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FORUM ON LANGUAGE AND DISABILITY ACCESS
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>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: All right. I think it is a good time for us to start today. I am Montserrat Serra and I started working in the Department of Medical Services back in 2019. My role is to ensure that Virginia Medicaid complies with Civil Rights laws by providing Language and Disability Access Services to Virginia Medicaid members and applicants.

We are here today with a presentation for everyone. This is open to the public.

And we have invited our stakeholders. Today we will be discussing breaking barriers, how Language and Disability Access Training can improve access for people with Limited English Proficiency, and people with disabilities. I would like to give a big thank you to our DMAS Civil Rights team.

We have John Stanwix here and Jesus Perez, who put a lot of work into the Forum, our Civil Rights Specialist. I wanted to give them recognition of their work here today. Without them, this could not have been possible.

I would like to provide you with some background on why we have been doing this type of Webinar, what we call the Forum.

Some of you may know that this is our second Forum of the year. We had our first one back in May, and our unit came up with the idea of Language and Disability Access Plan. Back then we found, and we documented that the agency had a need to engage and collaborate with our stakeholders to receive feedback that would help the agency stay up-to-date on the language accessibility needs for the

community, but most importantly, that would ensure our members can effectively access our programs and services.

It is important for us to highlight that the Forum is for informational purposes only and should not be considered legal advice.

I wanted to share that the details of our Forum are always available in our DMAS website, and that is where you can get and receive the latest updates of our events. You will also be able to access the recording of this Webinar, as well as other previous recordings and any materials that we will be sharing. They will also be uploaded later on on the website.

But before we begin, I wanted to share some of the logistics very quickly. I wanted to let you know that this is being recorded, and, as I said before, we will upload that recording later on.

I also wanted to let you know we have two Sign Language Interpreters that will help us interpret the event for those that need American Sign Language Interpretation. Thank you very much, Elaine and -- I can't recall the name of the other person, but both of them will be taking turns to interpret.

We also have CART services available. My colleague, Jesus, has pasted a link to access the Live Transcription of the event, and this is being provided by the Virginia Relay, and Leora Grasl is our transcriber. If you wish to follow the Webinar through the live transcripts, these click on the link, and you will have access to those.

Lastly, very quickly, we have the feature of the Chat, and if you have any questions that you would like us to address, feel free to submit them through the Chat. I have my colleague, Jesus, collecting all the questions. We will address those as time allows.

Some of those questions, if we don't have enough time, we will address them at a later time, and then share our responses, but feel free to use that feature of the Chat for any questions or comments you may come up with. Please know we will address the questions at the very end of the presentation.

All right. So, now we are here at our agenda. And, first of all, we are going to have the opening keynote, and we have Patricia Michelsen-King. She will be providing us a 5-minute speech, and then after her opening keynote, we will move to the presentation, we will be sharing some very good information, and good tips that will help you implement a Civil Rights training for your agency.

And then we will have in the panel discussion, we have four agencies here today that will be sharing good information about how they have implemented, or what are their goals on implementing training, or Civil Rights training, for their organization.

As I said, at the end of the event, we will have some Q&A, then

we will have the Closing Remarks. So, without any further ado, let me pass it on to Patricia Michelsen-King. She is a Federally Certified Interpreter. She is a translator and consultant, trainer, and also VCU faculty. Patricia, the floor is yours.

>> PATRICIA MICHELSEN-KING: Thank you very much. So, good morning, everybody, for the Sign Language. Everybody, everybody, no matter their abilities, their disabilities, their color, their income, should have equal access to medical care in this country. Sometimes people have the attitude of, oh, why don't they speak English? Well, English is the number one language in the world, and it is not in danger of losing that place, so don't worry.

By law, the patient has the right to have an interpreter, and have access to that information, the same as an English speaker. And any agency that receives Federal funds and provides services, must use interpreters or get sanctions and even lose funds.

My message to you is that you need a trained interpreter.

Imagine if you were the patient. Just because you have two hands, doesn't mean that you are a concert pianist. Just because you have two languages, doesn't make you a trained interpreter.

For equal access to medical services, if you don't speak English, it means you must have a competent interpreter because accuracy is important.

I went to a Richmond hospital with my grandmother a few years ago, and in the emergency room there was a sign that said, for emergencies and women in labor only. In Spanish it said, only for emergencies, and working women. Imagine a woman who is nine months pregnant coming in and saying, oh, no, I can't sit down because I am not working.

So, not every bilingual person can act as an interpreter. No family members or bystanders should be used. They may break confidentiality, they haven't been trained, they may not speak English well, or know the terminology. We don't know their level, and they may speak on behalf of the patient and think that is all right.

So, when a language barrier exists, the presence of a professional interpreter is usual. And I hope you leave today understanding how crucial accurate interpretation is, and I want to leave you with the assurance, also, that you don't have to worry if you are using a certified interpreter. When an interpreter is not used, more money is spent, time is wasted on longer appointments, more diagnostic tests, number of visits, and trust is lost.

Now, even when a patient can speak some English, language can slip with illness or distress. A patients' distress leads to a linguistic breakdown and the time lost saves money later. There can be dire consequences. There is the \$71 million word story. Lily

Rodriguez was an 18-year-old taken to a hospital in Florida and his mother thought he was sick because of the hamburger he had eaten. He kept saying (Speaking in Spanish). A bilingual employee said he was intoxicated, thinking it meant the same thing, but in Spanish it means food poisoning.

He was treated for an overdose of alcohol instead of an intracranial plural. And he then became quadriplegic and the family sued and the hospital had to pay \$71 million for this catastrophic mistake.

But I don't want you to feel overwhelmed, because the purpose of today is to give you solutions as provides. Pun of them, use trained interpreters. We have to evaluate the interpreters that we call in.

In a study, institutions were asked who they called for interpreters. The answers fell into two categories: The appearance model and the performance model. The performance model, people have taken a certification test prove they are minimally confident, put on a roster and called. That was less than 2%. The appearance answer was: Number one, they look bilingual. That is racist. They look like a Spanish interpreter, right? They were punctual, so it is comforting you know you have a warm body present, but who knows if they know what they are doing.

And the number three answer was: No one has ever complained. But who is there to complain. No one else there speaks the two languages. So, remember, not just anybody can interpret. Untrained interpreters may not know the medical terms, and for the patients, it is not the same care or interaction.

By using a certified interpreter, or qualified interpreter, you are giving more honor and respect. Providers may think they are able to adequately communicate.

This is a true story of a doctor who said, well, they kind of understand me. He thought soapbox sounded like soup, so he said I am going to pour some soup on your vagina, but soup is not soap. So, he was telling her he was pouring hot soap on her vagina. So, the patient should be able to hear from a fluent speaker than someone with so-so language skills.

Because if their grammar is not perfect, it is harder and more painful for the patient to figure out what the health provider is saying, which is something the English patient doesn't have to do. Bilingual providers are great to establish a friendly atmosphere and greeting in Spanish or another language, but the patient is embarrassed to say they don't understand, and there are power dynamics in-play and the patient does not feel comfortable or want to stand up to the doctor or nurse.

