

# The Impact of COVID and Implications for Post COVID Services

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# About AANE



Support for families who have children, teens & adults on the autism spectrum

- I&R & consultation
- Support Groups (grandparent, fathers, parent of teens, parent of adults)
- Training , forums (English & Spanish)

Direct Support for Adults on the autism spectrum

- Support groups (gay men, women, over 50),
- Social groups & Interest groups
- Artist's Collaborative
- Speaker's Bureau
- LifeNet (case management)
- LifeMAp (coaching)
- Neurodiverse Couples Institute

Training and Consultation for Professionals (conferences, webinars, workshops)

# AANE Changes during COVID

## Pre-COVID

- All services offered in person except I&R, webinars & some parent support groups

## During COVID

- **All** services continued virtually
- All training became virtual (conferences, webinars)
- All fundraising done virtually
- All staff worked from home
- Reduced cost of services and/or instituted pay what you can to reduce barriers

# Impact of COVID on Adults very Mixed

Some adults had lowered anxiety and were more comfortable (felt COVID was made for them)

- Expectation for less social interaction
- Preferred online work/classes
- More flexible work hours
- Better work environment (sensory, less travel & more)

Some adults had increased anxiety and found COVID disturbing

- new and unclear social rules
- Fear of loss of someone close
- isolated and lonely
- managing shopping with COVID rules
- Inability to have own space and time alone
- Loss of employment or working as essential workers

# Impact of COVID on Parents/Families very Mixed



For Families

Respond very dependent on employment situation, environment, ages of children, housing situation and availability of care

Most families with children no matter what age had much more stress

We saw more children with significant mental health issues

On the other hand, some children thrived learning from home without having to deal with the social environment.

# Positive Impact of Virtual Services

Very large increase in numbers of people using service

- Services accessible to a national audience
- Costs reduced for AANE (no cleaning, travel for staff or speakers)
- Parents didn't have to worry about and pay for babysitting and driving at night
- Adults preferred virtual meetings

Staff could work from home

Coaches could break up their time into 15 minute check-ins rather than hour chunks

# The Downside of Virtual Services

- Families and adults who had internet or technology issues could not join
- Some adults preferred in-person meetings
- Harder to assess someone's situation when you are not in the home
- Staff missing some of the camaraderie and sharing of values/information which takes place at the office
- Some feeling of distance when consulting with families virtually
- Zoom fatigue a real thing for staff and families

# Post Covid Questions

- When do we go back to in person meetings?
- Which services should be in person?
- Can we demand that people who come to meetings are vaccinated?
- How do we get the resources to maintain our services for the national audience while bringing back the local groups?
- Do we allow staff to work remotely and if so, how do we ensure staff cohesion?
- Is there a hybrid model that works well for meetings?