility related services whether it's assisting folks who have questions about accessibility, and we can consult with them, whether it's built or virtual environments. Also providing braille services and captions services and services for people who are deaf and have hearing related disabilities. We also provide high quality professional e-text production and we have a certified assistive technology team that is actively on board and focused on the whole thing when it comes to utility, ease of use and high quality.

Next slide. I will turn it over to Pam.

>> Pam Williamson: Thank you. I want to tell you a little bit about the southeast ADA center. We're one of 10 centers across the country. We are part of the ADA national network. Our mission is to facilitate voluntary compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. We're funded by the national institute on disability independent living and

rehabilitation research a part of the administration on community living. We serve Alabama Florida Georgia Kentucky Mississippi North Carolina South Carolina and Tennessee. Back to you.

>> Carolyn Philips: Thank you so much. I appreciate that, Pam. Today's topic is focused on businesses and employers. So as businesses and employers of all types continue to operate and/or reopen during this time of COVID-19 pandemic, there's so many questions. We have a lot of you reaching out about how operations can address the needs of employees and patrons with disabilities. We're going to share strategies and resources to prevent and reduce virus transmission. Maintaining that healthy work and business operations and maintain that healthy work environment. Keep in mind we're also looking at this through the lens as an employer. We obviously at Georgia Tech employee 10s of thousands of individuals and have learned quite a bit through this process. So we'll move through the next slide.

So what we encourage you to do and we're so thank you for the CDC and the Centers for Disease Control and prevention and their guidance. A lot of what we're going to be doing is referring you right back. They have developed and continue to update guidance for businesses and employers responding to corona virus disease in 2019. That document in particular and those resources are so valuable. This document

really does provide an overall road map. I have sent it out to so many individuals. Especially in the accessible formats that we've helped produce. For the health and safety aspects of reopening and it will serve as a framework for this conversation today.

The CDC health guidance is supported by sources of information related to compliance for health and safety, employment laws and some of those key topics and sources. They include disinfection which we have done a webinar about. The CDC and environmental protection agency safety really. Employment law and equal employment opportunity commission and then of course disability law and accommodations. So regional and also national ADA centers.

So, we'll be taking that deeper dive with this guidance and framework.

So what we want to make sure is that you walk away with tangible information, examples, actionable items. So we want you as a participant to be able to identify 3 considerations of people with disabilities. So think about that as businesses reopen. And also are operating during COVID-19. Be able to describe 3 tangible solutions for challenges for individuals with disabilities as they experience shopping and other aspects. And also identify 3 resources for businesses to support health for employees with disabilities while continuing to operate. We're going to be able to accomplish that today.

I am going to turn this over -- in a moment as we get even deeper we're going to talk about successful reopening of operations. So you have to plan first. That's important. We have to think about accessibility accommodations and inclusion. One of the great things that Liz and I have talked about is how so much of the planning is work that we've been doing within the disability community. Pam, we were talking about that also. So I'm going to turn this slide and the next slide on over to Pam.

>> Pam Williamson: Thanks, Carolyn. As we have discussed some, the disability community has been making -- talking about various things going on, but one of the things we have noticed and that the data is starting to show is that 40% of the people who are now jobless have been unemployed for 6 months or more. That's going to have a lasting impact on not only people with disabilities but people across the board as people lose their jobs and as we see places no longer being able to be in business.

These job losses here are really impacting people with disabilities in a way that they're not impacting people without disabilities. People with disabilities have truly been disproportionately affected by the COVID pandemic. For example, in February 2020 before the pandemic, the unemployment rate of people with disabilities was 7.8% adults. The unemployment of people in January 2021 during the pandemic, people with

disabilities it was 12%. Unfortunately we're seeing those numbers rise. So we know it's going to continue to have an impact on people with disabilities in a way that it might not affect other people.

