



Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario

Transition Planning Resource Guide for Students with Learning Disabilities

2003

**Revised from a document developed for LDAO in May 1999
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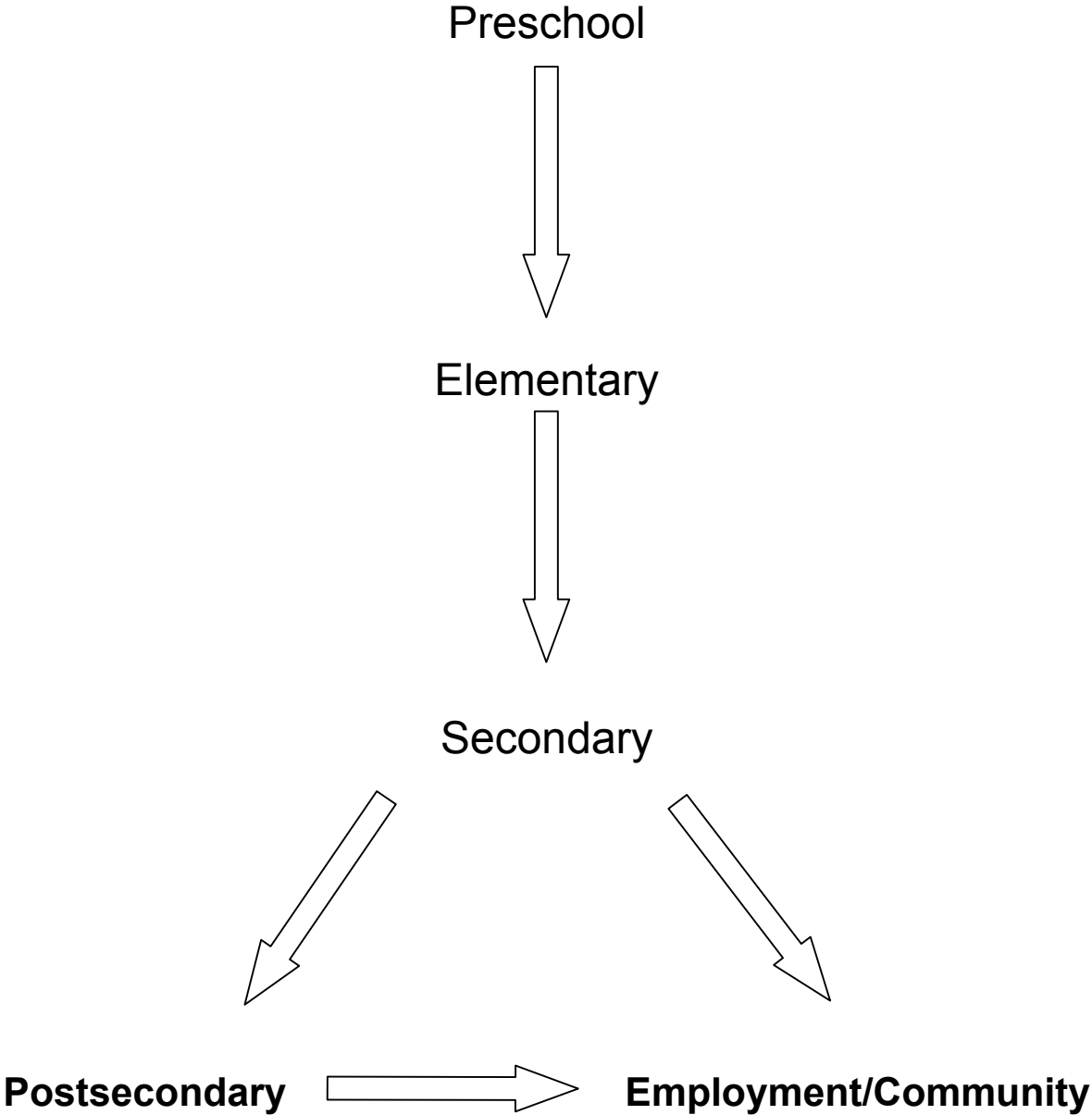


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TRANSITIONS



SUPPORT AT THE SCHOOL BOARD LEVEL FOR THE TRANSITION PLANNING PROCESS

Transition is usually described as a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed to promote successful progress to and from school. Transition relates to entry into and exit from each educational level, such as pre-school to elementary school, elementary school to secondary school, and secondary school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education (both university and college), vocational training, apprenticeships, employment, adult education, independent living and community participation.

