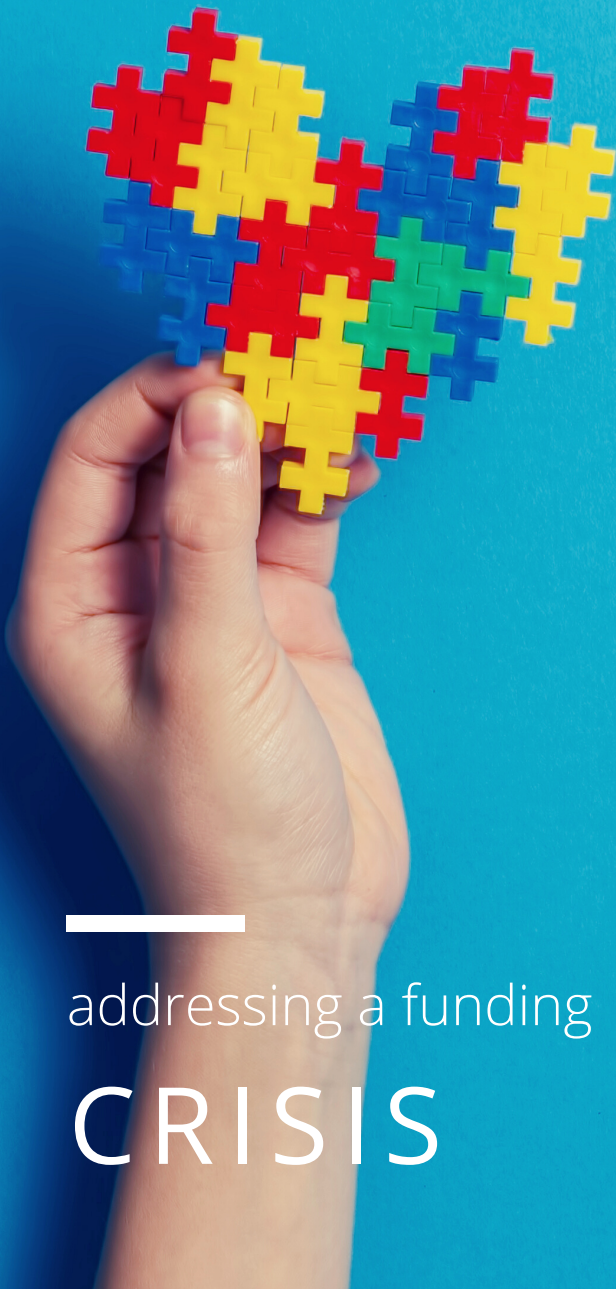




CASE STUDY:
GETTING THE WORD OUT IN A TIME OF CRISIS

ShellyLyons

PUBLIC AFFAIRS & COMMUNICATIONS



addressing a funding

CRISIS

Mark Davis, CEO, Pennsylvania Advocacy and Resources for Autism and Intellectual Disability:

"WE DESPERATELY NEED ACTION NOW TO COMPEL THE RELEASE OF FEDERAL DOLLARS THAT ARE READY TO BE DISPERSED."

The Challenge:

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, members of the Pennsylvania Advocacy and Resources for Autism and Intellectual Disability (PAR), a statewide human services association, were in fiscal crisis. The associated overtime and material costs due to COVID-19 meant that many members were facing a funding emergency.

With their budgets funded entirely by federal and state dollars and their reimbursement rates set by the state, they faced a daunting task: To advocate for increased funding for their members, who provide assistance to individuals with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism (ID/A) so they could remain in their homes and communities.

The pandemic was putting strains on all levels of government - the Pennsylvania Independent Fiscal Office was projecting a \$4B state government shortfall - and organizations everywhere who were serving vulnerable Pennsylvanians. **How could PAR break through and have their story heard?**

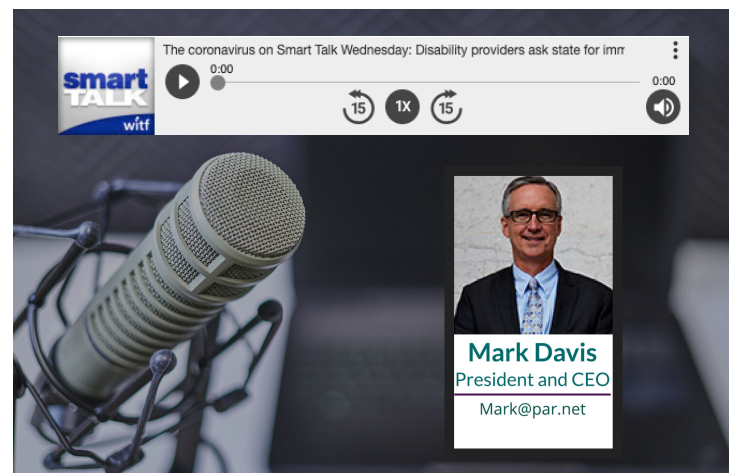
The Response:

The ShellyLyons team organized a series of Virtual News Conferences ([view an example here](#)) to highlight the impact that these providers and their employees (direct service professionals or DSPs) have on the lives of individuals with ID/A and their families. This format merges a news conference, a legislative/stakeholder briefing, and a platform for allies and partners – all in an accessible, socially-distanced environment.

PAR held four virtual conferences, with each centered around a different media market in the state. Each call featured PAR leadership, members, and family members of those with ID/A who articulated the impact of the funding crisis on their organizations, their communities, and most importantly, the families they served.

In total, 635 people attended these news conferences, including journalists, lawmakers, and staff. In less than a month, these calls resulted in 10 news hits on the funding crisis from television, print and radio outlets around the state; and specific mentions of the important work of DSPs by Governor Tom Wolf, Secretary of Health Rachel Levine, Secretary of Human Services Teresa Miller and State Senator Pam Iovino. At the same time, we worked with members to author and place opinion pieces throughout the state telling the story of the funding crisis from their point of view, generating 17 placements.

We also cut segments of the webinar and repackaged them into social media-sized mini videos and made quote graphics for Twitter and Facebook – ensuring that the message was not solely confined to the webinar platform.



The Results:

Soon, PAR, their members, more than 50,000 employees in Pennsylvania, and the tens of thousands of individuals they serve and their families had an answer: **The state agreed to provide an additional \$260 million in funds from the federal CARES Act to support ID/A providers and individuals with ID/A in the Commonwealth.** These funds will be used to continue paying for CPS retainers; one-time funding for residential/respice/shift nursing; and retainer-like funding for companion, in-home, supported employment and transportation.

This one-time CARES Act funding helped providers keep their doors open by covering increased costs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic including purchasing of personal protective equipment, payment of overtime/hero pay for DSPs and nurses, purchasing of sanitizing supplies, and training/onboarding expenses.

by the NUMBERS

635

ATTENDEES AT VIRTUAL NEWS
CONFERENCES

17

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR / OPINION
PIECES PLACED

10

PRESS HITS ON A SHORT TIMELINE

\$260 million

SECURED TO SUPPORT THE TENS OF
THOUSANDS OF INDIVIDUALS SERVED
BY PAR AND THEIR MEMBERS.