There are always concerns about reopening or maintaining your business because with the pandemic as we know, there is the susceptibility of getting the virus, to being really sick or having to quarantine. So businesses are very concerned about this and whether or not they can even sustain their business. Can we stay open? If we can, how will we do it? Are people going to be able to do their jobs? What are we going to have to modify in order for this to happen? And then compliance with older laws. We'll talk about the Americans with Disabilities Act in a few minutes. And we'll talk about newer laws are related to the pandemic. Employees are having income insecurities. Are my hours going to be cut? Am I going to lose my job? Can I get child care? Are they going to protect my child from the virus? Looking at transportation. Anyone that uses any public transportation, what's going on there? Am I safe on transportation? And also to being able to continue to access information in a way that works for that person. And last but not least the customer. The availability of goods and services many people with disabilities have experienced shortages of things above and beyond the toilet paper and paper towel shortages. A lot of people with disabilities are having



trouble getting medications or getting medical supplies because they're in short supply right now. Again, we talked about transportation and the accessibility of physical spaces. The one thing that crosses are of these groups is the health and safety issue. People with disabilities can be business owners, employers, employees, or customers. Many times they're in multiple roles. So we need to make sure that we're addressing these needs.

>> Carolyn Philips: Those are excellent points, thank you so much Pam. What we've been thinking about too looking through the lens of what works and what needs to be considered. I'm very happy as I said here at Georgia Tech that we implemented a lot of these things. It's been incredibly helpful. This resource that was created by the CDC: Resuming business the toolkit. What we have found and recommend and have lived here as an employee with a disability I was happy that my employer really identified, and we recommend that people should identify a workplace coordinator who is responsible for the COVID-19 issues. We have had constant contact at Georgia Tech with our person who is in charge and looking at that from multiple points of view. Also the willingness and the importance of implementing flexible sick leave and really those supportive policies and getting those policies into place so everybody understand how this will work. At Georgia Tech we had

a process that you can apply and say here's what's going on and it was a very much in alignment with the policies. So it was very clear. And it was public, made available to everyone.

Protecting employees with higher risks. When thinking about folks with higher risks with "severe illnesses" through supportive accommodations. There are folks who didn't need an accommodation before COVID-19 but they need them after, or they need some considerations.

Community. Supportive work place policies clearly via multiple ways. I get text messages, we have emails, town hall meetings, webinars about this. So a lot of this is really what has been laid out in the CDC guidance. We encourage folks to use the resuming business toolkit to analyze, plan and community. This is something that needs to continue to happen when it comes to COVID-19 policies and procedures.

>> Liz Persaud: I'm glad that you mentioned how proactive Georgia Tech is and our leadership when it comes to the pandemic and having a thoughtful planful approach, not only because we serve people with disabilities, but we are considering folks with disabilities in our everyday work. We are the leaders as well. It's important that we express how important it is to employment leadership to plan. This goes back to basic principles in the disability community. We often say nothing about us without us. People like myself -- I identify as a person with a disability. I use a power

wheelchair. I appreciate when leadership reaches out to me and asks my thoughts about it. Strategies can be more successful if defined through leadership that is including people with disabilities. Some of the points here are common sense advice and strategies. You want to treat people in groups fairly. Let's not think so much about employees with and without disabilities but how can we treat everyone fairly. Also taking a look at considerations that need to be thought out more. Personalize individuals. Carolyn was saying how leadership reaches out to her throughout this past year through town hall meetings. That happens with my leadership as well. I appreciate them asking how am I doing and how can they do better to serve me and what are my needs.

Leverage the thinking of diverse groups for smarter decision-making. Think about nothing about us without us. Who are the folks that can bring those collective thoughts together so we can have a thoughtful planful approach moving forward.

Preview plans for reopening the business with employees including those with disabilities to identify potential pit falls of proposed methods of compliance or changes. Get others opinions and see how the guidelines can coincide with the things going on with your business. Meet with people with disabilities and reach out to them and make sure they understand the plans and policies and make sure that the

materials you're giving your customers, your employees, people with disabilities are accessible. So they are able to get the important information quickly and on time.

A couple key considerations before reopening. Reopening strategies may address many factors. How are we all moving forward collectively considering all of the changing happens in our lives. So it's important to consider the nature of the physical facilities for those who cannot telework. For those who cannot telework every day, what is the physical facility look like? What does the place of business look like? Are there aspects to keeping safe for COVID? Are there gloves and sanitizing materials in place? There are all sorts of things to consider. At Georgia Tech at my office they generously installed automatic hand sanitizers. That's not only around our center but it's right outside my office specifically because that is something that affects my life in a critical manner. So folks sanitize as they come in and out. I appreciate Georgia Tech reaching out and making that a priority.

