Please stand by for realtime captions. >> Okay, I want to welcome everyone this afternoon. To what will be a really great event here. With our panelists. We have a nice big audience today. To get out front on all of these issues that are confusing the heck out of a lot of people. I just want to make sure, I guess I am supposed to do myself first.

Introduce yourself Scott.

My name is Scott Elliott. I am with the progressive center in the Association of Center for Independent living. I have to do the -- I am sitting here with a maroon shirt.

I am not used to this part. I like in person. I'm a big guy with a mustache and a beard sitting in a wheelchair. How's that? my background, you do not want to know. It is my closet. You will see multiple colors. I am at home today working from home. We will go from there. We want to go around to you next Carmella, I believe. Correct?

yes. Thank you everybody. My name is Carmella Sullivan ski. I am the director for Independent living in the member of the New Jersey Association of centers for Independent living, and the statewide Independent living Council. My pronouns are she, her, and I am a white female with highlighted blonde hair. I wear glasses, and my background is a window. I am sitting at my desk. Today's event is really the topic to address the issues that are at the forefront for people with disabilities as they attempt to navigate the ever-changing situations that arise due to the pandemic. A couple of housekeeping rules before we get into the introductions of our themed panelist. First I want to apologize for anybody who needed ASL. We had an interpreter registered, and unfortunately last-minute was unable to assist. We have done our best to get somebody as a replacement. Apparently today is a very busy day for interpreters. We do have card available and in your reminder you received the URL to sign on to receive the cart. We will have a recording of the transcript at the end as well. We are recording this session. I also want to let everybody know that we are not utilizing the raise hand option. Any questions will come through the Q&A button. Which is on the bottom of your screen. If you do have a question for a panelist please put that into the Q&A box. Finally there is no chat option available for this session. Again, only Q&A. Without further ado I will start with Dr. Fisher, if you would please introduce yourself.

Thank you for allowing me to be part of the panel. I'm a pediatric infectious disease specialist and I serve as a special advisor to the Commissioner of health. My pronouns are she and her. I am a white female with very short white hair. I am wearing today a blue striped shirt and gray glasses. I am wearing blue earrings and I am sitting in my office at the Department of Health.

Thank you Dr. Fisher. Colleen?
I'm a white disabled female with long brown hair pulled back in a ponytail and I am wearing a black shirt. I am wearing black glasses and my pronouns are she and her and I am sitting in my office. I am the treasurer of the statewide Independent living Council.

Thank you Colleen.

Kathleen?

I am Kathleen Madigan. I am the integration advisor and I oversee New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. My pronouns are she and her, and I have long red hair. I am wearing glasses and I am wearing a white shirt with a gray jacket. I am talking to you from my home office as I am teleworking today. I really want to thank you all for including me in this panel.

Thank you Kathleen. Hobby year?

good afternoon everyone. My pronouns are she and him. I am a Latino male, short hair and glasses. Salt and pepper hair. More salt than pepper goatee. And I'm in my home office.

As well as the director for the Center for disability support of health and wellness.

Stephanie [Indiscernible] is with us as a technical assistant. An independent living specialist here at dawn Center for Independent living. Stephanie white female with a green shirt on sitting in an office with the file cabinet behind her. Thank you.

Without further ado Scott, would you like to start the round of questions?

yes.

This question is for Dr. Fisher.

Please share with the group an update of where we are today. What the medical community is saying about the future.

