

Advisory Committee on Aging

Tuesday, December 2, 2025

1:00pm – 2:30pm

Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Govind Hariharan, Chair

Will Johnston

La Wanda Folami Vice_chair

Kim Smith

Sharifa Adde

Jay Francis Springs

Siddiqa Gibson

Barbara Guillory

Xavier Kim

Jennifer Rewkowski

Jessica Klausner

Mary Chase Mize

Gordon Rogers

Richard Sylvia

Dominique Louis

Robert Alexander

- I. Welcome and Call to Order
 - a. Govind Hariharan, Chair
- II. No public comment
- III. Manager's Update
 - a. Becky Kurtz, Senior Managing Director, ARC



FY 2027-28 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)

- ▮ Part of the Area Plan on Aging Process
- ▮ Purpose: select providers for aging services with ARC grants
- ▮ Service period: July 2026 – June 2028
- ▮ NOFA posted October 6 and now closed
- ▮ 32 applications received (a record number) and being reviewed by ARC staff
 - Could use an ACA volunteer reviewer
- ▮ Recommended awards will be presented for your approval with the FY 27 Area Plan on Aging Update (January ACA meeting)

ONE great REGION

ARC

- b. Members interested in serving as reviewers, please contact Connie White (cwhite@atlantaregional.org)

Services To Be Funded by ARC

Single County

- Case Management
- Home Delivered Meals
- Congregate Meals
- Homemaker Service
- Personal Care Services
- Caregiver Services (Respite)
- Senior Recreation
- Transportation
- Kinship Care

Across Multiple Counties

- Culturally Appropriate Information and Referral
- Respite Voucher
- Elder Legal Assistance Program
- Kinship Care
- Home Modifications/Repairs
- Telephone Reassurance



Atlanta Regional Commission's Aging & Independence Services Department cordially invites you to attend a public hearing regarding the **Area Plan on Aging and Direct Services** provided in the 10-county region.

Wednesday, December 17, 2025
1:30 - 3:30PM

[Register Now!](#)

Owinnett Community Services | Health & Human Services
3025 Bethany Church Road, Snellville, GA 30039
OwinnettOneStep.com

Please provide your feedback by completing a survey at [this link](#) or scan the QR code.



If you have questions, please contact Sharise Byrd at 404.967.2970.

empowerline ARC
Early Support Connection

Federal Updates: Shutdown from Oct 1 – Nov 13

GA Division of Aging Services:

- Providers/grantees to send notices to clients of potential disruption in services if shutdown continued past November 15
- Delayed state grant payments to ARC
- Could not guarantee ability to reimburse for services already provided

Delayed ARC grant payments to grantees to protect cash flow

Shutdown ended November 13

Current continuing resolution ends January 30, 2026



Federal Updates

FY 26 OAA Funding - All funding ARC receives is either level funded or has a slight increase from 2025

- Senate recommended increase in Title III E Caregivers
- House recommended increase in Title III B Supportive Services

AmeriCorps Seniors – President’s budget eliminates; both Senate and House keep it

- House recommended decrease in funding

SSBG – Flat funding in both House and Senate

OAA Reauthorization – waiting to see if House agrees to 2024 bipartisan version



- a. Question: what is the difference between Funding and Reauthorization?
 - a. Answer: appropriation secures funding without extending or modifying law; reauthorization is more secure
- b. Question: What wasn't Older Americans Act reauthorized in 2024?
 - a. Answer: DOGE recommended to Congress that continuing resolution which included reauthorization remove many reauthorizations

Letters of Concern/Sanction

- Both Georgia Department of Human Services/Division of Aging Services (DAS) and Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) provide grant funding and policies related to ADRC operations
 - October 6 – Letter of Sanction from DAS
 - October 7 – Letter of Concern from DCH
- empowerline
WELL DESIGNED WELL BEING
POWERED BY ARC
- Focus of both letters: Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) and ability to respond in timely manner to contacts.

