

Event: TFL and DAS Training – 4 of 4

Group: Center for Inclusive Design & Innovation

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TORI: Welcome everybody. Before we get started and begin recording I want to give you a bit of a rundown as far as housekeeping. As participants, you do not have microphone) but if you have any questions or comments, you are welcome to use the chat box.

There is a tab in the lower right corner which is purple. I will actually go ahead and type something here for anyone who has any questions or comments. That should pop up and you should be able to see that. You can type questions or comments throughout the training.

If you need to zoom in on the slide at any point, of course you can do that with your browser function or at the top left-hand corner it looks like a box with a magnifying glass. If you hover over that it will say show view controls.

When you do that, you can zoom in or you can zoom out. You can expanded and all kinds of things like that. I will put and a live captioning link. This will take you to stream text which will be another tab or a window in the browser. This way you can view the live captions. Is there anything else that we want to cover before we began?

MARTHA: Just to let everybody know encase you don't know where the chat boxes there a speech bubble at the bottom is right and you can click on that and type in there I am ready if Sal and Amy are ready. We are recording. Good afternoon everybody. We really appreciate you all taking an hour out of your busy afternoon to be with us today as we do the fourth and final Division of Aging training for the Cares Act project that we are working on with you.

I am really excited about this. It's one we get a lot of questions about. It was a topic that came up when you all took the survey. Today we will look at Connections for Older Adults: How To Access Digital Services and some things for digital service for connection. I am Martha Rust and I am direct services team manager at Tools for Life I will pass it over to Sal and Amy to introduce themselves.

SAL: I am Sal Kibler at Tools for Life. I am looking forward to speaking with you today about things I think are pretty exciting.

AMY: And with, senior services. Thank you for having me.

MARTHA: Any questions or comments that you have that we do not cover today please put them in the chat box . We like to have your questions and comments and we will try to answer those today. If you think of something you would hope that we cover today, you can put that in the chat and we will try to get to that as well. Let's go ahead and begin.

Learning objective. Define social isolation and its effects. We have been in this pandemic and we should know what social isolation is but we will cover it again because it may mean something different to one person or another. After being in a pandemic for over a year now effects are starting to show and here is some research around it. We hope that you learn three new ways to connect outside the Internet. Other ways that you can have interactions safely as well. We hope you will all learn some new ways.

We will review some existing technologies that we have used with older adults and their caregivers to help them stay more connected. We hope you will learn some new AT devices out there as well or think outside the box. As a reminder, we have the DAS Cares Act project you're working on with you all. We are enjoying getting to know your individuals and hope the assistive technology that we have recommended is working for them. We have had good feedback.

Let me zero in the Tools for Life slide. Just in case there is someone who may not know who we are. Tools for Life is the assistive technology program for the state of Georgia. We work with all ages and disabilities. Our mission is to help Georgians of all ages and disabilities to gain access to assistive technologies. We do this in many different ways. It can be a demonstration or even pointing you in the direction for funding.

I also wanted to include that we are partners with the DAS Cares Act working with 39 consumers around the state. We need at least three in each of Georgia's 12 areas agency on aging. We are still looking and we still have room for those referrals. If you are from the Atlanta area or Northeast Georgia area or the Three Rivers area we have your individuals and thank you so much. If you did not hear your region, please reach out to us and we will be happy to help you if you have any referrals or questions.

Just to let you know along with doing the evaluations, written assessments, we have 4 trainings that we did. This is the last one. I'm a little bummed about that because I've enjoyed working with everyone on these trainings. If you missed any of the ones that we've done in the past, we do have it up on the tools for life wiki. We will send it out as well please reach out to us afterward and we will make sure you have that information. With that, I will pass it to sell.

SAL: Thank you Martha. I feel like we talked a lot about social isolation and maybe some of us are getting tired of it. There are a lot of words on the slides I will give you the highlights. Social isolation is the absence of social interaction, contacts and relations with family and friends. It leads to what is called emotional manifestation of loneliness. It's not just about being alone physically but sometimes people are in a group but they still feel lonely.