Thinks. Right now we are still in this pandemic. We are reporting anywhere from 3000 and 5000 new cases each day. It is a tremendous undercount. Many people are testing at home and the results are not reported. People with mild symptoms are not getting tested. Many people with mild symptoms. We also know that in our hospitals we have between 701,000 in patients with COVID-19. We are experiencing somewhere between 15 and 25 deaths every day in New Jersey. We have also looked at our modeling and predictions for what will go forward. It is predicted we will stay at these levels throughout the summer. Probably with small peaks in the middle of June because of the Memorial Day weekend. In the middle of July because of July 4. That is pretty much where we are. We know now a lot more about this virus and how it is spread and how we can protect ourselves. These ways to protect yourself have not changed. Please get vaccinated and get boosted when you are eligible. This virus is spread by droplets. Droplets are the spit particles you make when you talk or sing or shout or sneeze. They go out into the air and most fall
to the ground harmlessly within 3 to 6 feet. If you are trying to protect yourself the first thing you would want to do is wear a mask. The first thing you want to do is get vaccinated. Wear a mask, the mask can be worn properly. It must cover your nose and your mouth. It should have a tight fit. When you have the mask on it does two things. You are breathing through it. Any virus that is in the air around you is filtered out by the mask. If you are infected in do not realize it and you are shedding virus that virus will go to the inside of the mask and not out to infect other people. Masks are useful. For people who are at high risk of getting COVID-19, you should consider continuing to use your mask. To protect yourself. Especially when you are indoors, and in areas where there are lots of people and poor ventilation. The other thing you can do is stay six feet away from other people. Those droplets, as I said, fall to the ground within six feet. If you stay that distance, then you are less likely to get exposed to those viruses. It is a physical distance. We do not want people to socially distance. We have been to socially distant, and we have had all kinds of mental health consequences from that. We want you to be socially connected. Do it at a physical distance if you are at risk for getting this virus. We want you to wash your hands. If you are sick please stay home. Do not go out and infect other people. If you know you have been exposed to the virus, get tested. If you develop symptoms that are suggestive of the virus get tested. If you are positive stay home and isolate. If you have been exposed and cannot be vaccinated you should quarantine. These are the same rules we have had, and they continue to work. Even as we see new variants of the virus getting around.

>> Colleen, based on your experience and the information you have in your advocacy efforts, can you please share with the group some of the barriers that people with disabilities have encountered as a direct result of the pandemic?

thank you Carmella. This is Colleen. We can all speak for hours on this question. I will take a couple moments to highlight some of the bigger barriers that have been seen in our community. First off I think access to testing and access to vaccination has been a challenge for many in our community. Whether it is having the appropriate transportation to get to and from vaccine sites, and whether it is being able to ascertain information online for where to get vaccination or testing. We know that a lot of sites are difficult for people to navigate. With certain disabilities. It has also been challenging for people to actually administer home testing. We did in this pandemic. We are entering your number three now. There are many barriers. Right now, access to getting boosters and home tests have been seen at a high level in our community. I think later we will talk about resources that folks can get help with. Getting their vaccines and their booster and the information that they need in order to protect themselves. I also think, and Dr. Fisher mentioned this briefly. Isolation has been a huge issue for our community. Many of the services that we rely upon on a daily basis have been significantly hampered during the pandemic. The impact on mental health has been fairly significant.

Thank you Colleen. Scott?
Scott: Many people feel they are getting conflicting information. Can you speak to those trusted sources that we should rely on to get accurate information?

Thank you Scott. This is hobby year. The most trusted sources for anything having to do with this pandemic are scientific sources. I know that has been in question for some time. There is no question, we should always look to our scientists and medical professionals to get the answer to these questions. That’s number one. It is highly important that you get the information from those places. The CDC at the national level, if you were on your computer you have access, it's a great resource. Here the department of health or Dr. Fisher works as well as the Department of human services. In their individual offices. As we all know the Department of human services, having to do with the new disability in the state of New Jersey. More than likely between all of those we would be able to answer any of those questions. Colleen mentioned this briefly. If you go to a website or a place and there is no access to your own best advocate. Tell people I went to this website and it was broken and did not work. My reader cannot read the screen. Sometimes they do not know that is happening. Sometimes you have to educate them. By doing so you help other people who come to those websites for the information. Thank you.

Thank you hobby year. This is Scott again. Dr. Fisher can you please share some of the common myths that are circulating regarding the pandemic?

