

UCEDD Directors Meeting Panel on Navigating COVID Year 3

2/17/2022

As we enter year three of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to reflect on the vast changes we as a society have undergone. Words like pandemic, vaccine, variants, boosters, PCR and rapid tests, quarantine, social distancing and more have become a part of our everyday vocabulary. I think I speak for everyone when I express that we are collectively exhausted, burnt out, and fatigued by the impact of the pandemic. Our society is grieving lives lost, navigating everchanging safety guidance, and constantly looking for the light at the end of the tunnel.

We've participated in countless conversations about COVID public health response and as a network we have responded with strength and resilience. Our network members have tirelessly continued to support the disability community through the delivery of accessible vaccine sites, dissemination of plain language public health information, collection of meaningful data, and much more. However, the pandemic is far from over.

Today this panel will discuss effective outreach strategies that UCEDDs and other disability leaders are still employing and what areas need continued effort and advocacy to support the disability community as we persist in our response to the ever-changing COVID environment.

Joining us today includes:

- Max Barrows and Hasan Ko from Green Mountain Self-Advocates. Max is the Outreach Director at GMSA and is joined by Hasan, one of their self-advocacy leaders.
- Next, we have Emily Hotez who is an Assistant Professor of Medicine at UCLA's David Geffen School of Medicine where she currently serves on the leadership team of the Autism Intervention Research Network on Physical Health (AIR-P) Project.
- Lastly, we are joined by Mary Willard. Mary is the Director of Training and Technical Assistance for APRIL or the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living.

1. All- Many of us are experiencing feelings of fatigue in our outreach efforts going into the third year of this pandemic. How have you and your team been navigating this so called "COVID fatigue"?
2. Max & Hasan- What lessons has Green Mountain Self Advocates learned in doing covid information sharing with self-advocates?
3. Max & Hasan- What do you think is important for UCEDD Directors and AUCD network centers to know as they continue to share information with the disability community about COVID-19?

4. Emily Hotez- What strategies have you found most effective in enhancing public health communication efforts, especially for marginalized or multiply marginalized populations? Systems level? Practical level?
5. Emily Hotez- What unique partnerships have helped you be successful in this work?
6. Mary Willard- There continues to be significant challenges in supporting rural communities during the pandemic. What unique considerations are important and what strategies do you recommend for improving outreach to rural or otherwise underserved communities?
7. Mary Willard- As we move forward in this work, what areas or issues do you believe still need the most advocacy and focus in order to best support the disability community?
8. All- What recommendations do you have for UCEDD leaders and network members on how we as a disability community can move forward with resilience to better plan for tomorrow?