Successful transition for all students including those who have learning disabilities is based on:

- the student's identified needs
- the student's recognized strengths, skills and competencies
- the student's interests
- the student's preferences
- the student's short and long term goals
- the student's past experiences, including academic achievements, co-curricular and volunteer involvements at school and in the community.

Students with learning disabilities have average to above average intelligence and, provided that they have been taught, supported and accommodated throughout their educational career appropriately, they should be able to be successful in the postsecondary destination of their choice. While intellectually most of them can handle the demands of postsecondary education, they should be encouraged to make independent and appropriate choices and be supported through appropriate transition planning to achieve their personal goals.

School boards, in developing their transition planning process for students with learning disabilities, must do all that they can to empower their students with learning disabilities to be successful in their chosen future destinations. Transition planning is a mandated process for exceptional students who are 14 years of age or older and whose primary exceptionality identification is any of the exceptionalities other than giftedness, and school boards must be fully accountable for ensuring that the transition plan meets all the necessary requirements.

In planning for the transition of their students with learning disabilities, secondary schools should:

- offer Learning Strategies credit courses to all students with learning disabilities, which focus on:
 - the student's understanding of his/her own learning disabilities,
 - appropriate learning strategies and accommodations,
 - the impact of learning disabilities on the various aspects of the student's life, including the issues of social competence and independent living,
 - self-advocacy training,
 - academic and career counselling,
 - technology and its importance for the current and future success of students with learning disabilities.
- offer credit courses in grade 11 or 12 that explore career choices.

- ensure that each identified student's IEP includes a written adaptive technology plan.
- ensure that there are adequate resources, including funding and personnel, available to assist all students with learning disabilities to function appropriately and achieve to their maximum potential in school.
- ensure that there is an adequate individual written accommodation plan for each student with learning disabilities that the student understands, benefits from and can explain for effective self-advocacy purposes.
- ensure that all relevant personnel, including the student's teacher, principal, etc., are aware of the student's specific transition plan and commit the necessary resources to carrying out its goals, objectives and action plans as well as meeting the time lines.

There are many changes in environment and expectations that affect successful transition from secondary school to postsecondary settings for students with learning disabilities, for example:

- teacher/ supervisor: student contact decreases significantly
- academic and achievement expectations increase, while guidance, support and individualized instruction are reduced
- reduced role for parents and other supports
- greater expectations on the student to become:
 - self-motivated
 - resilient
 - more independent in academic and living situations
 - able to self-advocate
 - able to cope with disclosure challenges
 - able to apply coping strategies independently
 - able to identify and advocate for accommodations required

Some essential components of all transition plans for students with learning disabilities:

- academic preparation, including literacy, metacognitive, problem solving, communication and future goal specific skills
- personal skills development, including future independence, life planning, social skills and self-advocacy skills development
- specific preparation for the student's chosen destination

In order to make a successful transition from secondary school to postsecondary life, students need to be able to do the following:

- understand their learning disabilities, including the potential and actual impact on learning and work;
- present a positive self-image by learning to focus on strengths and competencies;
- develop positive personal qualities, such as realistic self-assessment, willingness to take risks, becoming an independent learner and focussing on self-motivation;
- establish realistic and realizable goals;
- develop and practise positive social skills and pro-social behaviours;