Another example, a doctor said to her mother that her son was (speaking Spanish) retarded, instead he had delays. The mother was

suffering from depression and the doctor had a complaint filed against her and it turned out to be a big problem, so waiting five or ten minutes for an interpreter is worth the time.

Misinterpreting can have serious consequences. Interpreters should clarify and write notes for important information like medication dosages and instructions, because it is vital to the health of the patient to have the information interpreted correctly to avoid over or underdoses.

Lastly, Google, Babbel and other translation programs are not always accurate and they cause problems. During COVID it said the vaccination was not required. In Spanish it said it wasn't needed. 38% more Latinos got COVID.

Now the Spanish English translation, interpretation and translation program at VCU is the only one in the state and maybe some of you are interested in learning the mechanics or cultural competency part of interpreting. SETI is not only for Spanish majors but for students of all walks of life. At SETI we can help you with free translation and interpretation. Please feel free to call us. It will be reviewed by a professional so you know you are getting quality service, so don't hesitate to contact me. Thank you.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Thank you so much, Patricia. This has been so helpful hearing your stories. It so important knowing accurate translation is so important for the audience. Please know we are sharing Patricia's information and contact details in the end in one of our slides, so if you would like to reach out to her, there will be an email and information coming up that you can use at the end of the presentation.

All right. So, we are ready for the next section, which is our presentation. Today we will be discussing tips to help you implement a Civil Rights training.

If you are thinking about implementing Civil Rights training at your agency or how DMAS develops Civil Rights training, you have come into the right place.

Let me provide you with background on the Civil Rights training. It was one of the strategic initiatives that we outlined in the agency's Language and Disability Access Plan that we published in 2021. The training, the Civil Rights training for DMAS, was launched in 2022, and it consisted of a self-paced, 30-minute module, and, also, a Webinar presentation.

During that year, over 500 employees at the Department of Medical Assistance Services completed the training, and since then it has become a mandatory training for all new employees that come to work for our agency. Now for 2024 we are working on a training refresher to remind our employees of the organization's non-discrimination policies and procedures. And this will ensure

that they understand the responsibility to enable Individuals with Disabilities to access information and services in a meaningful way.

At the presentation today, I will talk about the significance of incorporating Civil Rights training, and the primary stages involved in its implementation. These stages include the planning of the training, the development of the implementation and post-implementation phases.

I will provide an overview of each of these phases, and we will be sharing useful ideas and tips that we use at our agency and that have worked for us.

All right. So why is Civil Rights training very important? I think Patricia shared good information that connects to the importance of the training today, but Civil Rights training is crucial for organizations, as an insurance compliance with legal requirements and regulations related to equal access, and nondiscrimination. It also, as Patricia explained, reduces the rising of legal issues and liabilities. The training informs employees about policies and procedures that the agency has on language and disability efforts, so that they know what to do when they have a situation where they need to communicate effectively with someone who is limited English proficient, or, perhaps someone who has a disability that impacts the way they communicate with others.

For instance, in a Civil Rights training, employees can learn how to request Interpreting Services and translation services if they need to translate a document.

Civil Rights training also promotes an inclusive culture where all individuals, regardless of their background, can act as a benefit for programs and services. The training provides the staff with the tools necessary to recognize and address discrimination, mitigating legal risk and liabilities of non-compliance with Civil Rights laws.

By demonstrating our commitment to Civil Rights, agencies and organizations build public trust, reinforce their credibility with the public, and maintain a positive reputation, which ultimately benefits our clients and the community that we serve.

All right. Let's start with the very first phase of implementing -- when you implement a Civil Rights training, and that is the planning phase.

During the planning phase, that is where we lay the groundwork for a successful Civil Rights training program. These involve tailoring the training to particular agency's unique needs, deciding on the training format, also, assessing the resources that the agency has to implement that training.

It is an important phrase for us to set up a realistic timeline

and involve our leadership from the very beginning.

In such cases, perhaps it may be necessary to implement a general Civil Rights training program for everyone, and then provide additional training details to staff that are more in constant contact with the public.

For example, at DMAS, we provide Civil Rights training to new employees, but we also have developed additional training that provides more hands-on experience on how to request language assistance, and how to work with phone Interpreting Services. We feel that those are some of the most needed pieces for those in constant contact with the public.

When choosing the training medium, it is important to consider what will be more effective. Perhaps the organization considers a face-to-face will be more beneficial as part of our training, or perhaps mutual training. It all depends on each agency.

At DMAS, we decided to mix-and-match, so we provided a neutral section where every employee could use their own time logging into an online module and complete the training, but we also provided more like a face-to-face interaction. It was done digitally through our Webinar.

So, it is important to decide which medium might work best for your team and your organization. And also, establishing a realistic time line is essential.

We learn by experience that you set up milestones, but it is so important that you add plenty of time around those milestones, as there are always -- and trust me, there will always be last-minute circumstances that just come and surprise us and make us switch our milestones and timelines.

So, having a realistic timeline with enough concern to ensure that you meet your deadline goal is very important.

It is also very important on the planning phase to think about providing interactive training with activities that staff can engage, while learning at the same time. We want to make sure it is not a boring training, and it is more like an engaging training so people enjoy and also learn.

For example, if you are delivering training, you could be using polls to ask participants to provide input on a particular training topic that has been discussed. And that, for example, would not only ensure that participants are following the training, but also makes the training more enjoyable and fun.

Lastly, I would recommend to involve your leadership teams from the very beginning when you are planning your training. This can be very helpful, as if you get their buy-in and support from the very beginning, the agency is already aware and understands the priority for all teams and divisions to complete.

So, they will be on your side if you get them involved from a very early stage. All right. We have discussed the very first phase of planning the training. How about the development phase. Let's talk a little bit about some tips on that phase.

During that phase, it is very important to focus on creating complete outline that covers all the necessary aspects for a successful Civil Rights training.

These outlines for a particular Civil Rights training should include the legal Civil Rights requirements for your particular agency, and also the practical procedures for your own staff that they can follow. The description of effective visual engagement element should also be included in this outline storyboard, as it can be helpful for your leadership team to approve at any given time that you are going through the development phase.

It is important to consider including information on Civil Rights legal requirements and regulations, again that, are relevant to your organization.

For example, the DMAS Civil Rights training includes information on more general, non-discrimination laws, such as Title VI in the Americans with Disabilities Act, however, since DMAS works with Virginia Medicaid, our training contains information that applies to Section 1554 of the Affordable Care Act, as it relates to non-discrimination laws within the healthcare setting, which is the Virginia Medicaid setting.

So, in order to make your training more visually engaging, you can include elements, for example, that we have done as images, or perhaps including silhouettes or charts, or Smart Art or any other graphic training. That makes the training more engaging.

For example, if you use a PowerPoint to deliver your training, you can easily insert these elements and it will make it more interesting and engaging. As DMAS we have chosen to provide and include silhouettes of people, and that is an image representation of someone providing the training.