Summary of Concerns

- Both DAS and DCH expressed concerns about consumer access to the ADRC, specifically:
 - Understanding ARC call abandonment rates
 - Challenges in reaching a staff person by phone, and
 - Call handling practices, including use of voicemail

Shared Priority and Plans

- All agreed in conversations of our shared priority:
 - Ready public access to information counselors for information, referrals, and screenings for services
- ARC Plans include:
 - Filling vacant ADRC positions
 - 2 additional positions when receive state funding increase
 - Implementing several technology upgrades for staff efficiency and public ability to search our expertise
 - Reviewing workflows and data to increase efficiencies
 - Monthly reporting to state agencies

- c. Question: will we be using AI?
 - i. Answer: Yes, and Cara will present more shortly.
 - ii. Comment: AI might increase disconnects and must be tailored to the population
- d. Question: has DAS sent other letters of concern to other AAA's?
 - i. Answer: Not that we are aware of
 - ii. We have also learned about differences between states in standards and practices
- e. Question: Is there a potential impact on funding?
 - i. Answer: as long as we continue to show that we are improving operations, we do not think so. There would only be a risk if we did not cooperate with the state.
 - ii. We get \$37,000 from federal sources for the ADRC. The rest of the funding comes from state funds. Thus, there is a balance between staffing and community services.
- f. Question: Could we use volunteers on the phones?
 - i. We have not been able to do this because of the training and background requirements, but we have hired temporary employees



At the ARC State of the Region (October 24)



ONE **great** REGION

A&C

Age Well Expo, Clayton County (November 11)



ONE **great** REGION



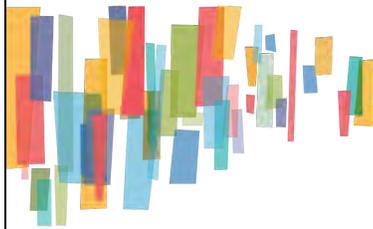
A&C

AgeTech Connect Summit (November 18)



ONE **great** REGION

A:G



Action Item Minutes from October 21, 2025

ONE **great** REGION

A:G

IV. Action Items

- a. Approval of Minutes – Co-Chair Govind Hariharan



Pandemic-Related Grants Update

ARC **Connie White**
Senior Manager
Aging & Independence Services

ONE great REGION **ARC**

COVID HOW IT BEGAN

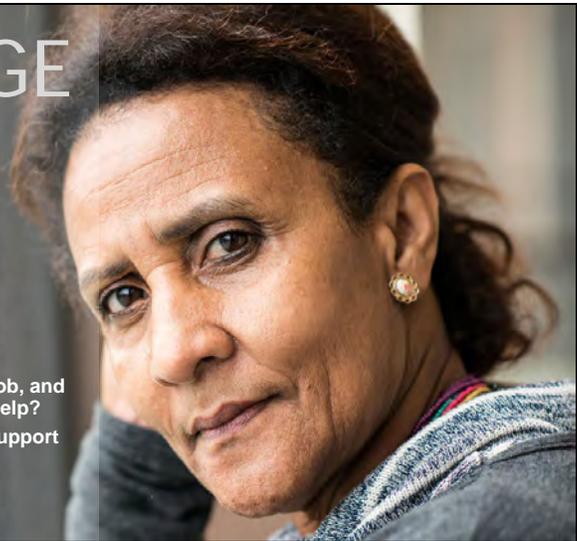
- March 12, 2020 - 2:00PM ARC staff sent home
- March 13, 2020- declared emergency for COVID-19 under all 3 sources of statutory authority (1)
- Essential vs non- essential personnel
- Older adults to quarantine at home
- ARC becomes clearinghouse coordination resources with local needs
- Philanthropy funding



ONE great REGION **ARC**

CHALLENGE

- **Isolation and Loneliness:**
 - Closed Senior centers and other activities
 - Closed Faith communities
- **Older Adults in high-rises at risk**
 - Can't leave home to access food
 - Lack of PPE
- **Decline of in-home services:**
 - Personal care, homemaker, respite
 - Client refusal to have worker come to home
- **Empowerline Callers: I've lost my job, and my bills are stacking up. Can you help?**
- **Increased Demand for nutritional support**



The Flow of Federal Dollars



- ➔ Families First May 2020 – September 2022
- ➔ CARES Act June 2020-September 2021
- ➔ Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA) July 2021- July 2022
- ➔ American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) June 2022- September 2025
- ➔ DAS ARPA APS funding July 2023-June 2024

Total Shift in Operations

- Senior Centers Closed
 - from congregate meals to HDM
 - Virtual programming
- Weekly meetings with DAS as new funds rolled out- understanding guidelines and how to set up budgets
- Transportation
 - From client trips to delivering meals
- Creative Food Delivery
- Decline in in-home services
 - From task to wellness check-ins, grocery and medication delivery