Scott thank you for that question. There are so many myths that are out there and so many miss information. Rather than keeping the misinformation I will try to tell you what we know are the actual facts. This pandemic is in its second year. Despite that, we are learning new things all the time. New things about this virus and we are learning new things about the diseases that it is causing. In the post COVID diseases. Long COVID or post acute COVID. Because we are learning new things our recommendations are changing very frequently. As Javier said you need to be sure that you have the most up-to-date information. You need to go to resources that are trusted and will give you the facts. For me, if you have Internet connection the best place to go is the New Jersey Department of health. I would use the CDC and prevention. As I mentioned I am a pediatrician. When I look for information about children I go to the American Academy of pediatrics. They have a website for parents called healthy children.org. That website is available in English and Spanish. It is really geared for parents to tell them everything. Not only about COVID-19, but about all things pediatrics and things you should think about. When you are dealing with children or working with children. Those things are incredibly important. I do want to say the vaccines that we are using currently have been very well studied. No shortcuts were taken or getting them authorized. They are continuously looked at for safety and for efficacy. The reason I say this is because very quickly, we know if there are any special problems or risks for one vaccine versus the other vaccine. We are monitoring this. When you got the vaccine you may
have signed up for something called be safe. You can do that on your phone. You will get a text message like once a week for the first week. Let's know what is happening. These symptoms can then be tracked. If there is any concern at all, we have several different monitoring systems that are looking at any kind of side effects from the vaccine. In fact, there is a group of physicians that meet weekly. To discuss any unusual or unexpected side effects. That information is immediately put out and made available to the public. These vaccines are safe. There are effective. They will not prevent every disease but they will keep you out of the hospital. They will keep you from dying. Very important. The other thing that we know now is that we have medicines that are effective to prevent the infection. We have the vaccines to prevent infection. We also have a monoclonal antibody. This is a medicine that gives you immune protection. Against these viruses. It is recommended for people who may not respond to the vaccine. Or who cannot be vaccinated. We have medicines to treat COVID-19. Many of these are most effective when they are starting quickly. That is why it is important that you get tested. If you test positive talk to a healthcare provider. See if you are eligible for one of these medicines. There is a medicine you can take by mouth. Called Paxlovid. It is an antiviral medicine. It is an inhibitor. What it does is it kills the virus. It decreases, again, by 90%. The chance that you will need to be in the hospital. It is a nice medicine. Interacts with lots of other medicines. You need to talk to your provider. To your physician and your nurse practitioner. Whoever is helping you with your medical care. Make sure it does not react with any other medications you might be on. There is an antiviral called Remdesivir. We use it for people who are hospitalized with COVID-19. It can also be given to people who are not sick enough to be hospitalized and prevent them from getting sicker. The other thing that we have, another group of monoclonal antibodies. Which are effective if given soon after you get sick. Before you are sick enough to be hospitalized. Those have to be given by an infusion. Into the vein. Those are the many things that are available. When I say today, maybe not true tomorrow. Look for those trusted sources. There have been lots and lots of chatter out there about medicines that do not work. Please, do not use the Internet as a way to order medications, or to order vaccines. Those are scams. There are a lot of scams out there that will take advantage of people. If someone asks you to pay for a vaccine that is not one of our vaccines. The vaccines are all available free of charge. Be careful of what you hear, and what you read on the Internet. There are great sources on the Internet. There is a lot of garbage and misinformation. Stay with those trusted sources. Most importantly talk to the people who take care of you. Talk to your doctors and your nurse practitioners. Get their advice. They know you and they know what works for you, and what other medicines you might be on. Thank you.

Thank you Dr. Fisher.

Kathleen, from the perspective of FEMA can you talk to the group about what people with disabilities can do to be proactive in an effort to protect and prepare themselves for protecting themselves against the pandemic events against COVID?
I would echo what Dr. Fisher said about being able to utilize trusted sources to get the appropriate information that you need. To understand what you have to do to keep yourself healthy and safe. I would say, and I have seen this and other disaster scenarios. It is very important for people to understand what their needs are. To literally take an inventory of what their needs are. To stay healthy and survive. A lot of times people do not want to think about do I have enough medication? also, questions may arise about what should you be doing for your personal health? to get through this. I do agree with Dr. Fisher. Reaching out to your provider, your health provider and your doctor with any questions is important. One thing I can say is New Jersey is an incredibly active and wonderful state that is full of resources for people with disabilities. I worked closely with the independent living centers and Kelly Boyd. For the state of New Jersey. That in addition to the independent living centers. People should not be afraid to reach out. New Jersey is just wonderful and offering resources to folks. In my role I have worked very hard with community partners to build relationships for information sharing. Offer resources to people. You have an incredibly effective network of people in New Jersey. I am here constantly to support and offer guidance as needed. People can realize they can tap into all of these resources to get the information they need to stay healthy.