It feels the Civil Rights of these images of a person in a different pose, next to the content, it kind of provides more of a professional look, an interesting look and it also provides a phase of who the trainer will be when delivering that training. So, those are important aspects that it can add some visual aids, and interest to the training.

It is important to have the sufficient details and instructions to build a training module effectively. We have included in this slide a screenshot of the DMAS, Civil Rights refresher, training storyboard, which contains the content that we have developed for this particular training.

The implementation phase. Here is where the action starts. This

is where we will be delivering or training. During the implementation phase, it is very important that you conduct a conducive training environment that encourages active participation and engagement. Whether the training is conducted in-person or visually is very essential or necessary to ensure that participants have all the necessary materials and technology, and that the setting is comfortable and free from distractions. For example, if you are delivering your training in a classroom setting, making sure that the classroom is set up in a way that encourages interaction among participants might be important.

If you are delivering your training online, testing the online platform, making sure that everyone can access the online platform, will be very important.

To keep everybody engaged, again, using interactive learning methods, such as, for example, role play, or peer studies or group discussions, those would make your training for efficient and effective.

Regular assessments or quizzes should be also conducted to evaluate participant's understanding and knowledge, while you are facilitating the training, and immediate feedback and clarification from the trainer should be provided during the training. It is important to create an open and welcoming atmosphere, where the participants are asking questions and seeking clarification.

That is always helpful.

If participants have any questions, they feel comfortable asking questions so they can learn better.

Finally, it is very important to manage time effectively during the training sessions, and keep the training on-schedule. This ensures that all planned content is covered, and that all the participants get the most out of the training.

So, after the training has been delivered, we are now phased onto the post-implementation phase. This phase is very important, because it is usually the phase where you can track who has completed the training. You can also provide ongoing education and updates, and feedback from participants and integrate Civil Rights training into on-boarding processes and assessor evaluate the program's effectiveness. You would run into these actions during this course implementation phase.

It is important to maintain accurate and up-to-date records of who has completed the training, and a secure database or perhaps a tracking system, should be used to record this information.

Plan also on sending out regular reminders for those that have not completed the training. That will be something very important to implement during these post-implementation phases.

As we all know, we all stay very busy. We get reminders about

trainings, but sometimes people have challenges completing them, so it is important to keep going and keep reminding individuals if they have not completed the training.

It is also important to ensure that participants have completed the training and that they acknowledge it.

This documentation is necessary for compliance and compatibility purposes. If you are using a platform that automatically tracks or records the training completion, that is excellent. But if you are running into situations where you don't have access to an automated way of tracking the training, perhaps you could just use an acknowledgment or some documentation that individuals can sign, where they would prove that they have completed the training.

So we have reached the end of the presentation. We hope this information is helpful to those that want to implement Civil Rights training for their organizations. We hope that sharing information and tips on how we have done it at our agency can help and encourage you to develop a Civil Rights training in your organization. Basically we have discussed how important Civil Rights training is for our organizations, and with the details of the different phases, we hope that you have now good tools, or that this is a very good starting point for you or your organization to implement Civil Rights training.

All right. As I mentioned before, if there are any questions, feel free to enter those in the Chat, and we will address those at the end of the presentation.

But, now I am very excited for the Session of the panel discussion. I think we are going to have a very good conversation with the four agencies that we have invited today to this panel discussion.

We will be asking these four organizations a few questions, and we are very excited to learn how they have, or what are their plans on implementing Civil Rights trainings for their organizations. We have here today the Office of New Americans, the Virginia DSS. Representing the office we have Seyoum Berhe, the state refugee Coordinator.

We also have the Office of the County administrator, Public Affairs and communications for Loudoun County, Sahar Behboudifar. She is the accessibility services manager.

We also have to be in our panel discussion, the Virginia Department of Health with Cameron Moore, the Language Access Coordinator.

And, lastly, we have the Virginia Employment Commission with Ma. Lorna Battles, who is the Language Access Coordinator.

Just to give you a little bit of background on how we will run

this section, as I said, we have five or six questions that we will be asking our panelists. Each of them will be responding according to what they have experienced with their organization, and I will just be moderating the discussion.

So our hope or goal is to have a very casual conversation where we can all learn from each other. All right.

So, without further ado, I move onto the questions, let me have each of the panelists introduce themselves very quickly and provide us with a little bit of background on their organizations. We can start with the Office of New Americans with Seyoum Berhe. If you would like to introduce yourself, Seyoum.

>> SEYOUM BERHE: Sure. Can you hear me? Wonderful.

You never know what technology does. My name is Seyoum Berhe. Thanks for the introduction. I have been the State Coordinator for the past seven years. Before that I was Director of the Assessment agency in Northern Virginia for 15 years.

And before that I was in academia.

So, I do want to mention one thing. For 12 years I was also an interpreter/trainer, so this is a kind of a privilege, and I absolutely understand what everyone is talking about. So, let me stop right there.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Thank you. I can't wait to hear more about that. So, let's have Sahar. Would you mind introducing yourself?

>> SAHAR BEHBOUDIFAR: Thank you for the introduction. Good morning, everyone. I am Sahar Behboudifar, the Accessibility Disabilities Manager in Loudoun County. Loudoun County is located just outside the Washington, DC in Northern Virginia. We have almost half a million population, and almost 5,000 full-time and part-time employees.

I also serve at the Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator for panel 2 agencies, so my position covers both language access and disability-related services.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Excellent. Thank you, Sahar, for being here today. Cameron, would you like to be next?

>> CAMERON MOORE: Sure, good morning, everyone. I am Cameron Moore. I have the privilege of serving the Department of Health as a Language Access Coordinator. I have been with the Health Department for a little over two years. One in regard to the Local Health District, that in Charlesburg, Virginia, the Blue Ridge Health District, now I have the great opportunity working at the central office level, developing the language access plan.

That simply means we are creating a central plan to be able to help the entire agency, so happy to be here. Happy to learn. Thankful for the opportunity.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Thank you. I appreciate you being here.

And, lastly, from the Virginia Employment Commission, we have Ma. Lorna Battles. If you would like to introduce yourself?

>> MA. LORNA BATTLES: Of course. Good morning, everyone, and thank you, Montserrat for inviting us to be part of the panel. Again, my name is Ma. Lorna Battles. I am an Equal Opportunity Monitor for the Employment Virginia Commission. I also serve as the Language Access Coordinator. Our main focus is obviously making sure that we do provide equal access to our clients and customers regardless of whether they have a disability, or they have Limited English Proficiency.

I have been with the agency going on three years, and just grateful to be here, and hopefully learn a couple other things about resources. Thank you.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Excellent. Thank you very much. This is very exciting to learn how all these agencies have Language Access Coordinators, or Civil Rights Coordinators that they are working on these efforts. This is very interesting to see. So, thank you, all, today.

I will be asking the very first question. This one, I want to make sure that we are all following the time, but I understand that this one is very loaded and there is very good information that each of you can share about this one. So, if you want to spend more than the three minutes, that is perfectly fine, because I think we can get a lot of information.

