

# FROM HIDDEN TO HEARD: Supporting Students with Non-visible Disabilities



**Workforce Wednesday Webinar**

Presented by:  
Dalton Byers

# Who is Presenting...?



## **Dalton Byers (He/Him)**

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**ICSPPS**



# Learning Objectives

## Participants will...

- Have a better understanding of the history and laws related to disability rights.
- Understand the context of students transitioning from high school to college with a disability (specifically a non-visible disability).
- Be aware of the types of non-visible disabilities.
- Be equipped to support students with non-visible disabilities navigate college transition academically, socially, and professionally.

# Brief History of Disability Rights (in the U.S.)

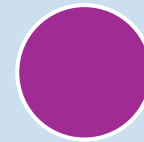
**Early 20<sup>th</sup>  
Century:**  
Institutionalization  
and the Medical  
Model

**1970s:**  
Legal  
Recognition  
and Activism

**2000s – Present:**  
Expanding Inclusion  
and Continued Need

**1940s – 1960s:**  
Early Advocacy  
and Education  
Reform

**1980s – 1990s:**  
Civil Rights  
Milestones



# ADA, Rehabilitation Act, & IDEA... (oh my)

An individual with a disability and/or medical/mental health condition is defined by the ADA as a person who:

- Has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of such person's major life activities
- Has a record of such an impairment
- Is regarded as having such an impairment



# Why is Disability Rights and Access Important?

- 70% of students with mental health disabilities were not registered to receive accommodations on campus
- Students with disabilities are between 7 and 16% less likely to complete their bachelor's degree.
- Students with disabilities have higher drop-out rates.



# Not Every Disability is Visible

Some look like this...



Others look like this...



**“HIDDEN DISABILITY”**

**“INVISIBLE DISABILITY”**

**“NON-VISIBLE DISABILITY”**

**“NON-APPARENT DISABILITY”**



# Examples of Hidden Disabilities

## Neurological & Learning Disabilities:

- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD)
- Learning Disabilities
- Autism (ASD)

## Chronic Physical & Auto Immune Conditions:

- Crohn's or Celiac Disease, Irritable Bowl Syndrome (IBS)
- Chronic Fatigue/Chronic Pain
- Diabetes, Migraines, etc.

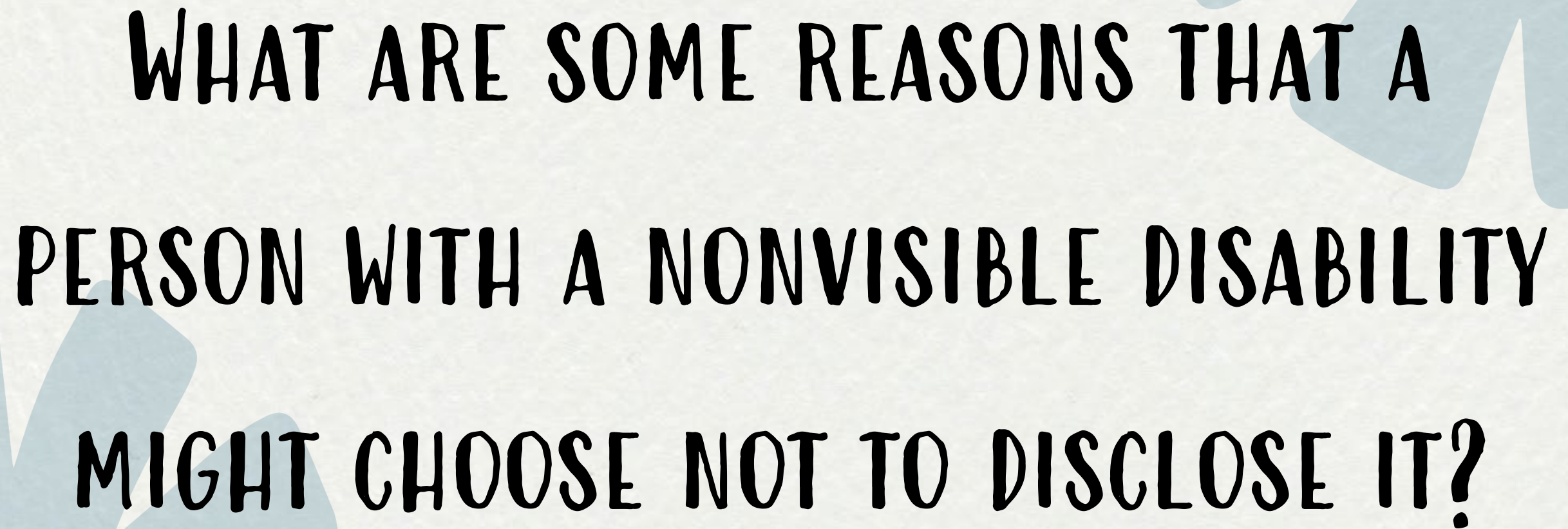
## Mental Health Conditions:

- Anxiety Disorders, Depression Disorders
- Bipolar Disorder
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

## Sensory Disabilities:

- Vision Loss
- Hearing Loss

These can be hidden, too!  
Especially if assistive devices are not visible!



**WHAT ARE SOME REASONS THAT A  
PERSON WITH A NONVISIBLE DISABILITY  
MIGHT CHOOSE NOT TO DISCLOSE IT?**

# Non-visible can = Harmful Stereotypes!

- “But you don’t look sick/disabled”
- “I’m totally OCD about that myself.”
- “But you’re so young to have health problems!”
- “Just try harder/think more positive; everybody gets tired/sad/anxious!”
- “You can’t park there. You aren’t in a wheelchair.”
- “You were fine yesterday, so you can’t be so sick today”



# Differences Between High School & College

## K-12 (High School)

- **The school identifies the student through assessments**
- Parents and school staff determine the appropriate needs and supports
- An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is written to address goals for the student
- A Multi-Disciplinary Conference (MDC) is held to assess the student's progress
- **The student has the right to a free appropriate public education**

## Post-secondary Institution (College)

- **The student must self-identify to the disability services office**
- The student must provide documentation of disability
- Accommodations are determined individually
- The student has the responsibility to manage their educational progress
- **The student has the right to equal access, not guaranteed success**

# Differences Between High School & College

## K-12 (High School)

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Success in the least restrictive environment and modifications are possible
- Schools take a hands-on approach and identify the disability and develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- School is responsible for the evaluation and development of the IEP

## Post-secondary Institution (College)

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Sections 504 & 508 of the Rehabilitation Act
- Access to the environment and little to no modifications
- Students must self-disclose and request accommodations. IEPs are not recognized
- Students provide documentation and evaluation

# Advocacy & Access Differences

## K-12 (High School)

- Students are supported by the IEP team
- Parents have access to students' records until they are 18
- IEP team meets with parents and teachers to discuss student's progress

## Post-secondary Institution (College)

- Students must request accommodations from Disability Services office
- Parents do not have access to records for their students without written consent from the student themselves
- Faculty members, seldom, if ever, interact with parents. Students are expected to address issues with them directly



# The Transition to College...

**Stigma  
&  
Self-Disclosure**

**Independence  
&  
Executive  
Functioning**

**New  
Environments  
&  
Sensory  
Challenges**

**Different  
Teaching  
Methods**



**Finding  
Connections**

# What Students Need to Know and Do



**Assess their own  
strengths**

**Communication  
& Self-advocacy**

**Connections to  
accommodations**

**Build a support  
network**



# **What YOU need to know!**



Disability is the largest minority group in the United States.

It is considered a minority group but literally anyone at any time can become a part of this group.

Disability does not discriminate against race, ethnicity, age, socio-economic status, or any other distinction we can imagine.



# What Educators Need to Know and Do

- Help students develop self-advocacy
- Create inclusive environment
- Receive self-disclosure well
- General accessibility matters

We can't remove every single barrier, but our role is to make sure that students do not face them alone.

# Additional Resources

- [LD Advisory.com Elizabeth Hamblet blog](#)
- [Scholarships](#)
- [Elizabeth Hamblet podcasts and videos](#)
- [Crip Camp](#)
- [Autism and Community College: Why It's a Good Fit](#)
- [Parking Video](#)
- [Serving Students with Disabilities Webinar](#)
- [Excellence in Adult Education Resources](#)
- [GED Resources](#)

## Research Reports:

- [Postsecondary National Policy Institute Fact Sheet](#)
- [NCCSD Research Brief](#)
- [Higher Education's Next Great Challenge](#)



## ADHD Resources:

[A Day in the Life with ADHD](#)  
[@HowToADHD - YouTube Channel](#)

**Questions? Discussion?**

**The floor is yours!**



# Stay in Touch



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