Thank you Colleen. This is Scott again. Can you speak to some of the issues with self testing, and vaccine access?

thank you Scott. Yes, I think as I mentioned earlier getting tough has been challenging for a lot of people. Just to share personal stories and making sure that if you are living in a dwelling that has more than one address, being able to get tests sent to that address, from the federal program, it has been challenging for people. A lot of people do not know that three tests, you are able to go online and get several free at-home testing kits sent to your home again. It is a multistep process. You have to access the Internet in order to get the test. If you are going to buy tests at a local pharmacy you have to have access to transportation. In testing itself, I recently had a pretty close exposure. I tested yesterday, in fact, and throughout the pandemic I have used home tests. My living situation has changed. Up until yesterday I did not realize that there was a adhesive sticker on the outside of the container. I have been ripping apart the box to get into the test itself. Being able to open the components of the test. We counted the number of individual physical steps needed to self administer the COVID test. It was about 20 from start to finish. That is a lot. If you are disabled or caring for a loved one, make sure that before you need to test your self or your loved one, that you know what your needs are. Planning that, that it occurs before you need to use the test. What kind of assistance do you need to self administer the test? What assistance do you need to help others administer the test? who can provide that information? if there are visual barriers. How can you get the assistance you need. There are no tactile indicators on the actual well for the test itself. In order to get the results. Again,
connectivity. In the disability community is a challenge. It goes back to what Kathleen said. Planning is of the utmost importance. It is a very difficult process for some people to think about. What kind of assistance, not when the sky is blue and the sun is shining and you are feeling low. What kind of assistance do you need of somebody with a disability, or as a caretaker or service provider when things are not going so well? Having that plan ahead of time will help you advocate for your self or others.

Thank you Colleen. Carmela, you are up. >> Hobby year, when you introduce yourself you mentioned the disability advocacy committee. Can you speak to what the disability advocacy committee is involved in, and how they are bringing the issues of the pandemic to the forefront?

Sure, it is a disability action committee that has two members. Scott and Colleen. They are well represented. The New Jersey disability act started as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic when we saw there were a lot of issues related to COVID. People unable to get their groceries. The state was not set up to do that. One of our IL centers and a bunch of other groups take together and solved this problem. It was a bunch of people who are advocates and parents and state groups, nonprofits and independent living centers. We get together and we wrote a report. Which you can access at MJD.org. We are having a few Internet issues.

People felt it was critical. We do not know what the extent of business will be. Maybe five years from now we will look back and know. We have been advocating for a number of things and meeting with lawmakers with the governor's office. We met with the department of health and Department of human services. To really hone in on some of the things we have identified into other groups. To make sure that people with disabilities get those services that they need.

Which are critical. That includes office of emergency management. We are we are trying to get legislation passed to have four people in that office. We mentioned Kelly Boyd. Who is an amazing person. She is one person in a contracted position for the whole state of New Jersey. That is not sustainable. If we are to get serious about making sure that people survive, whatever the next thing is that comes around, then we also have to invest in our communities and in centers for independent living and other agencies. We cannot just say we will do stuff. We actually have to do it. That is what we are trying to do. Sometimes you have to make people angry. People with disabilities [ Indiscernible ] for a long time. Nobody has noticed that until people with disabilities started dying. That is a travesty to our community and to the nation.

Thank you hobby year. [ Indiscernible ] do you want to start us off on questions or would you like me to start. You are on mute.

Thank you. We will be moving into some of the questions we are asking for the audience. We are hoping to get to all of the questions. We do have more feeding through. As time goes on. We will take them one at a time. At the end, if we do not get to all of your questions we will do our best to respond to them and send out the responses electronically to all. We will start with you Kathleen. One of the participants raised
the issue of the return to in person meetings. What safety protocols, again for the perspective of FEMA, do you think we should be utilizing as we move toward in person activities. Meetings and social events. Can you speak to that? I will go back to what Dr. Fisher told us. When it comes to meetings this brings up to the topic of accessible meetings. We have all been virtually connecting for two years. It is true, there are many people who do not have smart phones or computers or access to that. Organizers have to do whatever they can to make meeting successful. That includes the old-fashioned conference line. I am on a lot of meetings with people from all over the country. In different time zones and everyone. Many times there have been connectivity problems with zoom or teams. I will tell you the truth the backup can be a conference call. Also, I think if people are meeting in person it is the same thing. When you are at a meeting you want to make sure everything is successful and there is enough room for people to safely meet. Again, accessibility and full inclusion are paramount for organizers to take into consideration. Whatever people's needs are.

