



Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS)

# Stay Connected

**AT3 WEBINAR: SOCIAL ISOLATION, ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY, AND A PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION**

---

**Arlene Lugo, Program Director, CT Tech Act Project**

**Patricia Richardson, State Unit on Aging/ADRC/NWD**

**Professor Nicholas Nicholson, Quinnipiac University**

Supported in part by grant number 90NWC30023 from the Administration for Community Living, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201

# CARES Act Grant Overview in CT

- Funded by Administration for Community Living (ACL) for Aging and Disability Resource Centers/No Wrong Doors state agencies
- Emergency funding in response to the outbreak of COVID-19
- \$455,454 available to Connecticut based on the demographics of:
  - Age of people 60 years of age or older
  - People with disabilities over 18
- **Grant Period: April 1, 2020 - September 30, 2021**

# Stay Connected Program Objective

To connect individuals with disabilities, aged 18 or older, or adults 60 years of age or older to the most appropriate Assistive Technology (AT) to foster improved engagement and connection with family, friends, their community and medical providers during this pandemic when many of us are staying home to stay safe.

# Stay Connected Project Partners

- Contracts with:
  - 5 Area Agencies on Aging
  - 5 Centers for Independent Living
  - 3 Assistive Technology Partner agencies, and
- ADS state leads provide grant/program management & technical assistance
- Professor Nicholson provides guidance on his Social Isolation Scale, our overall process and Quinnipiac University students for post-surveys

# Stay Connected Process:



Individuals contact AAA or CIL to be screened for Stay Connected Program



Individual is asked a series of questions – will receive resources and a referral for an AT Consultation if criteria is met



Referral sent to AT Partner



AT Partner contacts individual for remote AT Consultation



AT Partner recommends technology which will be provided via a variety of funding sources



AT Partner provides remote training & follow up to individual

# Additional Partnerships: Help with Technology Costs

- National Family Caregiver Respite Supplemental Programs
- PLAN of CT Charitable Trust Foundation
- Centers for Independent Living CARES Act funds
- Department of Social Services – Medicaid Unit
  - Community First Choice – Self-directed long-term services for active Medicaid recipients
  - Money Follows the Person
  - Medicaid waivers:
    - Department of Developmental Services
    - Mental Health Waivers
    - Person Care Assistant Waivers
    - Autism Waivers
    - CT Home Care Program for Elder Waivers
    - Acquired Brain Injury Waivers

# Validated Social Isolation Scale

- Using validated SIS for older adults developed by Professor Nicholson of Quinnipiac University
- AAAs and CILs screen during Information and Referral calls for social isolation – responses are entered into a Survey Monkey which provides instant results

# Social Isolation Scale Questions

Thinking about your family, friends, and neighbors how many do you:

1. See face-to-face at least once a month?
2. Communicate with on a personal level?
3. Feel close to on a personal level?

The following questions are answered by: Strongly disagree, Somewhat disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat agree or Strongly agree

4. Overall, I feel that my relationships are fulfilling
5. I feel like I just don't belong
6. I feel I spend enough time involved in social activities

## Additional Questions – Important to / Important for

- To obtain a more wholistic view & person-centered approach:
  - Living situation
  - Ability to access groceries and medication
  - Connect with religious or spiritual community
  - Other disability information
  - Current technology available and usage
  - Demographic info

# AT Consultation:

- If criteria for social isolation is met individual is referred for AT Consultation to identify appropriate technology match
  - Remote consultation
  - Remote AT demonstrations or AT device loans provided
  - Recommendation of technology and hotspot if needed in brief report
  - Funding sources explored
  - Technology provided with resources for safety online
  - Training provided

## Other Resources / Interventions:

- If not eligible for the AT Consultation, they are provided with other resources and information:
  - Connection to Community Based Services
  - Screening for eligibility for other programs
  - Zero Isolation: Building Socially Integrated Communities

## Post Survey - 6 Social Isolation Scale questions

- Conducted 30 days after the initial training ends by AT Partner
- Quinnipiac research students to assist at 60 days and quarterly until the end of the grant
- Benefits of post survey:
  - Provides data to adjust SIS
  - Data to validate for persons with disabilities
  - Provide data on longitudinal impact on social isolation and use of technology over time
  - Reduces device abandonment

# Stay Connected – Progress

- Stay Connected project launched on June 29, 2020
- As of Sept. 21, 2020:
  - Individuals screened: 265
  - Individuals referred for AT Consultation: 79
  - AT consultations received: 32

## Stay Connected – What's Next

- Surveys Conducted: Resident Service Coordinators, Senior Centers & Municipalities
- Trying to provide information to Libraries & Senior Centers to resurrect their volunteer base for computer training and support
- Referring to existing Nonprofit org: Ur Community Cares for ongoing technology volunteer supports
- Care Managers from National Family Support Program

## Anecdotes:

Consumer is the primary caregiver for her husband. She limits time away from home due to concern for his well-being. She loved the idea of using a drop-in feature with video to check in on him when she is in another room, running errands or meeting a friend for a quick lunch.

Recommendation: Amazon Echo Show 10”

Technology Provided by: National Family Caregiver Program

## **Anecdotes (continued):**

Consumer has been using her daughter's smartphone to attend church services via Zoom. Due to vision loss, she needed a device with a larger screen. She wanted to be able to connect with family and friends through FaceTime and Zoom as well as participate in video telehealth appointment.

Recommendation: iPad (7th Generation) 10.2"

Technology Provided by: CARES Act Funding

## **Anecdotes (continued):**

Consumer has limited mobility due to a brain injury and she requested technology to help her connect with her family and friends by phone calls & video chats with a large enough screen for her to be able to see.

Recommendation: iPhone 11 Pro Max

Technology Provided by: Grant from UCP of Eastern CT

Results: She loves being able to attend church, check in with family and friends using Zoom, listen to music and books. She is attending events through the Senior Center such as Choir practice. This has been an amazing opportunity for her.

# Questions & Answers

## Contact us:

- **Patty Richardson: [patricia.richardson@ct.gov](mailto:patricia.richardson@ct.gov)**
- **Arlene Lugo: [arlene.lugo@ct.gov](mailto:arlene.lugo@ct.gov)**
- **Professor Nicholson: [nicholas.nicholson@quinnipiac.edu](mailto:nicholas.nicholson@quinnipiac.edu)**