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Visually impaired adapt to distance learning

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Distance learning has become a crucial element of education during the coronavirus pandemic, enabling students to continue their studies while practicing social separation. In expanding internet-based teaching, educators nationwide are facing new challenges. Distance learning is not always an equal opportunity method for for blind and visually impaired persons.

Many visually challenged users rely on screen-enlargement software to see content or screen-reading software to hear written content. These programs are not capable of reading graphics or images, unless there is alternative descriptive text. Blind users are disadvantaged when font size or color cannot be adjusted, or web-

based graphic information, such as alternative text for images or links, are unavailable. Miami Lighthouse for the Blind has responded to these limitations with innovative solutions.

We are grateful to the Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) for empowering us with methodologies to bridge some of the gaps. Our Learning Center for Children has adapted the M-DCPS Instructional Continuity Plan that was developed for emergency school closures. The Center's teachers are utilizing a family engagement messaging tool to communicate daily assignments and activities for parents.

Our adult clients are using an e-portal created by our instructor of technology to access instructions in Braille, employment and computer training, and music studies.

While all of these resources will serve us during this time, we also believe they will have future applications for students. Miami Lighthouse commends its dedicated teachers and technology staff for their ingenuity and for their creative teaching solutions during the pandemic.

*Virginia Jacko, president / CEO
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