Thank you Kathleen. This is Scott again. This question is for Dr. Fisher. Please let us know what safety precautions work or have not worked, to protect our members from contracting COVID-19. It is multiple mutations.

Kathleen just reviewed them. Let me go through them again. I do not mind repeating this stuff. Sometimes repetition is a way to stress the importance. Vaccines are very good. Not everyone is going to respond to the vaccines however. Some people's immune systems will not work as well as other peoples. As we get older our response is less than when we were younger. Vaccines are great. One vaccine will not do it. You need to have the series. The primary series is two of the Pfizer vaccines or two more during the vaccines. One J&J vaccine was also considered a primary series. Now we know that the Pfizer Moderna vaccine's work better. They have fewer serious side effects than the J&J vaccine. They are now preferred. Even the primary series is not enough. You need a booster jewel dose. If you have a normal immune system you need a booster dose and five months. If you have a weakened immune system or an immune system that doesn't work as well, then you need three shots for your primary series. You get another fourth shot and a booster three months after the third shot. Now we know that for people over 50 and for people who are immunocompromised or whose immune systems are not working as well, they need a second booster. The second booster is given four months after the first booster. It's hard to keep track of the schedules and the schedules have changed numerous times since we started. We are going to the CDC website. If you can get to that. It's a great place to just ask the question, what is the immunization for COVID-19? It will bring up a page and tell you exactly the timing and which people need which vaccines. Even as I say this, within two weeks I will be out. In the next two weeks it is likely we will have a fourth vaccine. That is the Novavax vaccine. It will be likely authorized for use. We will also have the Moderna and the Pfizer vaccines for children under five. The schedule will get even more confusing. In a few weeks. That is the vaccine. The other things that work, as I mentioned, are the masks. The masks are not perfect. Even if
I wear this mask exactly as I am supposed to, I happen to wear glasses but let's say I didn't. If the virus is in the air it can infect me across my eyelids. Even with those protections, they are not perfect. Nothing is 100%. The other thing people forget is let's say you have this mask on and you aren't wearing it.

Then something bothers you and you drop that mask down under your nose. Now it is not doing very much at all. You are breathing through your nose. The mask is completely useless. What I really love are the masks down here. They do nothing, as far as protecting you from the virus. Masks are great but they have to be worn properly. As soon as you take them off they no longer work. You are wearing them all day but you go have a drink with friends, and suddenly nobody is wearing a mask. You are drinking and talking. You are no longer protected. Remember that people who are not sick are still contagious. You cannot tell who is contagious and who is not. You really have to think about what your risks are. What will happen to you if you get this virus? are you a high risk person and you have underlying problems? does somebody in your household have problems? if that is the case you will have to be more careful. You will have to be much more noogie about making sure you have the mask on all the time. And that you know who you are having interactions with. The vaccines and the masks work. Handwashing is important. It turns out the COVID-19 virus, SARS CoV-2 is not particularly spread on surfaces. We were all concerned in 2020 about wiping off our groceries and doing all this other stuff. It turned out all of that was unnecessary. Washing your hands is still a good idea. There are a lot of germs and bacteria and viruses out there that are spread on tabletops and on phones and doorknobs et cetera. Wash your hands. There are lots of things that you can get on your hands and put into your eyes. When you rub your eyes. Were put into your nose when you rub your nose or put into your mouth when you are eating. Be careful about handwashing. Clean surfaces, particularly high touched surfaces. You do not have to do anything exotic to clean them. Plain soap and water will do the trick. A lot of these bleaches and other things, the fumes are pretty toxic to us. Just go easy. When people wash their hands, a lot of times they use crazy antibiotic soaps and stuff. You do not need that. You're just trying to wash off what you may have picked up. Having your hands under running water for 15 seconds is very effective at washing things off. If you are going into surgery or doing an operation, then yes you need the more sophisticated washes. For usual everyday things, running water and plain old soap is perfect. The soap is another way to keep your hands under the water. You have to wash it off. I am in favor of soap. Do not waste your money on fancy soap. The other things to do are when you are sick stay home. When you start to feel lousy get tested. To see if you have COVID-19. It's very possible you will be able to get treatment and you won't be able to get the treatment if you are not tested and don't know you have it. We have a lot of influenza in New Jersey. It is very late in the season to have influenza. We still have the flu going around. That is another reason to check to make sure what you do have when you are sick. We happened to be in allergy season. The same symptoms you have from allergies are also symptoms of the flu or of COVID-19. When you are sick stay home and do the quarantine and isolation. Just be careful. Always be thinking about how best to protect your family and your self. Even though we
would all like to be done with COVID-19, it is not quite done with us. Thank you.