I think we have been all there at one time or another. It's just as important for these people to feel needed by others as it is for people to need them. I think that is an important part of connecting with people. It is really evolutionary. In the old times we live in small groups and tribes and if you were not with the group you became isolated and survival became difficult. It is hardwired into our brains.

There has been research done that 7.7 million people are socially isolated. In fact there is a new cabinet position in England for this exact purpose. And helps manage and work with people on this. Man and people with depressions and those dual eligible Medicaid and Medicare are the most likely people to suffer from this. Although it crosses all socioeconomic classes and health barriers.

We have heard is the equivalent of smoking 15 cigarettes per day which is shocking. I will never get over that particular piece of data. It is really connected directly to heart disease and blood pressure and depression and dementia. People who stay connected do better in their health and mental health.

It costs a whole lot of money . There's a statistic that is \$6.7 billion annually spent by Medicare trying to deal with the effects of social isolation. The reasons for social isolation are pretty clear but it's living alone or remote from family and friends. Mobility issues. If you cannot get around you will not be able to connect with as many people.

Hearing and vision issues really impact people being able to be with groups of people or with others and enjoy themselves they feel embarrassed if they can't hear or see. A lack of digital technology and of course the never-ending problem in the state of Georgia is transportation. Unable to get places and do things.

One thing we need to know is digital technology is really no longer a luxury. It can lead to social isolation. It prevents you from being able to tell take telehealth or telemedicine appointments as in the picture. Emergency assistance, government forms. We all know how difficult it is for older people to sign up for the vaccine. Financial management is done primarily online now. Any kind of information, recreation . If you want to play cards with people you cannot even do that. Also importantly community connections. The good news is 22 million American seniors do not have wireline broadband access at home. This greatly restricts social and other essential connections.

Technology and lack of it is exacerbating social divisions and inequalities. It's really the haves and the have-nots. Existing digital inclusion efforts targeting seniors are really a hodgepodge. Large sections of the country are served by no significant low-cost offerings or age family initiatives. We know Georgia has many areas that are not wired there are some solutions within reach.

Why is it important for people to have technology at home? A lot of people say they can go to the library or the senior center. This is a problem for older people in particular because trying to do things on smaller screens or on your phone or other things limits the ability of video conferencing and even financial management screens are truncated.

There are old operating systems that limit access to apps that we have all been at the library and tried to look something up and realized it is really difficult to get to a senior center or other places. It is inconvenient and even risky in some cases. The emerging technologies that we are all excited about particularly at Tools for Life like wearables, satellite connections, voice activation all need high-speed wireline access.

Seniors isolated by lack of access to reliable technology face personal hardships. They cannot connect with loved one's healthcare utilities, etc. if there's one thing the pandemic has shown us the absolute dependency we have upon technology. There is one thing everybody needs to know about and you might share with your clients. There is FCC broadband benefit right now which is a discount up to \$50 per month toward broadband service.

Also there is an additional one hundred dollars toward the purchase of a laptop, desktop or tablet from participating providers. Eligible household who are struggling to stay connected during the pandemic are invited to apply for this. Eligibility is pretty broad. I would suggest you go to this website but it at least one person in the house must qualify for one or a variety of federal programs like SNAP or a variety of things.

When the funds run out it will be over for six months after the pandemic is declared over. That doesn't look like it's going to happen anytime soon but that is still something to think about. This is the website, fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit. You must do it through the carriers in your area. If you do not have carriers in your area you won't be able to do it. I suggest that people look at it and we are interested to see how it's working for those who are already doing it. I suspect once it's up and going it's probably great but it might be difficult.

We talked a lot about technology in that is important but how can we help older adults and their caregivers connect with the outside world in meaningful ways? Not just through technology. We know many places in Georgia do not have it. I do not think we can ever really go away from the importance of one-to-one contact. That might be the phone or Facetime or Zoom, postcards, letters, greeting cards are making a big comeback during the pandemic.

We talked about the importance of broadband and the importance of sending someone a card but it's unusual to get one now so it's really special. Big screens are a great way for people to connect. A simple cheap HDMI cable can go from a computer to your smart television and if you want to watch your church or a community meeting or have a group or family event on Zoom you can do that.