ARC MEETS THE CHALLENGE

► New services

- Caregiving
 - CARES-FLEX Consumer-Directed Services*
 - clients have flexible budget to meet care needs
 - One2One Telephone Reassurance Program
- Supportive services
 - Coaching for clients with behavioral health needs*
 - Emergency Material Aid and Assistive Technology
 - Home Modification and Repair



► New Awardees

- Meals on Wheels Atlanta, Houseproud Atlanta, Habitat for Humanity, Latin American Association

* Provided directly by ARC staff

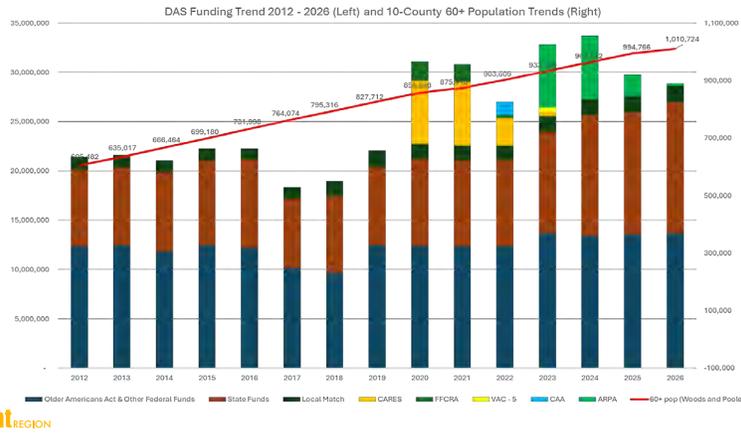
Federal COVID Aging Services Funds

Federal Legislation	Families First Act	CARES Act including VAC 5	Consolidated Appropriations Act	American Rescue Plan ARPA	DAS ARPA
Amount to ARC	\$1.9 million	\$6.4 million	\$1.3 million	\$13 million	\$260,000
Type of funding	Nutrition services	Multi funded-supportive services and Vaccine Campaign (\$403,307)	Nutrition services	Multi-funded-supportive services and nutrition	APS client case management and material aid
Percent of Funding Spent	100%	99.80%	99.99%	100%	92%
People served	6,679	8,731+ and funded two staff positions	2,295	8,123+multiple staff positions funded	79

COVID FUNDING IMPACT STAFF AND SERVICE CAPACITY

- ▮ Multiple ADRC positions were created
 - 10 full time positions
 - Extended funding for 4 part time positions
- ▮ One2One Telephone Reassurance staff position created
- ▮ CARES-Flex consumer direction position created
- ▮ Strategic Planning position created to support LBE work

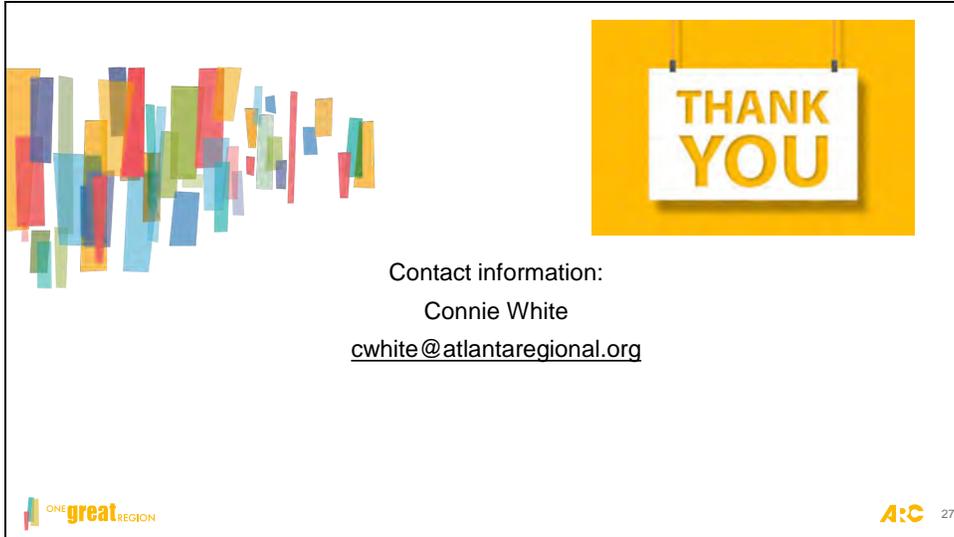
DAS Multi-Funded Grant Trend Across State Fiscal Years