So, what are the current training practices implemented by your organization to address Language and Disability Access for your staff? And if we have -- let's have Ma. Lorna Battles start with this one, and we will continue with the rest of the panelists.

>> MA. LORNA BATTLES: Sure.

We do have several training practices that the agency currently implements, but I think I want to focus on the most. We host a Civil Rights training and bring in a Civil Rights expert to actually give a presentation on compliance with Section 188. As you all know we work very closely with Workforce Services, Title I. We primarily work with a lot of those customers and we want to make sure we cover the bases, and in compliance with Section 188.

So, we were trained on Civil Rights Law that applies to the agency's programs and activities. We ensure that we use the correct tag lines, making sure that auxiliary services are available for those who actually need it, that we are an equal opportunity employer, of course.

We talk about how to handle this discrimination complaints, from internal staff, and actually external customers, so we definitely focus on that. Stakeholders and partner agencies such as DARS. And serving people with Limited English Proficiency, of course, and

handling religious-based accommodations, because that seems to be an up and coming topic right now. So, with definitely are focusing on that. We make sure that is actually a mandatory training.

Specifically at this point for managers and supervisors, and we make sure that they make their staff take the training. We can't all be on the training at the same time. Aside from that, with Patricia's presentation earlier, of course, with you saying. We also take time to invite our vendors.

We currently use our language line for interpretation services for our external customers. We actually bring in our vendor to do a presentation to our staff, to make sure how to work with interpreters and, actually, how to, you know, have that accurate -- most accurate information that we can provide to our customers. So, those are two of my favorite things that I think it is very relevant to our conversation today.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Thank you. I think that is very interesting that you bring the vendor to your agency to provide that training. I think that is probably very appreciated by everyone and probably very effective. That is an excellent idea. I like that.

So, let's move on to Sahar. What are the current training practices being implemented at your agency?

>> SAHAR BEHBOUDIFAR: We have available accessibility training that covers two topics, both language access and the ADA, for all new employees during on-boarding. It is a brief training on these two topics, but relates that especially during on-boarding, all new employees receive a lot of information.

And one thing that we talk about is to provide training on the Intranet, the internal website, that whenever they have any questions, they can go to those as the reference.

Also all the information regarding our vendors, all contractors, related to language access, whether it is over the phone, whether for face-to-face and virtual, and also any disability-related contracts that we have for American Sign Language, whether it is scheduled or On Demand for VRI, video remote interpretation services, and also Closed Captioning, they are all available on the Intranet, which is the internal website, again.

No matter if I am available to provide all those information, all the staff at any point of time, whether we are at the fire office, firearm rescue, Social Services, for on-call supervisors, they all have access to those vendors, their information and about the procedure, how to schedule any interpreters.

Besides all of them, I totally agree with Ma. Lorna, that she talked about how to effectively work with vendors, and working with staff how to work effectively with an interpreter. They all have it at their desk and it is available, again, on the Intranet.

The last item I have, I am a certified ADA trainer, and I offer training to different departments, and based on their needs, they request training.

So, in Fiscal Year 2023, I conducted ADA-related training to 670 employees. And there were different topics, based on the needs of that department, whether it was communicating with individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, or just the overview of ADA for Title II agencies.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Excellent. Wow! Lots of good work you are doing at your agency. In particular, I love the idea -- because we also have a SharePoint site, where we share content of training or any materials needed for language access -- and it makes it so easy when we have somebody at the agency asking, how do I have access to Phone Interpreting Services? Well, I just shared the link to that particular page and it is so effective, so I agree.

But, yeah, thank you for providing us an overview of all the trainings that you have working at your agency.

We have now, Cameron, if you would like to go next, and share your information that, would be great.

>> CAMERON MOORE: Sure. Right now BDH is in the process of finalizing our disability and language access plan and hope that will be the catalyst of providing workplace training and classified employee training. This person will work in collaboration with the Accessibility Program manager to develop and implement new training programs that we hope to be able to have.

Of course, our goal is to be able to have language access training that will be designed for our staff that wants to have direct contact with NAP and LAP individuals in the community and cultural competency. We think that would be vital to provide to the language access training. Without the cultural competency piece, it would not be necessary to deliver that training without the other one on the back end of it.

So that is where we are at right now. We have done a lot of good work, offered a lot of trainings, but we know it is the need and desire to offer more expansive opportunities for training.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Excellent. Thank you for sharing your information. Lastly, with this question, we would like to hear from Seyoum, if you would like to go next.

>> SEYOUM BERHE: Sure. Thank you. I want to start with something Patricia said. Don't be scared. The English language is not in trouble, because it is not. And we all know that by the third generation, that issue is taken care of.

I have been telling everybody not to be nervous that, we are developing at this community or society that cannot communicate because we have so many languages. That is a fallacy. I want to make

sure that is understood. I know I am talking to the choir here, but --

So, I am not -- the Office of New Americans is not a Direct Service provider. I will say two things. One, on a larger level, DSS is working exactly from what my colleagues at the Department of Health just said. We are trying to develop stronger language access and disability access, and they will be hiring a person to run that, so that is from DSS.

But the Office of New Americans, we were asked by the General Assembly to improve images in the services and contracts we managed. My services responsible for refugees that been forever but for the past few years we have also implements in Virginia.

Five of the nine people in our office are bilingual and the person I hired to provide implement information, connection and available services are both fluent in Spanish and English. So, that is the first thing from my office.

The contractor has refugee offices and having been a trainer in language interpretation, it is in their document to have cultural and linguistic capacity, to just start with. Title VI, when I was a Director and working on it, what we do, we either provide staff members who speak that specific language, which is many of the staff are, and if they don't, they must hire, and hire not a child or entry-language speaker, but trained interpreter. So, we have a very strong standard on that.

On the refugee side with the majority of refugees these days Afghans, they have very well-trained interpreters, but we conduct training here, as well.

With other communities, our challenge has been with the smaller communities who do not have trained interpreters is the biggest challenge. I am not for telephone interpretations and against children interpreting, of course, but sometimes as a last resort, I know it happens like that in the local Department of Social Services, but we try not to use that, because we do have --

I do want to mention the last one, in honor of my colleague, friend and co-worker who passed away a few days ago, we have developed mental health interpretation. As many of you know, Dr. Eva Shay has done a phenomenal job, so we went further than just language interpretation. We have developed a manual for mental health interpretation, because cultural and linguistic competency go hand-in-hand.

Just because you have language, it doesn't quite work very well. So, I just want to stress that and respect her and the work she has done. Thank you, Montserrat, for giving me a chance to touch on this.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Yes. Thank you, and we are very sorry to hear about the passing of Dr. Eva Shay.

She has done amazing work for language and access in Virginia.

We are very sorry for that loss.

>> SEYOUM BERHE: Thank you.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: I think we can move on to question number two, and this one relates to technology. I think throughout the presentation today we have touched so many times on technology and how relevant it is for training.