Also, the personal digital assistants we will discuss. Recreation. There's all kinds of online cards and bingo. Martha likes to point out that I play bridge twice a week during the pandemic online. It actually improved my game a lot of. There are also collectors' sites and virtual travel and photo frames which we will discuss.

Again, Facetime, I think it's overlooked by a lot of people. Very important. This is probably the highest use of Facetime grandmothers in aunt and uncles face timing with their grandchildren. It's pretty simple and straightforward. It can be done with somebody who has a phone. Zoom. Can't say enough about it. We all learn how to do it.

I was talking to an older adult that I know who learn how to do Zoom. She is 93. She hosted 130 something calls. Everything from book clubs and other kinds of specialty things, etc. They had Thanksgiving dinner virtually over Zoom. It is clicking a link. I know everybody's a bit hesitant about doing that for the first time. But I think so many people learn how to do it. Also Zoom is the best platform for captioning. And probably wanted the best to use with older people. But there are many that you can try.

MARTHA: Let me jump in about Zoom and videoconferencing. Zoom is popular and there other videoconferencing platforms out there and what I have seen throughout the pandemic is these videoconferencing platforms have gotten better with accessibility. As you said, mentioning the captioning that is free on Zoom I just want people to know it's AI.

It's not actually somebody captioning but the ability to turn that on and even though it may not be 100% correct, it gives an individual a good idea about what's going on and being able to join in that conversation, especially if there a lot of people talking on Zoom or different background noise. It may be difficult for individuals to get the concept or process it.

That is one of the things I have seen throughout the pandemic . Some other videoconferencing platforms have done better with their accessibility during this which is great. They have become more user-friendly by using icons instead of words and that makes it pretty simple for people to figure out how to use it.

SAL: Thank you Martha. NixPlay digital photo frame. I have this in my home. I really learned about it from a friend who gave it to her father who's in a nursing home. Set this up and you set up the app on your phone and you can send photos and update and change things all the time. It is really a great way for the user who doesn't have to do anything but the person who's providing the picture does it. It runs nonstop. It's like having a lot of framed photos all over your house without having to frame them. I think this is a good one to look out. It makes a nice gift.

Amazon Show is a great product. Again you must be wired for this. Is voice activated and it's great for a lot of older adults that have mobility issues and vision issues. Even with hearing you can turn it up just by saying *Alexa, turn up the volume*. We have some this to a number of people. It is very interesting.

Sometimes people say all I want to do is read the newspaper in the morning. But I cannot see and I cannot hold it. But you can walk in to say to Amazon Show, Alexa please read the front page of the New York Times and she can do that. You can ask for a recipe or certain kinds of music or turn it up or down. You do not really have to do that much with it except get it set up.

We will talk about three different tablets today. One of them is GrandPad and the next one is Birdsong. There are some differences between them but generally I like to say that they're very easy to use. They are smaller format. You can see this lady is holding in her hand. You can see how large the icons are. You can just touch them. Usually a family member set it up in advance and set up your connections to other people.

So you can just go in and save call my daughter or call whoever and it will go right to them. They will see a picture of that person. One of the things about was interesting about this is even if you just want to ask for the person it shows you what the weather is like. This is one of the first questions we have like what is the weather like in Arizona today? Also there is the Birdsong. With these you can do all kinds of cool things. It's super easy and it plugs in one way. With some of the things you go down the rabbit hole and you can't get out but this is very simple to use. It's also a great way to enjoy all kinds of hobbies and games.

One question that we get is how to introduce technology to older adults. The first thing you should always think about is to start with something they love or need. I think the question about the person wanting to read the paper was the single most important thing. They're very motivated to do that but it can be a card game or a hobby or communicating with loved ones looking at pictures.

Start with something that they love and need not something that you love and need and go really slow. Do not introduce too many concepts at once. Let them get comfortable with the step that you have before you move on. Limit the number of steps and don't get too complicated. Don't use computer language. Words like apps which does not mean anything to older adult. When you can engage younger relatives in the construction.

I know I called my millennial children several times per week for advice on some technology issue I am having they solve it in about five seconds. It also makes for that person to have a chance to spend some time with the younger relatives or younger neighbors or anybody. At this point I will turn it over to Amy who will talk about another tablet that's actually an app called Claris.

