

# **Disability in College Settings: Information & Advice for Orientation Leaders** (Aug 2014)

## Presenter:

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# Today's Presentation Topics

Participants will be exposed to the following topics, through discussion and activities:

- **Understanding “Disability”**
- **Disability Etiquette Tips**
- **Disability Services and Reasonable Accommodations**
- **Advice for Orientation Leaders**

# What is a “Disability”?

According to the federal laws that define and govern disability rights (i.e., Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act) a “disability” is:

**(1) a long-lasting physical, cognitive, or psychological condition**

**(2) that substantially impairs someone’s ability to perform major life activities without assistance.**

- For #1, major life activities can include: seeing, hearing, walking, organ & hormonal functioning, walking, information processing, learning, concentrating, communicating, etc.
- The law does not include the names of actual conditions (i.e., depression) because one persons diagnosis may not be impairing enough to qualify as a legal disability, based on #2.



# Activity: What is a “Disability”?

Although the law does not specify the names of diagnoses, some conditions are more likely to qualify than others. Indicate whether you think the items below are likely to be considered a disability:

Deafness  
Dyslexia  
Blindness  
Pregnancy  
Major Depression  
Sprained ankle  
Diabetes  
Influenza  
Cerebral Palsy  
Broken Arm  
Multiple Sclerosis  
Traumatic Brain Injury

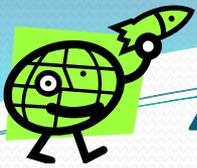
 Q: *What kinds of disabilities do you think are the most prevalent in college (not listed above)?*

A: **Learning Disabilities** (specifically for reading or math) & **ADHD**

# Basic Disability “Etiquette”

Addressing the topic of disability or speaking with someone who has a disability may not be the most comfortable situation for some (even the person who has the disability). These general tips can help to guide your communication and interactions:

- 1. Use person-centered language (i.e. “person with autism”, not “autistic person”).**
- 2. Try to stay alert of architectural barriers in the path of individuals with blindness and mobility impairments.**
- 3. Respect individual privacy & avoid disclosing someone’s disability to other people who would not have otherwise known.**
- 4. Use the same eye contact and other respectful non-verbals that you would use with anyone else.**
- 5. Don’t be afraid to ask the person w/ the disability if and how you can assist them.**



# Activity: Etiquette & Language

Read each statement below and determine whether it is True or False:

**Statement #1: When I meet someone with a disability, I should never ask them about their disability.**

**Statement #2: I should not touch someone's powerchair or an animal guide.**

**Statement #3: When a person has a sign language interpreter or an aide with them, I should talk directly to the sign language interpreter or aide. The person with the disability probably won't understand me.**

# Stats on Students with Disabilities

- Almost 1/2 of graduating U.S. high school students with disabilities will go on to pursue higher education goals<sup>1</sup>.
- Currently, 11-14% of the U.S. college population has one or more disabilities documented at their school, 3x higher than 20 years ago<sup>1,2</sup>.
- Acc. to the U.S. Dept. of Education, only 19% of students with disabilities will actually identify themselves to their college DS office.

**In addition to the same academic support services that are available to all students on campus (i.e., tutoring, writing assistance), the law requires every college/university to also have a “Disability Services” (DS) office or department.**

*1. U. S. Dept of Education, Office of Special Education Programs; 2010*

*2. The Learning House; 2006 & The Pope Center for Higher Education Policy; 2010*

# Services for College Students with Disabilities

**At every college/university, the DS office...**

- is responsible for ensuring that students with qualified students with documented disabilities have equal access to courses, programs, services, jobs, activities, and facilities, by:
  - developing & implementing initiatives to improve accessibility in the curriculum and in the campus environment, and
  - coordinating “reasonable accommodations” to reduce disability-related barriers for individual students.
    - DS reviews each students medical documentation, when selecting accommodations.
- works with many campus depts. (Admissions, Facilities/Physical Plant, Academic Integrity, Residential & Dining Services, etc.) and may be located in the academic success or support center, a counseling or health center, an equity/diversity/inclusion office, the student engagement or development office, or somewhere else all together!

# What are “Reasonable Accommodations”?

- **Reasonable academic accommodations are adjustments to the teaching and testing methods** that do not change the actual content being taught or tested. (*For ex., no accommodation can shorten exams or waive required assignments.*)
  - Extending the time allotted to take an exam (79% of students with disabilities are approved for this accommodation)
  - Allowing audio recording in a class
  - Arranging sign language interpreters
  - Copies of class notes from the professor or another student
- In order to receive accommodations through the designated DS office, students must complete an eligibility process (MU’s are posted online).
  - Requesting & continuing accommodations is completely optional and up to each individual student.

# How Can Orientation Leaders Help?

Orientation leaders, academic tutors, student government officials, and other leaders can help by:

- **Modeling appropriate disability etiquette.**
- **Volunteering to be a note-taker when a class announcement is made.**
- **Helping other students to develop their self-advocacy skills, and to learn their student rights & responsibilities.**
- **Increasing the awareness of themselves & their peers on disability-related topics.**
- **Referring students to MU's DS office (Student Access Services), IF they have disclosed to you that they have a disability.**
  - Caution: Don't push any student to pursue disability accommodations unless they have voluntarily disclosed to you that they have actually have a disability.
- **Providing all students with info on ALL of the support services available to them, regardless of their un/known disability status.**
  - Urge students who have been already been approved for disability accommodations to use them consistently!