COVID Lessons Learned

- Flexibility was the key to success
 - Person-centered services that give clients and families options: vouchers and consumer-direction
 - Federal/state policies that give us flexibility to meet needs: grocery delivery can be a better fit (and cheaper) than prepared meals
- Food insecurity remains high
- The awareness of Empowerline increased and our volume remains high





b. Pandemic Related Grant Updates Feedback

- i. Thanks to the ADRC and others who did this good work.
- ii. Question: how did ARC pivot to remote work?
 1. Answer: Daily check-ins, utilizing existing remote experience, leaning into networks, creative responsiveness
- iii. Question: How did/does ARC provide emotional/psychological support to employees?
 1. Answer: ARC offers usual EAP



Vision

ONE **great** REGION

Mission

Foster thriving communities for all within the Atlanta region through collaborative, data-informed planning and investments.

Values

Excellence | Integrity | Equity

Goals



Healthy, safe, livable communities in the Atlanta Metro area.



Strategic investments in people, infrastructure, mobility, and preserving natural resources.



Regional services delivered with **operational excellence** and **efficiency**.



Diverse stakeholders engage and take a regional approach to solve local issues.



A competitive economy that is inclusive, innovative, and resilient.

Aging & Disability Resource Connection (ADRC)

Connecting individuals and caregivers to critical programs and resources

Intake and screening for GA's Elderly & Disabled Medicaid Waiver Program (EDWP)

Intake and screening for Older American's Act Services

Challenges Facing the ADRC

- ▮ Increasing volume
 - Difficulty returning calls within 1 business day
- ▮ Loss of ARPA funded staff
- ▮ Inefficient technology
 - Time intensive documentation
- ▮ Limited Self-Service options
- ▮ Phone calls as the primary method of contact
 - Require ADRC Counselors even for simple requests
 - Longer handle time than other methods of contact
 - Methods of contact external to the phone system come in through multiple entry points
- ▮ Staff and partners frustrated

Expert Knowledge Site

Characteristics:

- Answers.empowerline.org
- Knowledge site for ADRC Counselors and self-service for the public
- Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Can make content internal only, public only, or both

Benefits:

- Call deflection
- More informed ADRC Counselors; more consistent information to the public
- Decreased onboarding time for new staff
- Reduced call handle time

empowerline Google Link 2 Link 3

How can we help you? Options Site tools

Filter results by:

- Location >
- Classification >
- View attachments

Q can I get help with caregiving ExpertAI

Generating from: [Caregivers](#)

Empowerline offers comprehensive support for caregivers, including consultations with certified care coordinators to create action plans and identify resources. They provide access to support groups, respite care services, and educational tools like Truista's free online resources. Additionally, Empowerline assists with understanding the costs of care, navigating insurance coverage, and managing financial responsibilities. They emphasize the importance of self-care for caregivers, advocating for the oxygen-mask philosophy—taking care of oneself before caring for others. For those feeling overwhelmed, Empowerline recommends exploring Powerful Tools for Caregivers and downloading the BRI Care Consultation sheet to get started.

> Source articles: Helpful Not helpful

Searching in: [All results](#)
About 140 results

[How to recognize when you are a caregiver and find caregiver resources](#)
https://answers.empowerline.org/Caregivers/Caregiver_Resource/How_to_recognize_when_you_are_a_caregiver_and_find_caregiver_resources

If you would like to submit a statewide referral online for the Elderly and Disabled Waiver Program (EDWP), also known as Community Care Services Program (CCSP), or in-home senior services provided by...

...

[More About Assistive Technology \(AT\)](#)
[https://answers.empowerline.org/Community/Assistive_Technology/More_About_Assistive_Technology_\(AT\)](https://answers.empowerline.org/Community/Assistive_Technology/More_About_Assistive_Technology_(AT))

Assistive Technology (AT) is an item or a piece of equipment that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of life. Includi...

Copilot with Auto Summary



Characteristics:

- Next best response
- Sentiment
- Quick responses



Benefits:

- Agents receive information directly instead of having to search for it
- Agents can send information to callers directly
- Reduced onboarding time
- Reduced call handle time
- Next best response helps agents who may need help with difficult calls



Patron inquired about senior resources, agent provided detailed info on programs, brochures, and mailing options.