AMY: Hello everybody. This is the Claris companion which this is AI said is actually an app. We have distributed 80 tablets to client is a part of a pilot project with this app. Through the Cares Act funding from the Atlanta regional commission. The Claris app is very similar as you can see in the picture to the grand pad and the Birdsong.

It has the bubbles and the easy-to-use access. It also has a console that the caregiver can get access to help customize the tablet for the loved one or add contacts or add additional customization websites etc. For us we actually have 80 of these that we distributed at this point and we are administrators on these tablets.

Initially, we were looking at this to deliver virtual programming during the pandemic. It really has expanded as an opportunity for digital inclusion. Digital literacy or however you want to say it to improve access to devices and the Internet and just to increase client skills with technology. As well as reducing the social isolation.

We have recently completed a survey with the initial group of about 30 people. They got our first round with these tablets. Here are some of the results. You can see that of those users, a good portion of them really have not had any prior experience with a tablet or a computer. But we were excited to see almost 2/3 said it improve their overall health.

One thing we are really excited about is three fourths saying they were more connected to us as an agency as a result of the tablet. We are really excited about that. I think areas for improvement are really connecting the family members of our clients to the tablet so we have more people using the tablet to connect with their family members.

I apologize, the slide get a bit jumbled. But were able to look at some of the engagement. That is one way we are evaluating this program. I'm not sure you can tell from the colors but a large majority of our users are really excited about the game apps. The game apps are on the tablet. You can also see how people are using it secondly to access resources which are basically websites . Such as our website, AARP, other information that we have connected them to on their tablet.

Just to give you a little taste of what our experience has been like, you see in this photo this is actually an in-person class that we had with some of our users. Our centers did reopen toward the end of last year . They have been open on a limited basis. We were actually able to have some in person classes with a tablet. That has been very helpful. In that photo you see one of my interns teaching a group along with a volunteer to get the one-on-one training.

We have had several folks who initially were hesitant. I'm not sure this is for me. What is really exciting to me is the first example of a woman who told me and swore up and down I really do not think I can use this. But once we added her son to the tablet, she connected with him and he was excited about it.

He began sending her pictures from graduation, beach visits, etc. all kinds of things to make her feel more included. She is pretty much stuck in her apartment and is not able to get out as much or go travel at all. So she has really enjoyed that. That is how she primarily uses her tablet which is wonderful.

Another woman I had also was not sure. She was hesitant. Now when we look at program use and engagement, she is one of the people who is the second-highest user. She loves to play solitaire. She has really gotten into it and that was someone who was very low-tech if any kind of tech previous to this. That was exciting.

Lastly, here is a third example and a quote I wanted to share. This is a woman and basically she told me this: I'm all alone . I'm all by myself but I am alert. I can learn things. Technology is a little bit complicated to me. That the tablet keeps my mind alive. I learn! To me that was an awesome way to kind of show what we are trying to do here and what we hope to achieve just connecting people with technology. Basically giving them some fun and more connection in this difficult time. Now I will pass it on to Martha who will talk about some other ways to make connections.

MARTHA: Thank you Amy and Sal. I like that you just shared all of those stories and quotes about individuals who were older learning technology being hesitant at first but really then kicking it off. It has been interesting to watch the research come out throughout the pandemic showing that older adults are hesitant but they're catching onto technology and other ways of thinking outside the box which I think is great.

Some of the people I worked with have let us know at they have grandkids or younger next-door neighbor that has shown them how to use their technology help them download apps etc. They feel more comfortable . We are meeting with them in talking with them and it's been cooled to hear their stories. I love the idea of the of this. My mother has one and both grandkids have smartphones. They can upload pictures from their phone to my mother.

Every time I get busy visit it makes me laugh because her picture frame is full of selfies from my nieces and there are pictures of them and their friends in random things they wanted to share. It periodically shows up in every other day they upload things. It's another way to connect. Thinking about connecting especially with reading there a lot of different books and audiobooks in large print books and magnifying sheets.