The fact that people with disabilities or underlying conditions may be at a greater risk. So keep that in mind and keep those thoughts in check.

Consider how changes to the business or service may affect health and safety of workers. That's why we're doing this webinar and getting connected to this project into this webinar series. What are the changes that are happening. How

can we implement strategies to address these changes and also what are the solutions in place so we can help continue to keep people safe moving forward?

How to implement the CDC recommendations to prevent COVID-19 transmission? We want all of you to take these materials and resources and study the guidance and make sure you understand it so you're able to help us educate others out in the community as well when it comes to businesses employees and serving customers as well.

Obviously how to communicate all of those policies and procedures to all workers. Making sure that materials are accessible and available to the folks that need it the most. I'll give it to Pam.

>> Pam Williamson: Thank you. Liz has mentioned many things that we need to consider before looking at reopening our businesses or continuing to have our businesses open during the pandemic. Some of the things that we need to look at are are there any stay at home orders in your state or local area that you need to be aware of? There may be things that are impacting the ability of your particular employment workplace to reopen or your business to reopen. So we need to make sure we look at the stay at home orders.

We have to look at the severity and the number of COVID-19 cases within the area. We're a large country. It's going to vary from state to state. It's also going to vary from

county to county. That's something to take into consideration when you're looking at the best way to meet the needs of your employees, as well as to meet the needs of your business in being able to stay open. What are some of the things you need to do if the cases are higher? Do you need to implement more disinfecting? Whereas in other places it may be lower and there may not be the same need to do some of the things where they are higher.

Does the business or organization have a physical location? Our office, the Southeast ADA Center, we have a physical location but we made the decision early in the pandemic that it was safer for all of us to telework so we can be safe because all of us were in the high-risk category or lived with someone in the high-risk category. We also want to make sure you have the ability to enforce the proper social distancing in the location. If you live in a world like my husband where you're in cubicle land, what is it going to look like? In his office they chose to put high plastic barriers between the cubicles. In addition to that they spaced people out in every other cubicle and then also have them doing staggered shifts in the office itself. So that really made a difference because otherwise it would have been not a good situation for him to be exposed to people on a daily basis.

The other part is the level of contact that workers will have with other employees or customers? What are

things you can put into place that will help to alleviate any transmission of the virus? All of those things need to be looked at carefully.

There are things to make the physical workplace safer. First of all, putting in the ventilation system where -- so that there's increased outdoor air flow. Also looking at options for improved air filtration. Make sure the air coming through is clean and the potential for recycling germs is not there. Also make sure that the safety and functionality of the water system is intact. You want everything working properly. Last but not least, always always clean and disinfect the workplaces in accordance with CDC guidance. We have talked about the need for communication and policy and procedure but when we're talking about meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities, we have got to look at a variety of ways to make those communications accessible. For people who have vision disabilities whether they're blind or have low vision, look at doing accessible documents. It can be electronic or digital. It might be embossed braille. There are many ways the information can be provided. It can also be done via an audio version. You need to be able to talk with individuals about their communication needs in order to determine what needs to be used. For individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing there needs to be the consideration and use of American Sign Language interpreters, videos also too making sure that they are

captioned. So when they're shared and also in the workplace and in other places where people will communicate with customers. Ensuring that they have access to clear masks for people who use lip reading as one of their ways to communicate. There are many clear masks that have been approved for use. So I encourage you to look into that option.

Although low literacy is not necessarily considered a disability, it is a -- something that needs to be looked at because we want to make sure that what we're saying makes sense. The term that is often used is "put it in plain language." I tend to say put it in real people language. That's something that everybody can understand. Look at multiple ways of being able to share information. Use the company's website, the internet, guidance posters in the work place, e-mail, the text that Carolyn was talking about. There are many ways making sure that people get information these days and we want to make sure we're covering all of those basis.