So, the question here is how does your organization use technology to enhance Language and Disability Access Training for your employees?

We can run this in circle. If Ma. Lorna wants to short sharing her information, please.

>> MA. LORNA BATTLES: Yes. Currently in terms of the technology we are using more judicial platforms in terms of the training programs that we currently roll out. We recently added a Training and Development Coordinator for the agency, so that is exciting.

He will be overseeing the process of building more training opportunities, hopefully using, you know, an LMS, so, Learning Management System. So, right now for most of the trainings that we use, we still do it on a virtual platform. So, MS Teams. Zoom, obviously, WebEx. Those are the three top platforms we are currently using for virtual.

We are starting to put together more in-person trainings, but we are not quite there yet pre-COVID status. That is where we stand at this point. But hopefully with Chris, you know, as he is getting his hands and feet wet, and knowing the opportunities for training within the agency, hopefully we can see more robust structure going on in 2024.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Excellent. Thank you for sharing that information. Sahar, how about your agency? How do you handle training and technology?

>> SAHAR BEHBOUDIFAR: Well, actually, we have our HR Department, the Human Resources Department, and went through the RFP process, and we have our own program at this time. We call it Loudoun eLearns. We take all our mandatory training on that platform. Besides that, if I am going to offer any ADA training for any departments, we are using Teams. It is easier for me, because then I can, you know, have the polls and, you know, do the quiz and all this stuff on Teams.

Also we use the WebEx Webinar. That something if we offer any training to the staff, and also the public, we use WebEx training. The example is every April, we offer -- April is the Fair Housing months, and every April we offer Fair Housing for People with Disabilities, and that is the training that is open to the public.

That is something that we always offer through the WebEx Webinar.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Excellent. Thank you. How about Cameron

with the Virginia Department of Health. Let us know a little more about how you use technology on your trainings?

>> CAMERON MOORE: Sure. So, the Department of Health has a platform that is known as TRAIN, T-R-A-I-N. As soon as someone is hired to the Department of Health, this online database platform is how they are able to access trainings. Essentially it allows various types of trainings. Webinars, online modules, and there is also the opportunity for you to be able to use that platform to register for in-person training. There is just a bunch of different resources that people can use in order to do that.

Our hope is to be able to use that, already existing platform to add additional trainings to them, as time goes on. Specifically as it relates to language access. But right now the Department of Health leans on training for those folks who get hired in their first 90 days.

In order to do that, they are able to use their work-issued laptops in order to complete those trainings.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Excellent. It sounds like you go with the automatic type of technology that makes life easier for everyone. Would you like to share information about some technology that your agency might be using?

>> SEYOUM BERHE: Just a little bit. If there was anything that COVID did good for us, it focused us to think outside of the box. Because we could not provide services face-to-face for such a long time, different agencies said we have around 10 sites in Virginia that provide services to refugees.

So, everyone does their own thing on this, but we funded computer technology.

We even funded some refugees to have those who don't have telephones, to provide telephones so they could conduct even employment training, language interpretation, everything was online.

And guess what, we actually achieved our outcome goals nothing less than than when we were doing it face-to-face. Here we go.

So, I don't have every name of the platform they are using, but we use technology extremely well, because we were forced to do it. And now we are becoming, well, this is not so bad maybe. I work from home for the past three years. I think we are working, but I cannot give you any specific technology aspect we are doing, except the refugees are probably ahead of us when it comes to the phone system.

They then do it real fast and very well. That is all I can share with you.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Thank you. I think it is noticeable the trend that we are all going with technology. Everyone has explained how they are using technology, but I want to reinforce that sometimes

in-person trainings are very helpful. And we have recently completed very simple training with some DMAS staff that have more interaction with members, and they didn't know how to use Phone Interpreting Services, so we decided to put together a classroom, hard to believe after COVID days, that we can meet in-person now, but we put together a team of 10 people in a classroom, call or Phone Interpreting Services, a vendor on-the-spot, and we walk through the process of engaging with Phone Interpreting Services, and how to have the person online, while the interpreter interprets, so, with that being said, I believe technology is making us very far and making our lives much easier, but sometimes adding the personal touch and doing face-to-face training, I think it can be very beneficial, as well.

I just wanted to add that piece of information.

But I am curious now to learn a little more about what are the key components you use in your training on Civil Rights. I would will curious to learn a little more about the topics you touch on your training. So, Ma. Lorna, do you want to go first?

>> MA. LORNA BATTLES: Part of my role is actually to go out in the field and -- as a Federal Monitor, to the knowledge, tools and resources available to our staff members. Because for us we provide you with what you need. That is kind of where we are coming in. With what you have right now, what else can we help you with? Paragraph what programs, Webinars or trainings we can actually put together to help you, again, provide equal access and opportunities to our customers.

So, for example, just a couple of weeks ago I was in Northern Virginia. So, Northern Virginia set-up is so much different than central Virginia. Diversity is obviously very, very obvious, prevalent in that region.

So, I was able to get a lot of feedback from staff members just within Northern Virginia, with five different counties. It is almost like a completely different country out there.

So, for us, you know, making the assessment, like, it is a different region out there. How do we actually strategize in as much as the resources they have is probably more than in other places like central Virginia, or like southwest Virginia, comparatively. So, for us, assessment is key.

And then we move forward from there, like, you know, I receive information from staff, like, oh, we didn't know that, you know, the TTY machine is, obviously, obsolete nowadays, but how many people know that within your iPhone, within that accessibility tab, you can actually activate a TTY RTT feature. So, available resources like that that we would not know if we didn't go out, visit, make the assessments and hear what our staff are experiencing on a first-hand basis. Thank you.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Thank you for sharing that information. I agree that learning from our staff about what they need to learn, it is very important, including that as part of the training content, it is great. Thank you for sharing that. Sahar, would you like to go next?

>> SAHAR BEHBOUDIFAR: Absolutely. Thank you, Ma. Lorna, that you mentioned about diversity in Northern Virginia. Just to give you the idea about Loudoun, based on the volume of enrollment for the Loudoun Public School, 7 languages are spoken in the house in Loudoun County. So, the important competence of LEP training, Limited English Proficiency training, for me, is to provide the demographic about population to our staff and bring awareness.

And every year I update our annual Limited English Proficiency plan. It is available on our website. Basically it starts with Title VI and then our policies that we have. Not to discriminate people that cannot speak English very well.

And then the demographic of our community, and the top languages that are spoken, and then after that, I provide information about the language usage of our departments, and provide information about the resources that we have in Loudoun County. At the end of usually wrap up with the outreach in different languages, from different departments.

So, this is the plan that we have, and mainly it also is used for training for LEP, because it brings awareness and the needs of our community. So, it is also available on the website, so all this information are available for the public.

And just quick data, in Fiscal Year 2023, we used 144,000 minutes for over-the-Phone Interpreting Services for our departments.

