Embracing Technology: 
Moving the Family Support Conference Into the 21st Century

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Background

Community Crossroads
Community Crossroads is an Area Agency in southern NH that serves individuals with developmental disabilities or acquired brain disorders and their families.

Mission: Provide people in need of long term supports, either through age or disability, with the information, guidance, support, and advocacy they need to remain in their chosen homes and live full, independent lives.

NH-ME LEND
NH-ME LEND provides graduate level interdisciplinary training for parents, students, and professionals from diverse disciplines.

Mission: Prepare leaders to enter the field of maternal and child health in order to improve the system of care for children with neurodevelopmental disabilities and their families.

Family Support Conference
The NH Family Support Conference is an annual event for families, caregivers, and individuals with a disability. This event is in its 33rd year, and offers attendees the opportunity to learn current information on a variety of issues, as well as providing a forum to meet other family members and individuals with similar life experiences. Participants come away with renewed strength as well as resources to continue the journey in assisting family members to reach their full potential.

This is the first year that Community Crossroads is taking the lead on planning and coordination efforts for the conference. Members from this agency work closely with parents and family members throughout the planning process.

In the past, conference materials were only available in print. Per last years survey results, participants had concerns regarding the amount of paper used, and redundancy of the information provided. Many packets were left untouched.

Summary

The conference app and website will allow participants to view information regarding the hotel, schedule, workshops, and events. Other unique features include the following:

- Biographies of presenters.
- Detailed descriptions of all events and workshops.
- ‘Push Notifications’ which will be used during the conference to alert attendees of events.
- Sponsors can have their logos displayed within the app depending on their level of contribution.
- Surveys for workshops and overall conference experience.
- Direct messaging between users of the app to enhance communication and networking opportunities.

The conference website is currently up and running, and the app is in the planning stage. This project continues to compile all necessary information that is needed for the app.

Registration for the conference is currently underway. The app will launch on April 12. The 33rd annual Family Support Conference will be held April 26-28 at the Omni Mount Washington Hotel.

Project Activities

Through a collaboration between NH-ME LEND and Community Crossroads, this project assisted in various aspects of conference planning. The primary goal of this project was to support the creation and introduction of a conference app and website.

Conclusions

The NH-ME LEND Program is supported by a grant (#T73 MC 00024) from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and administered by the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (UAUCD).