- develop and practise effective studying, test preparation, test taking, time management and note taking strategies;
- identify any potential and actual difficulties with needed skill areas and any accommodations required;
- maintain a suitable portfolio of relevant information, including samples of past work;
- know their rights and responsibilities as students with disabilities, potential workers and contributing citizens;
- prepare for and practice disclosure;
- learn how to select appropriate postsecondary destination options and choices;
- identify and know how to access resources that will assist in facilitating ongoing accommodations and future success, including disability related services, funding, etc.;
- seek out a learning and/or working environment which is supportive and in which they can demonstrate their competencies effectively;
- be willing to commit to life long learning;
- be willing to work hard to achieve their goals.

School boards and their staff, parents and the students themselves are the key players in ensuring that transition for the student with a learning disability is successful. However, it is school boards that have to set the tone and establish a supportive and nurturing environment where transition is a positive experience for every student with learning disabilities.

There are many resources in the community ranging from the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario and its local chapters, to the special needs offices of community colleges and universities, to disability specific organizations and the employee assistance programs of many companies and businesses. Many of these would be excellent partners in the school board's transition planning and support programs and services. School boards and their personnel need to build upon, encourage and welcome such community involvement initiatives.

In conclusion, it is important that school boards make the necessary commitment of resources, including personnel and funding, to manage the transition process effectively and successfully for all of their exceptional students, and establish an environment that is student centred. For students with learning disabilities that will mean a recognition that these students are able to achieve to their potential provided that they receive the necessary help, guidance, support and accommodation. The focus needs to be on their abilities and competencies ahead of the barriers represented by the learning disabilities. There is no one suitable postsecondary destination or career choice for students with learning disabilities. They need to be supported in setting their own goals and achieving them.

THE TRANSITION TEAM

In determining the composition of the Transition Team, it is important to consider the following in order for successful transition to take place:

- The whole student must be taken into account, recognizing that student issues include academic progress, social competency, employment challenges and potential complications such as strained familial relationships, housing issues and other stressors. .
- At least one member of the Transition Team must be a qualified Special Education teacher with a Special Education Specialist in Learning Disabilities and part of this person's responsibilities would be ensuring that all team members have an adequate understanding of learning disabilities and their varied implications. It is not necessary for that person to be the Transition Coordinator.
- The Transition Team composition described in *Transition Planning: A Resource Guide* (2002) provides a good basis for assembling the various players in a student's file. Effective coordination, planning and clear, consistent communication is essential among all team members, leading to a transition plan which articulates goals, identifies actions and assigns responsibility and time lines. It cannot be over-emphasized that the student's role on the team creates an ideal opportunity for the development and practising of self-advocacy skills.
- The Transition Team should begin their process by planning and implementing an evaluation process which determines outcomes based on the student's own realistic future goals.

CONTENT OF THE TRANSITION PLAN FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

For most students with Learning Disabilities, if not all, the Learning Strategies - Grade 9 and the Career Studies, Grade 10, should be part of their course selection and listed on their I.E.P.

The Learning Strategies course will teach, reteach, review, consolidate, and/or extend learning strategies learned in the elementary system. Our students need this in order to transfer strategies/skills learned from one level of education to another. The course will reinforce for them the strategies/skills that can be left behind and the ones that are still applicable. This course will also develop self-advocacy skills so that students can gain independence in accessing support.

The Career Studies course will help students with learning disabilities to complete a thorough investigation so that they can examine all of the options open to them. Then they may be ready to make realistic choices. This course will also alert them to work experience choices that they may not have considered. Students need to be given opportunities to assess their learning styles, their aptitudes and their talents, in conjunction with their learning disabilities/abilities. Career Studies should also include a full appreciation of the support systems and departments that are available in postsecondary programs. The Special Needs Offices of the colleges and universities should be contacted and the information regarding their services should be collected and studied (as of 2003, all colleges and universities in Ontario have funding available through the Learning Opportunities Task Force for at least one Learning Strategist and Assistive Technologist). Students must also be aware of the procedure for accessing support and the documentation required.