>> Carolyn Philips: Thank you so much, Pam. So what we're encouraging folks to do and once again building upon what you have heard already is really plan to optimize worker's safety. That's using Georgia Tech as an example something that has happened. Planning ahead and getting those ventilation systems in place. Within our own workplace and team of 60 folks we have thought about our business plan for reopening and thinking about how we address preparedness and response and



really control strategies. So looking at the uniqueness of jobs, the nature of the job, the environment of the job is going to change some of the way you address some of this. So are there specific things to your work place? Think about that. Identify areas and specific job tasks that have potential for exposure. If you have a front desk, what are different ways including thinking about modified ways people can interact with the front desk. Think about creating a safe space. Also include control measures to eliminate or reduce exposure measures. If you don't need to be in the office, we do not have you coming into the office. Any changes we let people know ahead of time. We send them out in an accessible format. We have a wide range of folks some with disabilities and others without disabilities that work with us. Making sure we are sending out information and posting it so folks can listen ahead of time so they can prepare for the workplace, know of changes, and know if we adjusted the workspace. When you have people who have learned a workspace that might have a vision related disability, it's important to make sure folks are aware of what's changed. You should be implementing a lot of space, more than 6 feet. Making sure folks are aware of those changes as well that they are ADA compliant. Pam, back to you.

>> Pam Williamson: Thank you. We've been talking about various ways to implement things that are for the worker's safety and employee safety and customer safety. One of

the things we have seen a big change in or at least an enhancement of over the last several months is in the retail area. One of the things that has really been interesting for me to watch as a person with a disability and also as a person who has been in the disability arena for well over 30 years is that things that were once considered special or reasonable modifications and may have received some push back because a person with a disability asked for them are now more common place. We're talking about the ability to be able to buy online and pick up in the store or to be able to curbside pick up to having special or designated hours for people with disabilities or older adults. I have benefited from this in my own life. My local pharmacy that we use, now if I need any type of medication for the family, I call ahead and say I need this item and I'm talking over the counter medication, not prescription, I need this item, can I pick it up at the drive through window? That keeps everyone safe. It really has made a difference. Next slide.

Some other things that we have seen are the ability to do curb side check in. This is at multiple places. I have watched this happen at my doctor's office. I do a check in before I get there. Then I will -- so that we don't have to wait in the waiting room. They either text or call me and let me when my mom and I need to go in. That way we have minimal exposure to the other people who may have the virus. We also

have the drive-thru services and the ability to do live chat video appointments. The other thing is a lot of businesses are now using apps for people to be able to communicate if they're deaf or have vision loss. So there's so many things in place that we have not seen in the everyday world, especially in the retail area. So it's really exciting to me to see that these things are becoming more common place and they're becoming accepted and really I believe will change the face of business all the way around. Next slide.

>> Liz Persaud: I am smiling because I am hearing you talk, and I hear the excitement in your voice. As somebody living with a disability these are things I utilize. My friends and other professionals who are like me have utilized but now it's becoming common place and hopefully these are things that will be staying in place for folks to use long-term moving forward. We want today share helpful tips and considerations when it comes to modifying the workflow and procedures as needed for your business reopening. Definitely assess the hazards for each job and even look at the day and how business flows through the day and what that means for accessing the hazards for each day. It's important to minimize sharing of spaces and tools. Whether it's sanitization or the fact that somebody may be dedicated to one area and not have others mix in that area. When it is possible minimize contact with

customers or delivery people. So maybe there are other ways that delivery individuals can leave packages on a table somewhere. So your employees are not having to have actual contact with those folks. Take a look at the work flow and interior patterns. As somebody who drives a power wheelchair I'm always thinking about the traffic patterns at work and the avenues from one meeting to another. So it's important to think about that as we try to minimize contact with other individuals. Hold virtual meetings when possible or in open well-ventilated spaces. The most important thing there is if you're able to be virtual, make that happen. If not, think about the space. Make sure it's open and well ventilated. Encourage folks to continue social distancing and to wear their masks.