I have heard that some people have joined book clubs through this where maybe they're not meeting virtually because they do not have Internet but using the phone and doing group calls and checking in and doing book clubs like that. A really great resource we have here in Georgia is Georgia Radio Reading Services. This is a great free service that can be done online. They also have the ability for individuals to call in on their phone and listen to news etc. that they do. They will also mail out a free radio receiver to individuals.

Again, not meeting the Internet they can mailer receiver to an individual's house and again they can listen to their programs right there in their homes and still feel kind of connected even though it's not online. Another great program is the Georgia Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled. They have recently gone through a name change. You may have known them differently but now they are GLS. The website is on the screen. You can sign up and mail in the form.

You can get a device that will play books and magazines where you have access to so many different books magazines periodicals newspapers. There's also an app version of the device that someone can download to their smartphone if they are able. If you're not connected to the Internet, they will send the device to the home. It's just another way of getting books and newspapers and magazines and staying on top of things especially if you really love to read.

Communication. Hearing aids can be very difficult for some people to use. It can increase the background noise. Sometimes that background noise amplifies everything. It's difficult and it can cause many people to abandon using them. We have worked with several individuals who have had hearing aids and they cannot seem to get that frequency correct. We have heard people tell us they do have a hard time hearing.

As we know hearing aids can be very expensive and may be difficult to find funding for them. They have told us I feel isolated in my home because I have a hard time hearing my spouse or my children or my friends. I have decided not to hang out in certain groups because I cannot hear or going to a restaurant is difficult. Working on ways they can get some of these things funded and cost can be a barrier. Learning about different funding options out there. Looking at different hearing amplification devices. There are some devices out there that you can wear .

Many churches have these devices where you can wear headsets and there's a microphone and the minister speaks into the mic and it amplifies just to that person. Or there's devices for the car when you're traveling. There are also captioned phones. Free service to the phone system having the conversation captioned. So you can understand what is being said as well. Mobility can sometimes cause isolation.

Having the correct walkers, wheelchairs, rollators, is it appropriate? Making sure that they fit the right weight of the individual is very important. Especially on a safety level. Making sure that they still fit and they work properly and are the tires correct do they need air, etc. do they need air, etc.

These things are very important and can keep somebody in isolation if they are unable to get out and move around. Seeing what is causing that isolation. Can the person get in and out of their house safely? Can a ramp be installed are looking at alternative ways to move around is something that we do and worked with at Tools for Life.

Again, I think the slides got out of order but here's a picture of the different types of hearing amplification devices. On the far right-hand side you will see a picture of the Cattail phone which is cool. I have worked with people who have been able to get a phone like this. It is a free service. They have an operator caption what is going on so they can actually understand the conversation and respond.

What is great about these phones is we don't necessarily have to have Internet for it to work. They have found like this that work by analog system . As we know Georgia is a huge state and there are lots of rural areas in the state of Georgia where there is no cell phone service and no Internet service. Looking at different devices to help with that. The top one in the middle, it is a serene amplification system that one can use. Instead of having it full blast and everybody in the house hearing it you can have that speaker and moved around.

You can put it beside the chair or whatever so it amplified just in one area and it's not so loud throughout the house. On the bottom, you have a personalized amplification thing. The picture on the far left is a hearing aid. Hearing aids are getting smarter which is very cool. Many of the newer hearing aids actually work with an app. If the person has an app and has a smart hearing aid, they are able to control the frequencies in different areas. That can sometimes help with device abandonment. Being able to control the hearing aid in a certain area like a restaurant, etc.

Eating together is another way to have connectivity. Especially in pandemic time and social isolation it's been difficult. But there are some ways to still have that connectivity and to get meals to the people who need them. Meals on Wheels deliver. It usually often just one visitor which is an older adult but having meals deliver that way can happen.

I believe Amy taught beforehand and I don't know if you're doing it yet but senior centers having congregate meals. It's not on offer at all senior centers during the time of COVID but another way to share time and connect with others.

Family meals. Creating the right environment if you are having an older adult come over and take part in the meal. Being sure you have the right ambience with the lights as well. Having individuals participate food preparation. Some people really like cooking and they may want to join in with the family and cook especially if you live alone you might like cooking more if you do it with others.