Regarding ADA training since I created all the training for our staff the main focus regarding materials is on ADA requirements under Title II agencies. The requirements for the State and Local government agencies, and disability awareness, and general disability etiquette guidelines, what to do and what not to do. And the important part is our available resources in Loudoun County. But I always consider, like, what is more important for this department.

For example, the training for ADA on law enforcement, or an overview of ADA for the correction system, is definitely different from customer service folks. So, considering the needs of that department, I provide different types of training for ours.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Interesting. I had a chance yesterday to review your Language and Disability Access Plan, and it is excellent. If anyone that is attending wants to take a look to their website, it has very good information, very good data to understand your community needs and how much effort your organization is putting into language access, so very excellent piece of information.

Thanks for sharing that. Thanks for sharing the link.

All right. So, Cameron, would you like to share a little bit more about your plans or what you are thinking about including in your trainings as far as content?

>> CAMERON MOORE: I was struggling to unmute. In regard to what we hope to be able to add, we want to be a partner with our Accessibility Program manager in regard to being able to make sure our training is comprehensive.

That means in regard to things like translation services we want to be able to have trainings for that in multiple languages to accommodate employees and individual, even employees we may have that are NEP or LEP. Training on Closed Captioning in regard to the same thing I just listed, for employees who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

The biggest piece that I think I can speak to is in regard to providing training on ADA Compliance. In the construction of the Language and Disability Access Plan, we really have learned about our blind spots as it relates to ADA Compliance. And in regard to how the LDEP needs to be a little more comprehensive, so those are some of the things we want to make sure in regard to curriculum is widely distributed to those in the agency.

I think oftentimes as it relates to language access, those who are deaf and Hard of Hearing, those that may not be able to see something not necessarily thought about in relation to language access, even though it is an extremely vital and key part of that.

We want to make sure when we are disseminating the Disability Access Plan, we hone in on that for contract for full-time employee so is we are not missing a major part of the constituent for the Commonwealth, the need for services, as well.

You want to be able to, again, focus on the -- you spoke to it earlier, the training platform. You will be able to see who is taking the trainings and completing them in a timely fashion, and making sure we are able to reach out to the people who have not taken the steps to take those trainings so we can make sure we do that.

We also want to make sure we are working with community organizations, as well, to make sure our training curriculum is well thought out, and well developed.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Excellent. Thank you very much. Seyoum, would you like to share some information as far as what concepts or knowledge you would be sharing on training pieces, or what would be important for your agency to share.

>> SEYOUM BERHE: Absolutely. I think the first thing is Title VI, because refugees all come from different countries. The second, also very important one, is faith, religion. It doesn't matter what religion you follow, it is fundamentally the rights in the United States, which is really shocking for a lot of newcomers, because we

are admittedly telling them, after we have told them their responsibilities, talking to them about their rights, no matter what religion you follow, no matter what country you come from, these are your rights, and this country respects that.

That is a very positive foundation for what we do. We have documents -- documents are always -- they try, all the agencies try to get the documents in Spanish, in the language of the separate, different countries and communities.

We have also hired people that work with our school system. Every agency has what we call a school liaison. That is the person building bridges between the school, parents and children, linguistically and culturally. We also have a health liaison. Our health system is difficult for us, let alone our newcomers.

We have health liaisons also navigating the culture, the linguistic aspect and the complexity of our health system.

So, one area we were not very good at was the disability area, because we didn't see a lot of refugees coming. Now we do. So, we have to learn real fast. We have, but that was really our weakest, because we mostly didn't have to deal with it. Now we do. We have started to work with specialists on that, and talking to our state entities, and I have seen a few disabled refugees who have come and done really phenomenal, but it took us a while to cross with that and move with that.

>> Excuse me just a minute. The Sign Language Interpreters need the cameras on. I am sorry to interrupt.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: I am glad you are bringing it up. Here we go. Perfect. I am glad it worked.

>> SEYOUM BERHE: I want to add one more thing with this subject. Our second most difficult one was Sign Language. We try, but with Sign Language, American Sign Language, is not the same with all the countries. So, I have to admit, that has been the most difficult one. We tried one time and we failed. Let's focus on that, but that is a difficult one, and a small community to have nobody here.

That is the challenge. We are Dahling with that as much as we can.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Yes. I do agree. It is obvious that we are working with a challenging environment, trying to accommodate everybody's needs for language and access. It is a challenge, and I am happy we are all working together to try to find solutions and learn from each other, because it is not an easy program, and it proves that trying to learn from each other, we can get better. I agree. It is a quite challenging environment.

For question number four, I believe most of the information has already been shared. And this one in particular is trying to assess how your organization tailors training to meet the specific needs

of different departments. Is there anyone that would like to volunteer from the panel to add some additional information that perhaps has not been previously shared?

>> MA. LORNA BATTLES: So, for VEC, since Unemployment Insurance is a completely different beast, they definitely conduct a more extensive training for that department, just in terms of benefits and claims and things like that. So all our departments are given autonomy to make decisions as to how much more training can we actually give to, or provide to our staff members depending on our business needs. That is kind of where we are at right now.

On that aspect, I want to give a shout out. Some of you might know that the VEC Workforce Services and employment insurance is actually kind of have not really gone separate ways because we will still be working together. But we have the new agency the Department of Workforce Development and Advancement, the DWDA, that is actually -- it is already official, and is going to be a new agency. Hopefully I think my intent here is to -- we will have opportunities, new opportunities to kind of, like, bake in some of the training opportunities we have in terms of Equal Opportunity since we are building this new agency.

Our new Director will be Carrie Roth, the former Commissioner for the Virginia Employment Commission, so hopefully the merging of resources and new resources coming in, we are going to hopefully build this agency and do more of the proactive work in terms of the focus. Some of it may be -- that is kind of the hope at this point. Definitely stay tuned, and I will probably be reaching out to some of you and get some more information.

So, thank you.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Excellent. Thank you for sharing that information. Sahar, is there anything that you would like to add or share about tailoring the training to your particular groups? I know you spoke before about work enforcement. Is there anything else you would like to add?

>> SAHAR BEHBOUDIFAR: Just a quick thing.

Here we centralize accessibility services, so, which I think it is very helpful, because I have access to all contracts for both language access and Disability Services.

One thing we all need to understand is disabilities is intersectional with many other needs. It is like it can be a person or immigrant and they need both services. So it is very important regarding language access and disability awareness to convey that to all the staff and make sure they have access to all resources to provide services accordingly.

As Seyoum mentioned, there are many folks that are newcomers with disabilities and also, they cannot speak English very well. So

I think working very closely with these two divisions is very crucial.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Seyoum, are you sharing something?

>> SEYOUM BERHE: I think they all touched on key issues, working together. This is really good as you mentioned, Montserrat. If we are all working interconnecting, I think we can take care of this, even though we know it is a challenge, so that is all I want to repeat.

The working together and the relationship to develop. That is all I wanted to say.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Thank you. Cameron, is there anything you would like to add to this particular topic or question?