As always, if it's possible, provide personal protective equipment or PPE suitable for the tasks, masks for everyone, gloves, gowns, shoe covers, or other PPE as needed. Making sure it's in an accessible space. I gave the example of how our center has motion sensor hand sanitizer. So I'm able to roll up and they are easily accessible to me. So make sure that folks are aware of where these items are. Avoid unintended consequences. Consider accessibility and that legal compliance before converting parking spaces to additional outdoor dining spaces or order pick up. It happens in general anyway but please be mindful of that. Just because you don't have your

typical flow of traffic in your business doesn't mean that doesn't include people with disabilities and if somebody is driving to your business and they need an accessible parking space, they're going to need an accessible parking space. I will say we have definitely seen those spaces taken up by additional dining spaces or that curbside pickup. Those accessible spaces are there for a reason and it's important that we don't eat that up.

Provide alternatives to leaving seniors or people with disabilities waiting in long lines that they cannot manage physically. That's what we have been hearing about folks having to wait in long lines. Maybe there's a better way to set up a communication method so they can wait in their car. I had to get blood drawn not too long ago. I was nervous about doing an invasive procedure. Something I wouldn't have worried about not too long ago, but I was able to check in while I was in my van. They sent me a text. I did not see any other individual as I made my way into the lab as I worked with the person doing my medical procedures. So possibly setting up a way to communicate is helpful. Be sure that furniture removed to allow for social distancing does not become a barrier to access somewhere else. People are moving furniture around. Be mindful as you're moving furniture there are folks using wheel chairs, canes, crutches. Know that often if you are somebody with a disability that you need a little bit more space. So appreciate the

mindfulness there.

Be careful that people waiting for access to the building are not blocking those arriving for pick up or waiting to exit. Plan a flow that does not result in groups of congregating. You don't want a pile up of cars or individuals and end up with a mass of people outside the front door of your business. These are all very thoughtful ways to consider your strategies and really at the end of the day it goes back to looking at your business operations and your work flow and planning /STW COVID. So we're going to move along to making plans to prevent and reduce transmission among employees specifically. I'll give this to Pam.

>> Pam Williamson: Thank you. So we have talked a lot about the different protective measures, and we have heard these many times over the last several months. As a quick reminder: Wear a mask. Unless it's a respirator that is required for the job. Remember social distancing from other workers or customers. Wash our hands frequently. I know my ABC's and twinkle twinkle little star very well now because that's what I sing to make sure I do my 20 seconds of hand washing. And get vaccinated when possible. That will be another step you can take in the near future.

This has been a hot topic of discussion over the last several months. CIDI has done a webinar on face masks previously. This information is from a white paper that was

developed by the Southeast ADA Center. We reviewed guidance from CDC and many other organizations to ensure that we were providing the best information available.

First of all this is a reminder that a private business may require customers to wear a mask to limit the spread of COVID. This is a pandemic and it has been looked at something that can be a direct threat to the safety of others.

It varies from state to state and even local counties and cities and towns as to how many -- as to where the masks are required in the state and local government areas or whether or not they require business. As of February 8, Tuesday, 36 states the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico are required to use /TP\*D when in public spaces. There are situations where a person with a disability may not be able to wear a face mask. It can be so that it's either because of the disability that they may not be able to wear it, they may have PTSD, some type of physical disability that prevents them from being able to wear it but if that's the case, we need to be able to look at reasonable modifications. Under the ADA it's a reasonable modification to a policy practice or procedure. So if a private business has a policy stating that a person must wear a face mask in order to enter their business then they need to look at reasonable modifications that allow the individual with the disability to be able to get the services.

So let's look at what reasonable modifications

may look like.

You know, some of these are going to look familiar to you. This is because we talked about them earlier. The fact that a lot of things in the past that have been considered special or just for people with disabilities have now become more common place. So some of the examples of reasonable modifications to a face mask policy so that an individual can receive the service or goods that are being provided is to allow customers to order online, do curbside pickup or no contact delivery. How them to order by phone and do pick up or no contact delivery. Allow a person to wait for an appointment and then enter the building when they're called or texted. Or offering appointments by telephone or video calls. These are basic common-sense examples. They're really becoming more common place. At the end of the day, we need to focus on how a customer is being served because it's all about providing the goods and services in an equitable planner. Focus more on how to provide reasonable modifications under the ADA so this person can have the services that my business provides. Be thinking about that and go ahead and plan ahead. What are things you can do? What are things you're already doing? Look at that issue and make sure that you're serving all customers, including customers with disabilities. Let's change gears a little bit. We've talked about private businesses, but there are going to be the need for accommodations in the workplace.