Students must examine their individual needs and, if necessary, pursue optional funding to support them during their postsecondary education including OSAP, and the Bursary for Students with Disabilities. Additional funding is also available for living expenses through the Ontario Disability Support Program for those who qualify for ODSP income support. Applications for funding, should it be required, should be initiated before leaving secondary school.

Many students reach secondary school without a solid understanding of learning disabilities and specifically their own strengths and areas of need. This void cannot be ignored any longer. A vital part of the Transition Plan **MUST** be a solid, yet positive, understanding of their learning disabilities - what are their strengths, what are their weak areas, what further remediation is required and what compensatory strategies need to be in place before they finish secondary school. It is essential for students to be aware of the breadth of accommodations possible and to recognize those that specifically suit their individual needs. With this understanding, self-advocacy can be enhanced. If necessary, a separate course or sessions with the Advisor or Transition Team member should be in place to facilitate this understanding. Mental health issues, social competency, and independent community living should also be addressed. At this point, it will be critical to discuss the issue of disclosure with the student and his/her parents.

Technology is one of the key components for survival for students with learning disabilities at the secondary and postsecondary level. I.E.P.'s must contain this component and emphasis should be given to the importance of technology by making it an integral part of the Transition Plan. Students should be given access to and training for use of computers with speech-to-text and text-to-speech software, and/or a tape recorder and taped books.

Transition Planning Resource Guide for Students with Learning Disabilities

Students with learning disabilities may have a difficult time recognizing and promoting their strengths and aspirations. The development of a portfolio is a useful way for students to display their learning styles, aspirations and goals, as well as the necessary accommodations to allow them to be successful. Sections should include the following areas: assessments which document strengths and weaknesses, achievement records both in and out of the academic environment, and a section devoted to investigation of individual career and postsecondary options.

The set of student needs outlined in the first few pages of this document should be addressed in the transition plan if students with learning disabilities are to make a successful transition to postsecondary life.

PERSON-CENTERED TRANSITION PLANNING

- Personal Profile***
- Future Lifestyle Preferences***
- Action Steps and Responsible Parties***
- Necessary Changes in the Service System***

SAMPLE PLAN FOR A STUDENT WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES SEEKING ADMISSION TO A COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY

This page is part of the student's I.E.P. and is in the format recommended in *Individual Education Plan (I.E.P.): Resource Guide, 1998*.

DATE: September 2003

LONG TERM GOAL: Postsecondary Community College or University

Visual Arts/Graphic Design/ Media Programs

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	DATE
STEPS: 1. Identify and select target college/university programs. 2. Investigate the selected institution's policies on modified admission, accommodations and support for special needs students. 3. Complete prerequisite SS credits. 4. Identify and plan to acquire goal-specific and postsecondary education specific skills, e.g., specific technology, study skills, compensatory skills, self-advocacy skills, etc. 5. Prepare for admission screening process including decision about disclosure of learning disabilities. 6. Identify necessary post secondary accommodations.		
ACTIONS TO DATE: - IPRC to be held with attention given to updating assessments, documentation, need statements etc. (1,2,3,4,5) - student has set goals in Annual Education Plan (1,2) - begin to develop visual arts portfolio (3) - art samples folder and table of contents (4) - current assessments indicate what adaptive technologies are appropriate to train (3)	- Principal, Special Education Coordinator, Resource teacher, parents, student - completed by student and reviewed at IEP meeting - Teacher Advisor/ Resource Teacher - student - Teacher Advisor/ Resource Teacher	Sept/03 Prior to Sept/03 Sept/03 1st semester Sept/03