Thank you Dr. Fisher. Carmella, I think you are up. The question at the bottom here for Colleen, Javier or you.

I will open this up to anybody who thinks they might have an answer. One of the participants has asked, they stated they are having trouble finding resources and service groups that are specific to individuals that are visually impaired. Does anybody have any suggestions for them?

I would recommend the commission from the blind and visually impaired, and the American Federation, you can find both of them. A New Jersey-based division. The AFB is a national organization. They put out a number of resources for folks that are experiencing visual impairment. I would definitely encourage you also to reach out to yourselves as well. A lot of [Indiscernible] have done a lot of great work. There are several throughout the state. Each of them serve an area of several counties. They are a great resource to connect folks with disabilities. And their families to more localized resources. I think our boots on the ground [Indiscernible].

Thank you Colleen. I would reiterate for the commission and for the blind, they do have numerous support groups. That they run regularly. They are actually meeting virtually. I believe the representative mentioned at a recent silk meeting they would start meeting in person again. In North Jersey there is the vision loss alliance. They are located in Denville. That will be information that we will share in our resources. When we submit that to everybody at the end.

I was also going to say we have a member from [Indiscernible], her name is Crystal. You can find a like mine on the portal website as well. There are groups too.

Just to add, to what Colleen said about centers for independent living. If you want a peer check with your center. To get a peer experience. They may add information to the different groups you just heard about. That is always good. Thank you everyone. When we start meeting in person on June 14, what kind of precautions will everybody take?

We already answered that Scott. There is a question for Dr. Fisher. Just so the audience knows Dr. Fisher has a hard stop at 3:00 and maybe sooner. She will need to leave. Dr. Fisher, the question is what patients rights need to be in place for disabled individuals to make sure they are not overlooked for COVID protocols?

thank you. This is an important thing to remember. Everybody has rights. You need to be able to access your rights and know where to find those rights. In the resources there is a link to the patient bill of
rights. This is not only for impatience but for outpatients. This outlines your right to receive medical care. To be transferred and have communication and information and medical records. To know the cost of the hospital care. To be involved in discharge planning and have privacy and confidentiality and freedom from abuse and restraints. Civil rights and questions, complaints and appeals. It is important if there are problems, you have the ability to make a complaint. To make a specific complaint. Right at that same site, if you just ask about filing a complaint, you can file a complaint. It can be about care at a healthcare facility or billing and payment complaints and physician complaints and nurse complaints. I would encourage you if there are problems, please let somebody know. If we don't know anything about it it's impossible to fix those situations. If we do know about it, sometimes we can make a huge difference. Granted not every complaint will be answered positively. If we do not know about something we definitely can't do anything to try to fix it. We also have what we call affirmative protections. In our mandates we have put out and are instructions to hospitals we have actually really explicitly said that people with disabilities have to have a support person available to them. I know this was not happening at the beginning of the pandemic. This is now the case. If you have a disability you are absolutely entitled to have somebody with you to help. To help with your care. That is an important item. The COVID prevention has to be accessible. The Department of Health and human resources has tried to enhance your access to vaccination sites. It has not been perfect. Remember that every place that gives vaccines has to be compliant with ADA regulations. We know that there have been issues with transportation. There are a variety of free transportations you can get. To take you to vaccine centers. It includes the trains. They also include Uber. They were running a service where they would take you for free. To a vaccination site. Check out these possibilities. One of the other things that is important to know about is our call center. Not everybody has Internet access. Particularly at the beginning of the pandemic and the vaccine distribution, that was a real problem. People could not make those appointments. We developed a call center. The number is 855 - 568 - 0545. I should have added that to our resources. Hopefully we can get it in there. 855 - 568 - 0545. They can answer any questions that you have about the vaccines and about the medications. And about where you can go to get both medicines and vaccines. They can help you make an appointment and they can get you registered. There is a lot they can do for you. If you do not have Internet, or even if you do and you still need help, call the call center. They are handling literally thousands of calls a day. They are helping people with their frequently asked questions and with their not so frequently asked questions.