We have two issues that have come to the top over the last few months. We have people with disabilities who need reasonable accommodation because they are in a high-risk group. We have individuals who have disabilities who have never disclosed their disability but now because they are in a high-risk group they need an accommodation. They need to have a reasonable accommodation in order to be able to work. And there is a third thing. People who have had COVID now have long-term effects that may be arising as a long-term disability.

We have to look at these issues on a case by case basis. That's the most important thing when it comes to addressing reasonable accommodations. You can't make blanket decisions about what will or won't be done because it's focusing on the individual. I want to emphasize the most important thing an employer and an employee can do when an employee needs a reasonable accommodation is to engage in what the EEOC or equal employment opportunity commission, calls the interactive process. This is an informal discussion. Really and truly it is a conversation so that the employer and employee can decide the best accommodation needed in order for that employee to be able to continue to do their job. I can't emphasize that part enough because so many times things break down early in the process because these conversations are not held. The important thing to remember here is that the employer is the one who gets to make the ultimate choice on what the

reasonable accommodation might be as long as it's effective. There could be a variety of accommodations and many things that have happened over the last several months have shown this. We have done telework. There are folks who have worked in closed offices. We have seen the rise and the need for captioning because we have gone to virtual meetings. I am loving the fact that now that we have American Sign Language interpreters in our meetings without having to fight for it. It is a boost for those of us who have hearing impairments and need these accommodations. The only reason an employer might not have to provide an accommodation would be because it causes an undue hardship. That's the short definition is that it's a significant difficulty or expense. It is not just a financial difficulty, but it could be something that is fundamentally alter the operation of the business. It's going to be very difficult for a grocery store to allow a stocker or cash ear to work from home. There's got to be other pieces to be looked at as to what accommodations might work. And then of course the other issue that comes up is that employers can exclude people from the workplace or deny a reasonable accommodation because of -- they pose a direct threat. Based on the CDC guidance and sense March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic definitely meets the direct threat standard. So that's something that has to be looked at carefully. We could spend another webinar on the reasonable accommodation issue. So that's going to be the short

over view of that for today. Next slide.

>> Carolyn Philips: Thank you so much. That is so helpful. I love all the specifics, all the details. When optimizing workflow for safety, we often have been reengineering the workplace and that is about proximity. It is those tangible things and some of what you've been sharing even if we're in the same workplace still going ahead and having your meeting via zoom or what have you because you don't want to be in that physical space necessarily if you can do that. Or using large conference rooms to host meetings that would typically been in smaller conferences rooms. All of that reducing the exposure.

There's a lot of cool technology out there that we want to make sure is on your radar. There are good resources that we're going to move through. Some apps that help with social distancing. Spaced social distancing is an app. The iPhone 12 pro has a people detection app. These are things we have been needing. This really helps folks who have a difficult time telling how far somebody is or who are blind or have low vision. Some more strategies when it comes to preventing spread: Think about the hand washing, making that -- there's a great point. I carry it on me. I know a lot of folks can carry it with them. A friend of mine who using a wheelchair has hand sizer attached to his wheelchair which is great. We have the

hand sanitizer sensors throughout our building which is great. So that's eliminating one point of possible contamination. So travel precautions. Really what we are doing and what I know a lot of folks are doing is minimizing nonessential travel and really just doing it. Checking the travel planner for state and local, tribal territorial restrictions is important. We advise employees to check themselves for symptoms. Commuting to work is another great one. I will turn this to Pam.