>> CAMERON MOORE: Sure. You know, I think with the Health Department, one of the tricky things is that Virginia is such a geographically diverse state. There are small pockets in different places that have dominant languages spoken in different places, so hopefully once the Central Office Language Access Plan is revised, the Language and Disability Access Plan is devised, excuse me, there will be special attention to tailor the specific needs and things for each Local Health District, just because their needs may vary.

There are some Local Health Districts further along than others. Richmond, Northern Virginia, they started to do really good work on language access, but other Health Departments are just starting on this process.

So, the goal is in regard to meeting these different, I guess we can call them departments, but, specifically, how do we assist each Local Health District in providing quality language access for the folks that need it. That will come with a lot of community collaboration.

So, we are starting the process of devising a Workgroup that will be extremely inclusive as it relates to all the different facets of the Health Department.

We reached out to leadership in regard to picking the folks they feel need to be a part of that specific Workgroup, because we recognize that language access is not a one-size-fits-all, specifically as it relates to the entire state.

Yes. Very interesting approach. Because we do also include in our Language and Disability Access Plan, we include the most frequently used languages in Virginia. We realize for our program, Medicaid, those might not be necessarily the same ones, particularly the top five, might be the same ones that we have as far as frequently used languages within the Virginia Medicaid Program.

It is interesting how this has come as a conversation, how each organization statewide, might have some different languages from the local level. So, how that, again, going back, might represent a challenge, but how it is very necessary to understand the particular

needs for the population that you are serving, as they might be different for the entire state, so interesting conversation. Thank you very much for sharing.

We have one more question. That we thought would be -- oh, yes, Ma. Lorna. I see you raised your hand. Go ahead.

>> MA. LORNA BATTLES: Yes.

Since we have been mentioning and focusing work on the individual language access plan. Cameron kind of touched base on this a little bit. I do see that there is another opportunity that is coming up, just because I know we have been mentioning about LEPs, Limited English Proficiency, however data does show, especially in Northern Virginia, that there is a predominantly increase of uptick on Unlimited English Professionals. The access program addresses the NEPs. So that is a trend we need to monitor and prepare for.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Interesting.

Thanks for sharing.

I have touched a little bit on the topic of the track training completion. Ma. Lorna, is there something you would like to share more specifically about how your agency tracks training completion for individuals that take the training?

>> MA. LORNA BATTLES: We definitely still have an opportunity in terms of the tracking aspect of things. I think most of the things we track properly are what we consider mandatory.

I think that is definitely an area of focus for our training and Development Coordinator down the road. Right now the HR folks do track the promotion. It is definitely for resource tracking. I think we need to keep services in mind as we obviously develop and implement those training programs.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: That represent as challenge, so that is why I wanted to gather feedback and tips for you all. How are you guys able to track training completion?

>> SAHAR BEHBOUDIFAR: Well, if that is mandatory training, then it is true, we have the Loudoun eLearn. It is easy to track everyone. At the end they have to take the quiz, then they will receive a certificate, internal certificate.

But for those that I offer, and I do virtually, I always can track the number of folks that are on the call. Track the facilitator that monitors the Chat Box, and the panel there to help for advancing slides or doing quiz or breakout rooms or something like that.

The other thing for in-person ones, I had the training evaluation form. So, basically that is another facet to see, you know, to track the number of folks, that they are attending, and for, you know, most trainings, because when it comes to, I think title is very important, for folks that they want to attend optional trainings, and for mandatory, then it is just a general, like, overview of ADA,

or LEP.

But for those that are optional, I always try to be creative about title of the training to make sure people feel like they need this information for their awareness, especially for ADA. It is not a matter of learning anything about ADA for work.

It is a matter of your rights and also your loved ones, because no matter what no one sign up to be a person with disabilities. Any of us can become a member of this community at any point in time.

So, it is always good to know about rights and resources for ourselves and our community and our loved ones.

I am very fortunate that many staff attending, they are very much involved. Those are the ways that I can track.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Yes. Excellent. Excellent. Yes, Cameron, I think you shared before that the training platform keeps good tracking completion training. Is there anything else you would like to add?

>> CAMERON MOORE: Sure. That is correct. The good thing about training is not only can you see your completion and go back and revisit trainings that you may have had to pause for whatever reason, your supervisors are able to see that, as well. So the actual vision as it relates to the tracking platform to see what it is you need to do, there is a litany of different things in that platform.

So, the good part about it is, it really keys out what you specifically need to do for your role. When you get hired, some trainings are applicable to everybody, and then there are some trainings only applicable to you and your role.

The good thing about that, everyone can see, whether it is the employee or supervisor, can see what it is that needs to be done or completed in a timely fashion.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Yes. Thank you. Seyoum, is there anything you would like to add as far as tracking training completion?

>> SEYOUM BERHE: Sure. The non-refugee immigrant side is very difficult because we do not have the funding to provide the services. That is a tough one. With refugees we have over 8,000 new refugees to Virginia. Everyone is in the system. Every training done for them or the staff, is in the system.

The reason I know the success story of the disabled person who is now working and paying his rent, was because I have the data. The Virginia newcomer information system. We have -- it doesn't mean we captured everything, but it is Federally funded. As you know, we got so have the data.

But the immigrant side is where we have not gotten that far, mainly because of funding. We have it for refugees, but not for other immigrants.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Interesting. Yes, I was previously working

in the refugee program and I was aware there is a tracking way for the training, so, yes, we always try to go into technology, but, again, sometimes there is not enough funding to use technology and technology keeps advancing, as well.

We might be using some systems that then become obsolete, and then we need more funding. Yeah. I see the challenge.

Well, this is the last question that we have for our panelists. I wanted to, before I close, to ask the panelists if there is anything else that they would like to share, or information for the particular agency, or any information they have learned today that they thought it was important to highlight?

I see Sahar is raising her hand. Go ahead, Sahar.

>> SAHAR BEHBOUDIFAR: I just want to mention something. We are talking about technology and how it makes many things easier, but we need to be mindful about whether they are accessible or not.

So, when we move to any new platform, whether they are user-friendly, whether they are accessible for our employees, or, for example, regarding the Seyoum case, whether the platform is accessible for immigrants and refugees. Most of the time this is something that people overlook, and when I am talking about accessibility from the disability standpoint, whether it is something that people can use it easily with using Screen Reader, whether it is good for folks that are low-vision. Whether it is good for any type of disability.

Especially these days for neurodivergent communities, those individuals with autism, ADHD and so forth. Since there are many different agencies on the call, I just wanted to mention, please be mindful about the process that you are selecting any platform.

Please make sure you consider all aspects of accessibility. Thank you.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Thank you very much for sharing this. This was one of the notes that I wanted to share on my presentation, the accessibility aspect of the training. I don't believe I spent much time to explain, but we did find a situation at our agency where we developed these eModules, online training, which was very engaging, and we used the storyline platform that we understood was accessible to Screen Readers and things like that, but then we -- agency reached out to us and mentioned due to the visual impairment, were not able to follow the interactions or even use the mouse.