That brings us to our last slide. I just want to open this up for any questions or comments or anything that you would like us to cover that we did not get covered. Sow and Amy if you have anything else you would like to add?

SAL: One of the things I would say that is so great about the tablet is there is no keyboard. A keyboard and a mouse is a very intimidating thing. I think the ability to touch or voice activate makes a huge difference in building confidence in people. People do not want to look like they cannot figure things out. I think it is important to introduce it in that way. You don't have to you learn a keyboard or use a mouse.

MARTHA: Great point. A lot of things are voice controlled which is very helpful. Do you all have any questions?

RACHEL: This is Rachel from Tools for Life. I wanted to add that a lot of the devices is not a one-size-fits-all. Some people might not like the feel of the headset on their ears . Just looking at the amplification device . I want to give a friendly reminder that at Tools for Life you can actually borrow some of those devices and see if they work for your clients and individuals that you know. You can decide maybe if it doesn't work maybe there's another solution you can try. I just wanted to add that point . Does not always work and we go to plan V and look for other solutions as well.

MARTHA: Thank you Rachel. Lynn says are there any specific venues for seniors to talk to one another? I will say a bit and then leave it open for anybody else like Amy or Sal or Rachel to add to it. I do not know of any specific offhand. There are a lot of groups online. I have work with people who have gotten more into Facebook and there are tons of Facebook groups or meet up groups that we can get together with as well. Sow or Amy do you know of specific groups?

SAL: I don't know of any specific groups you can meet up with people online to do things like gardening or stamp collecting or things that people have in common. I do not know of any specific groups . Do you Amy?

AMY: I see somebody else posted something about Senior Planet having a lot of online classes for older adults and some are interactive. I was going to say I know there are a lot of platforms out there. Some are free and some you have to pay for. But there are more and more platforms out there that you can join to either take classes and some of them are interactive. You can meet people. The one that I know of that's free is called well-connected that is mostly a phone-based program. I believe that out of California. There are many others out there. I believe AARP also has some available through their website.

RACHEL: A few years ago we were introduced to this woman who was in her 80s who first started playing video games to win on to start a YouTube channel and got followers and started playing with all these other people of all ages and interacting from her own home. She became a personality. It was a cool experience of seeing somebody in their 80s learning something new and getting a lot of new friends at the same time.

MARTHA: I do remember that but I don't remember her name Rachel We need to Google that. That's a great example video games. I see there's another question. Are there any good less expensive alternatives to a service like life alert. I know they make analog phones where an individual can plug in their own numbers that they want to call in case of emergency. They can wear a bracelet and there's a prerecording. That is absolutely free.

I have used that with my great aunt who lived to be 98 and did not want strangers in her house so it was a great compromise . She put a voice recording on it and programmed the numbers of my mother and my father my sisters and brother-in-law and I was the last one. She lived close to my mom and I told her it might take a minute if it gets to me. But she felt comfortable wearing that because she knew if she fell it would first call my father and then my mother. It helped her feel more comfortable because she lived alone until she passed away. She didn't want strangers in her house. There are some emergency phones like that.

There are a few need devices that have come out on the market that have a one-time fee of the bracelet in the device and you set it up. You can plug in who you want and it will call them. The Apple Watch actually has fall detection in their if somebody falls down, you will be notified and ask if you have fallen and if you say yes it will call somebody for you. There are a few different things out there. One of our webinars before we covered some of that. That is a great question. The name of the phone I was talking about is the Geemarc emergency phone. I will type it in the chat box. That was the name of the phone. That was a great question. I love these questions!

SAL: Also, the Captel captioning phone is the other that we discussed.

MARTHA: LifeAlert can be expensive especially if you're on a fixed income so finding something a bit cheaper works. You don't have to have stranger's come in your house and that's important to a lot of older people. Please feel free to continue with any questions that you have but if you want to get a hold of us and have more specific questions please reach out. Here is our contact information on screen.

Amy, you put a program in the chat box for well-connected. Everybody please check that out in the chat box. We appreciate all of you spending an hour of your afternoon with us. We look forward to speaking with you all in the future. Thank you so much.

Session ended.

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