>> Pam Williamson: So there are many people who use various types of public transportation or shared rider systems such as Uber or Lyft. These are things that need to be looked at for people with disabilities who may have difficulty social distancing if they use public transportation. Some public transportation systems have limited their operations or cannot carry as many people because of social distancing. So we have to get to look at different ways of accommodating employees and looking at what can be done so employees can still get to work or still be able to work. So there may be alternative methods of transportation. Is there another way the person can get to work? Can the employer work it out with the employee so they pay one person to bring them back and forth to the work place? Or is there another way they can get to work and just so they can limit their exposure. Changing work hours. That's one of the easiest things many times to do is change work hours in order to minimize exposure. That way we can

ensure that people are able to still do their job, do it well and that way they can -- as the employer you can still get the benefit of having a valuable employee. And in many situations telework is an option. For many of us we have been teleworking, but it may be that there situations are teleworking every day is not an option. So can it be a situation like my husband's where they work every other day and still it minimizes the exposure so that people don't have to have to deal with the transportation issue quite as often.

>> Carolyn Phillips: Thank you so much Pam. As we're wrapping up some things to consider: Make sure you have policies that should be changing because of COVID-19, especially as you work with your employees that have disabilities. They may include things like general hygiene, social distancing, what to do if they get sick.

As you're thinking about this, encourage people to stay home if they're sick. We have done that for years within our work space. It's great to see that done throughout the community. We have testing stations at Georgia Tech that are set up and people with get tested. Really encouraging people to isolate if they have symptoms. We are also very much encouraging people to use the CDC guidance to perform those checks. There's some great information out there when you're screening for symptoms. Using the contact free through monitors. Also thinking about separating employees if they have

been sick and paying attention to how long symptoms can last. And being mindful of all of that. So if the employees are essential workers there's a bunch of great guidance and very helpful that we have been sharing with so many folks from the CDC about essential workers and the COVID vaccine communication toolkit specifically for essential workers getting started is valuable. So we want to point you to that resource and some of the things you mentioned in the chat is absolutely invaluable. We have to think about protecting everybody. The masks and all of those different things that you have been bringing up have been helpful.

More information resource here information for community-based organizations. Looking at the tool-kit helps with educating folks. Raising awareness about the benefits and encouraging people here to ask the question and get answers.

Lots of great guidance for employers. It continues to evolve. Lots of great information when it comes to responding as we said and as essential workers getting started is right here. There are links. I will ask my cohosts to put those links in the chat.

As the guidance continues to evolve, please we're always looking for solutions, things that you have tried, things that work. Please send us those things our way. Make sure that business owners, you as a business owner, employees are aware of the changing COVID-19 guidance. We're learning a

lot which is good. New information about COVID-19 there's so much to learn about the virus. So stay informed and stay flexible and know that as the new administration is implementing some of this there's a lot that we must wait and see how much of it will be proposed and we may be affected by how it's implemented too.

Safe shopping, I'm going to turn this to Liz as we wrap up.

>> Liz Persaud: So we have strategies when it comes to safe shopping. I try to schedule shopping at a time when you encounter fewer people. Early in the morning has been some of the best times. Patronized businesses that have reconfigured with the customers in mind. Money speaks. When you're going to accessible businesses you're telling them we appreciate what you're doing if you're going to an inaccessible business you're saying what does that really say about keeping people separate. Entertain businesses that are keeping people safe. Consider your transportation options and how they affect potential contacts. Can you bike or walk to your appointment? So lots of helpful tips out there that we encourage everyone to be flexible and continue to stay safe and continue working on your strategies in order to do so.

All right. We have come to the end of our webinar. We have a brief survey that we wanted to put out there. We appreciate everyone's comments and questions in the

chat. Know that you can e-mail us and we have our e-mail address [training@gatfl.edu](mailto:training@gatfl.edu). Know that you can get in touch with us through that e-mail address if you need credits or have questions or comments about this webinar. I'm going to send this over to Carolyn.

>> Carolyn Philips: Thank you so much Pam, Trish Redmond. We appreciate everything you have done to pull this webinar together. Thank you so much to Sam and Tori and Sarah behind the scenes. We appreciate all the feedback and all of the positive feedback that you have been sending our way. We do hope this is something that you will help share and get the information out there. Liz awesome job. Thanks to our funder CDC Foundation for making all of this happen. We'll just encourage you to check out our other webinars. We have covered a lot of the topics you were asking about in the chat. Those are resources that you can access and also share and know that we're very appreciative of you spending your time with us today. Stay safe and be well and thank you so much.