Thank you Dr. Fisher. There is one more for you. I will jump right to it. Dr. Fisher you may have addressed this. Maybe not in this same way. By law do we have to take the booster vaccine every year?

there is no law about getting a booster vaccine. If there is a booster developed, or if there is a new vaccine developed that will be specific for some of these variant viruses, I would highly recommend if any vaccine is recommended for use, it is because it has been put through
the safety testing. It works. It has to be efficacious and safety proven. If those are recommended, I would strongly recommend that you protect yourself and get the vaccine if you are able to. Everybody is able to. Children under five years old cannot. Hopefully by the end of the month they will be able to get them as well. We want to protect everyone in New Jersey. Vaccines are a great way to do that. They are safe and effective. At the moment they are free, for everyone. Thank you.

Carmella I think that Colleen will be up next. Is that right?

I want to say before we answer this last question there are a host of questions that have come through and there is no way we will get this done by 3:00. We will need to do a little wrap up.

All of the questions that are coming through that have not been answered, we will get you answers and we will send out those responses along with all the resources. Colleen, the last question I think we will answer before 3:00 is one of the participants wants to know what would be the recommendation for providing good support for an individual with a disability?

what would you think would be good support?

thank you everyone for joining us. These town halls would not be an option. We are so glad you have all joined us. A couple steps, I just want to, [Indiscernible] mentioning for people who have chosen not to or cannot get vaccinated, there are ways to keep ourselves safe. And to make choices to reduce our exposure to vaccines by masking and choosing not to go to highly populated areas. It is a risk-benefit analysis. Vaccines are valuable, I think. For folks who choose not to get vaccinated, making sure that you wear a mask and making sure people around you know exactly what your vulnerability is to COVID-19. If this feeds into your question, if you are somebody that is providing support to someone with a disability, make sure if you feel sick at all, they you are letting the person or the family members know you are not feeling well. So they can find other options for support. This goes back to what Kathleen said. As someone with a disability it is important for us to make sure we have backup direct support providers and personal assistance. This is hard to do. If you have not thought about it before today, I encourage all people with disabilities to do it. Think about who is in your support network? who can you call on when your DST or your PCA is not able to come. If you do not have answers to that question today that’s fine. It is definitely something we want you to think about.

Nobody is coming to save us. We know that. DSPs need to be respectful. Of the balance of the individual list accordance. The person or the family requires you to take her temperature or wear a mask in the home. Or wear gloves following all the universal protocols that you typically would. As part of your training as a DSP it is important to maintain all of those. It is also important for you to have dialogue with the person that you are supporting. About what you have concerns
about. Recognizing that as a DST activities outside of the home of the person you are supporting have an impact on that person. As Dr. Fisher said, the virus is transmitted through those droplets. What you do afterwards has an impact on what you are doing work and supporting a person. In very intimate ways. It is a challenge.

Thank you Colleen. I think we are just going to close. I just want to thank everyone. From our audience to our panelist and everyone that was on board today. And that the recording will be shared with all registrants as well as the resource list. That will be posted on the site. That will be posted on the [Indiscernible] website. [Indiscernible] again, your resource list, speaking for the [Indiscernible] that are all over the state, call us. Call us if you have questions. Like Carmella said the ones we did not get to, for hobby year and myself and some other questions, we will make sure that you get some good answers. Even if you need further information, please reach out to us.

Thanks Scott. I just want to mention to the participants that the Center for Independent living, some centers do have cares funding. If you are a person with a disability and you have encountered a barrier that is a direct result of the pandemic, reach out to your local center. See if you have financial needs. We are here to assist. The centers do not -- some have financial assistance available in the resource list. [Event has exceeded scheduled time. Captioner must proceed to next scheduled event. Disconnecting at 1:00 p.m. MST.]