11 min

Legal Disclosure
This output is generated in whole or in part using AI. While we strive for accuracy it may contain errors or inaccuracies and should be checked and verified by you for its intended use.

Customer Sentiment is Neutral
The conversation lacks context and does not indicate clear positive or negative sentiments.

Home-delivered meals include low-sodium, low-sugar meals, with options for renal and mechanical soft meals. Homemaker services provide assistance with light housekeeping, meal preparation, and essential errands.

[Web Links \(1\)](#)

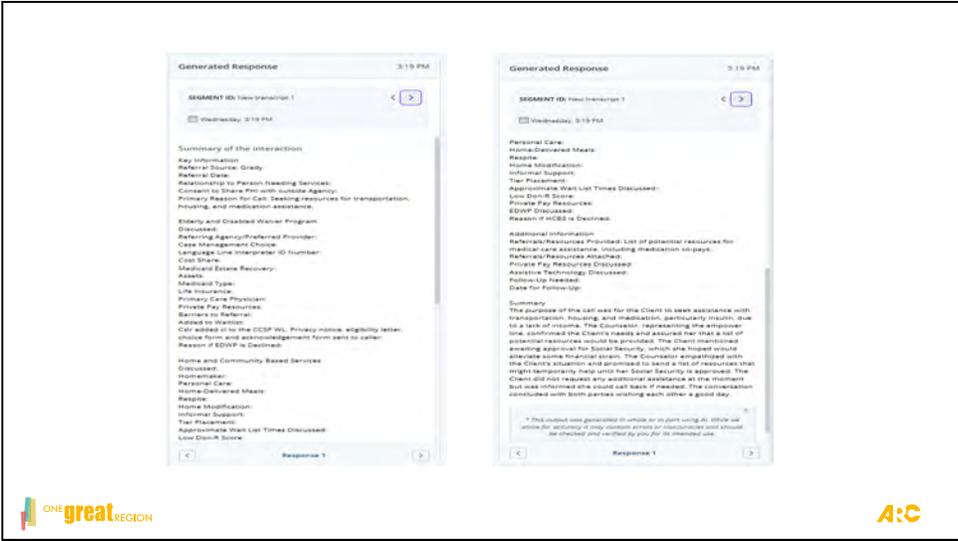
Tell me about oneZone
The One2One Telephone Reassurance Program offers regular calls to older adults in the metro Atlanta region to combat loneliness and social isolation, especially during COVID-19. It's free and available to those 65 and older in the 10-county Metro Atlanta Region.

[Web Links \(1\)](#)

Cobb county services
Cobb County offers home-delivered meals, homemaker services, personal care services, caregiver respite, and transportation options for eligible seniors. Services are provided on a sliding scale cost-share based on income. For intake, contact Empowerline at 404-463-3333.

How can I help?