So, we determined it was an important aspect for us to develop an alternative training, the solution we found was to complete a desktop recording of the training and provide a video. We reached out to the person who had the challenge to access the training, and it worked very well for them, as they could listen into the training, and they didn't have to take any actions using their visuals or their

mouse.

So, I am thankful that you brought up this aspect, because it is very important that we talk about engages, images, and things like that, but we need to consider the accessibility aspect and limitations some people may have. Thank you.

All right. Is there anybody else in the panel discussion -- we Lew -- next, we will open for questions. I will reach out to my colleague to see if we have any questions that the panel can also address, but if there are additional comments from the panelist, please feel free. We are doing good on time. If there is any additional remark, feel free to share. You can raise your hand or speak directly.

If not, we can just continue and open the Q&A Session, and, again, my colleague, Jesus, has been collecting -- I haven't been able to follow the Chat, but, Jesus, are there any particular questions that you think we could address at this time, either us or the panel?

>> JESUS PEREZ: Hi, Montserrat. We have been receiving some questions. Steve wants to make sure is there a way that people, managers and facilitators take tests to make sure they are up-to-date with the regulations?

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Jesus, do you mind repeating that question one more time.

>> JESUS PEREZ: Yes. Steve grammar asked if there is a way to make sure that Case Managers and Service Facilitators take tests so that they are up-to-date with regulations.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: All right.

It is about Case Managers and Service Facilitators. I think -- I don't know if that would be -- are there any of the panelists? What we can do, we will reach out to Steve. We might perhaps need a little more details on his particular question, and we will certainly address that at a later time. But I might need a little more details on what particular tests he is referencing. We will reach out to Steve later.

>> JESUS PEREZ: Is there any insight on what can be done for interpreters that assist families in Special Education?

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Maybe, Patricia, is that something that perhaps you could address? Let me see if she is still -- would you like to address that question, Patricia? I think you would be a good fit.

>> PATRICIA MICHELSEN-KING: I am sorry. Is it for -- can you repeat the question? I heard it, but I wasn't sure you were going to give it -- I didn't know I was included in this part.

>> JESUS PEREZ: Yes. Is there any insight on what can be done for interpreters that assist families in Special Education.

>> PAT MICHELSEN-KING: Well, actually I think there is a need

for training for more interpreters working with families with disabilities. I think since there is so many different kinds of disabilities, there is a lot of terminology and vocabulary that I think that sometimes it is challenging or the interpreter doesn't know. I think that without more training, sometimes what the interpreters do is they guess, or they, you know, from the context.

Sometimes they are just not getting it exactly right. Even in the IEP tests and things like this -- in legal terms and the legalese. In the terminology, it is common to people talking about this. What is an IEP, an individual education test life and plan for the education. So, it is understanding all of these.

I think that interpreters also talking to others that work in the same field and talk to people in the state. I think we have a lot of resources around us that we don't even know we have. Other people working at interpreters in those type of questions -- for those type of programs or agencies, or whatever, can get together.

But I think by getting in touch with Montserrat or with me, I would be happy to give you some leads. I don't have that at the tip of my hands right now, but I have spoken to many people who have worked with families with these challenges and it is difficult. I don't know if my colleagues have anything to add?

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: It looks like Sahar would like to add some information?

>> SAHAR BEHBOUDIFAR: Just based on my experience, I am the Certified Interpreter for Farsi, and so I am with families, how to interpret accurately. At the same time, I work with the Americans with Disabilities Act, so I would say something that needs to be considered for an interpreter who is going to provide services to a special-needs kid, and the family, it is good to know about the ADA requirements.

All the information is available on ADA.gov, especially for Title II agencies, education, the higher-eds and also schools under the Title II agency. it is good for them to at least become familiar with the requirements under Title II, what to ask, and what not to ask. How far they can ask about disabilities, or, you know, about the Best Practices, during interpreting. There is many good information on ADA.gov. That is my two cents.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Excellent. Thank you. All right. I think we can move onto the next question. We have one. Jesus?

>> JESUS PEREZ: Last question, very interesting from Leah. She is asking if there are trainings, accessibility trainings, for those in charge of website creation, or website content?

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Yes, Sahar. Your hand is raised. Go ahead.

>> SAHAR BEHBOUDIFAR: Yes. I saw that question and I thought

it was a great question. There are new rules about website accessibility that were published maybe last week or the week before that. It is always good to provide some training for those individuals that, you know, they update the website, or create any Social Media posts for any State and Local government agencies.

They need to be familiar with color contrast requirements, with font size, preferred fonts, and also Alt-Text.

It is very important to provide training for staff that they are working on the website, proper heading, and these are all required for -- there is a reason behind that. Those individuals that they are using Screen Readers, if you don't follow the rules, then the Screen Reader starts reading scattered.

So, make sure there are tons of resources on the internet. If you Google it you can find it through Universities, through ADA.gov, through different agencies. And I highly recommend to just find resources, at least for basics, and for those individuals working on the website or Social Media accounts.

>> MA. LORNA BATTLES: I posted the link on digital.gov, a good resource for anything accessibility and ADA Compliance. There is web-based trainings in there that I think people that manage websites can definitely look into.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Yes. Thank you for the information. I wanted to take the opportunity with this question to share a resource that we have at our agency at DMAS. We have our Digital Accessibility Officer, Lisa Dove. She has provided a large number of trainings in regard to Digital Accessibility. There is a lot of information out there online, but sometimes it is very complex to understand. So, our colleague, Lisa, has been doing an amazing work to make that information more digestible for each of us, so that when we put together, let's say brochures or flyers on content for a program, that we take into consideration the main aspects of Digital Accessibility when that information is being posted online.

So, I wanted to say this, because it might be very complex sometimes to understand all the information, but it is very important that at least everyone is conscious of the Digital Accessibility aspect, and try to learn as much, and make their content as accessible as possible.

All right. Is that one of the last questions out there or are there any additional questions out there?

>> JESUS PEREZ: We don't have any additional questions.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: All right. If you think of any other questions, you can send them to us here at the email on the screen to the Civil Rights Coordinator and we would happy to address any additional questions as it relates to this topic.

Let me go through this slide. I wanted to put together more

resources on Civil Rights training. And Patricia's contact information if you are interested in reaching out to her about interpretation and translation accuracy. That is it for us.

I just wanted to say thank you, everyone. A very special thank you to all the panelists for sharing their resources. I think this has been an extremely informative session, and I hope that everyone has learned something new today, and I hope that we can use this session as inspirational for all of us to continue the great work that we are doing about Language and Disability Access, and to take into consideration that there are barriers for individuals with Limited English Proficiency and individuals with disabilities, that we want to make sure we address so that they can access our services, and that we can communicate effectively with all of them.

So, if there are no further comments or questions, we will close this session. Thank you very much. Thank you to Jesus and my team, for all the help. And we will be in touch soon for the next Forum. We will plan a few additional forums for 2024. So, be on the lookout on our website, where you will be seeing the next upcoming dates.

Thank you, everyone. I appreciate your time being here today.

(Session was concluded at 11:51 a.m. ET)

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