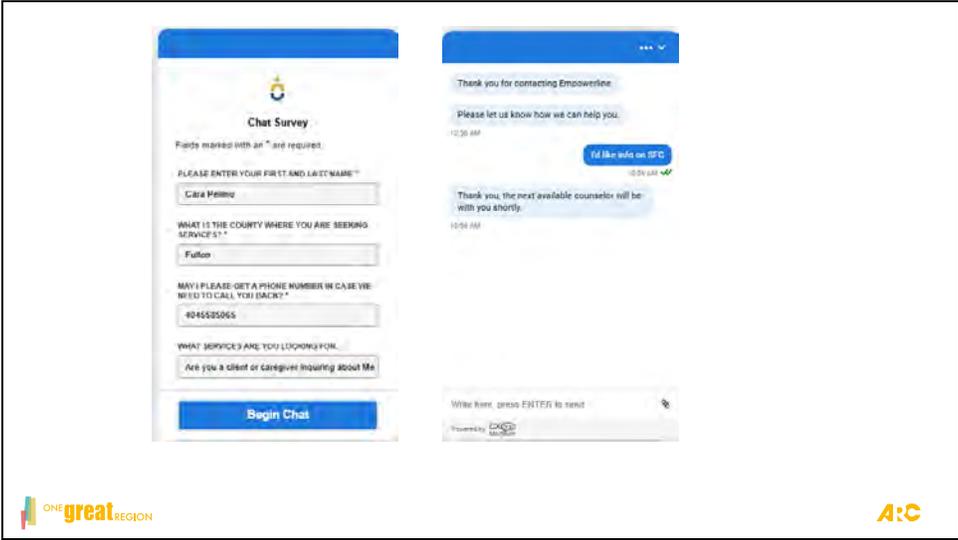
Digital

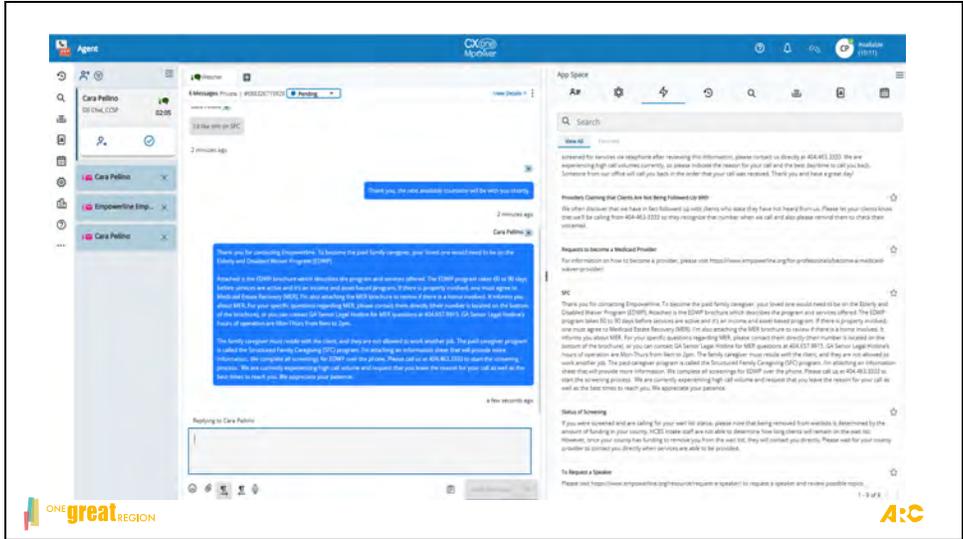
Characteristics:

- Chat, email, text
- Menu options
- Required fields (name, county, zip)
- Optional fields (description of need)
- Quick responses

Benefits:

- Ability for agents to handle multiple contacts at once
- More options for individuals to contact us but all contacts are in the same pot
- Quick responses help agents respond to most common requests quickly but with accurate and complete information
- Call deflection





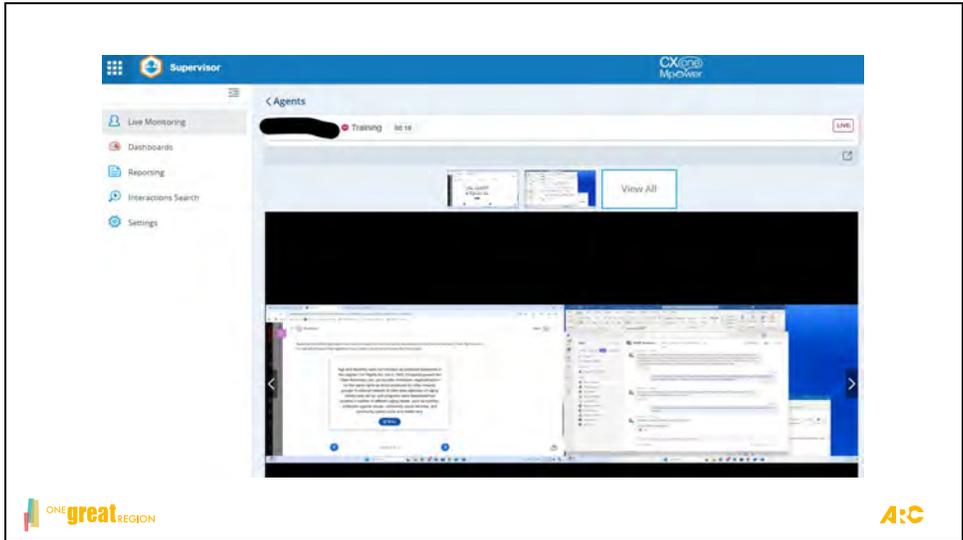
Screen Viewing and Recording

Characteristics:

- Can view and record up to 3 agent screens
- Can view screens when agents are not on calls
- 14 day recording storage

Benefits:

- Can assist with staff monitoring
- Can help share best practices
- Can help troubleshoot what under performers need help with
- Can help identify and troubleshoot technology issues



Next Steps



Weekly technology office hours for ADRC staff for technical assistance, feedback, and discussion related to all new ADRC technology



Continued review and revision of technology currently in place



Implementation of digital chat in December and digital text in early 2026



Go-Live with public-facing Expert Knowledge site anticipated in December 2025



Continued weekly meetings with NiCE phone implementation teams to review progress, troubleshoot, and calculate return on investment



Contact information:

Cara Pellino

cpellino@atlantaregional.org

c. Using Technology to Better Serve Consumers presentation

i. Question: How much is the AI hallucinating?

1. Answer: it doesn't because we control responses

ii. Question: How is the technology helping?

1. Answer: ARC has already seen improvements, including in efficiency, training, and onboarding

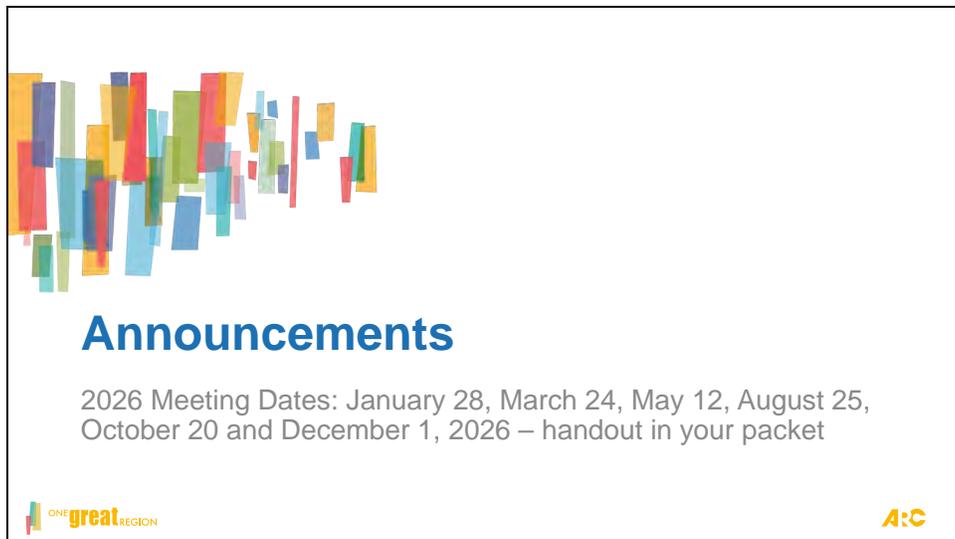
iii. Question: Can we identify call volume per day?

1. Answer: Yes, we get ~300 calls, total ~550 contacts per day

iv. Question: How many staff manage this?

1. Answer: There are about 22 staff on the phones, and each team has a lead.
- v. Question: How does this technology impact other ways of contacting clients?
 1. Answer: we will always call some clients and call callers back.
- vi. Question: Technology will give us data and statistics, but how else are we measuring success?
 1. Answer: Yes, we want to hear about this.
- vii. Question: One2one requires a very manual process. Is there any consideration in changing the process?
 1. Answer: Cara has met that team and they are open to it.
- viii. Question: will this technology address the needs of the state?
 1. Answer: Yes, these steps will help us stay in compliance. The state has also decreased the standard turnaround time to one day.
- ix. Question: Do we know why people call?
 1. Answer: Yes, we know why people call and the resolution.
 2. Follow-up: Could we see this? (Yes)
- x. Question: Are we able to help most of the people who call?
 1. Answer: Many callers are not eligible for the services they call about.
- xi. Question: How many people are repeat callers?
 1. Answer: This is a tricky question because the same person might call for a new need.
- xii. Question: Can you clarify multi-tasking?
 1. Answer: Supervisors monitor calls and monitor the queue as well as offering responses.
- xiii. Question: How do we inform constituents about the services?

1. Answer: We do outreach, and we offer a broad overview of the process when we do speak to callers
- xiv. Question: can we add messaging while people are waiting?
 1. Answer: We have.
- xv. Question: have we had focus groups of consumers?
 1. Answer: not directly
- xvi. Question: how can the ACA help?
 1. This question led more to further questions.
- xvii. Question: can we work more closely with senior services?
 1. Answer: we work closely with county senior services.
- xviii. Comment and suggestion: thank you and congratulations on improving.



- V. Announcements
 - a. Next meeting Jan. 28, 2026
 - b. Adjournment
 - i. Govind Hariharan, Co-chair