<p>ACTIONS - CURRENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - update Student Portfolio to ensure that appropriate documentation of strengths and challenges, records of academic and social accomplishments, and career and postsecondary research is up to date (3,4,5) - review graphic design opportunities available at Community Colleges/Universities (1) - ensure appropriate courses are selected and meet college/university prerequisites (2) - select a senior student from the school's Art program as a mentor (4) - identify relevant opportunities within the community such as graphic arts workshops, courses, etc., and arrange to participate (2) - identify computers within the school that are accessible (3) - ensure current program contains a course that teaches the use of appropriate software, eg word pro, database, spreadsheet, graphics program, desktop publishing, etc. (3) - if student has significant language based learning disabilities, train to use speech-to-text software and develop a voice file on an accessible computer (3) - if student has a significant reading based learning disability, train to use text-to-speech software (3) - ensure that technology training is delineated on current I.E.P. also (3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher Advisor/ Resource Teacher, student and parents - Teacher Advisor, Guidance Dept. and student - Teacher Advisor, Guidance Dept. and student - Teacher Advisor - Student and parents - Teacher Advisor/ Resource Teacher and student - Guidance Dept. - Resource or Computer Teacher - Resource or Computer Teacher - Resource Teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jan. 04 and June 04 1st semester Jan. 04 Feb. 04 June 04 Sept. 03 Sept. 03 Sept. 03 Sept. 03 Sept. 03
<p>ACTIONS - NEXT YEAR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - continue use of student mentor and attempt to establish liaison with Community College student (s) (4,5) - gather specific info re certain colleges/universities and Special Needs department available (1) - study skills program (3) - consider co-op placement at Graphix Inc. (2,4) - ensure that technology training continues (3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher Advisor, student - Guidance: Career ed. Unit - Guidance and Special Education Department - Co-operative Education Co-ordinator - Resource Teacher and student 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st semester Feb. 04 1st semester 2nd semester 1st and 2nd semester

<p>ACTIONS - FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visit possible colleges or universities - art/graphics and special needs offices (1,3,4,5) - investigate tours, open hours, university days (1) - if needed, arrange for a personal laptop with necessary peripherals are available and equipped with speech-to-text and text-to-speech adaptive software (3,5) - explore postsecondary funding options and needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - student and parents - Student, Teacher Advisor, Teacher Counsellor - Student and parents 	<p>all of these sometime during the 2004-2005 school year</p>
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SAMPLE PLAN FOR A STUDENT WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES SEEKING ADMISSION TO THE WORKPLACE

This page is a part of the student's IEP and is in the format recommended in *Individual Education Plan (IEP): Resource Guide, 1998*

DATE: September 2003

LONG TERM GOAL: To enter the workplace and function independently.

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	DATE
<p>STEPS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify area of the workforce in which there is interest and aptitude. 2. Complete prerequisite SS credits. 3. Identify and acquire goal-specific skills as well as employability skills, e.g., technology, communication, self-advocacy, compensatory, interdependent group dynamic etc. 4. Identify steps needed to achieve job readiness. 5. Determine disclosure plans. 6. Identify requisite on- the- job accommodations and how these may be obtained in order to get and keep a job. 7. Determine if any additional training is required after secondary school graduation and before entering the workforce, e.g., an apprenticeship or some specific training course to acquire additional job skills. 8. Prepare resume. 9. Prepare for interview and selection process. 10. Identify suitable references. 11. Identify potential work placement opportunities and explore company through information-interview. 12. Consider volunteer work if paid work is not a realistic option at this time. 		
<p>ACTIONS TO DATE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IPRC to be held with attention given to updating assessments, documentation, need statements etc. (1,2,3,4,5) - student has set goals in Annual Education Plan (1,2) - current assessments indicate what adaptive technologies are appropriate to train (3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Principal, Special Education Coordinator, Resource Teacher, parents, student - completed by student and reviewed at IEP meeting - Teacher Advisor/ Resource Teacher 	<p>Sept/03</p> <p>Prior to Sept/03 Sept/03</p>

<p>ACTIONS - CURRENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - update Student Portfolio to include appropriate documentation of strengths and challenges, records of academic and social accomplishments, career investigation information and résumé (1,3,4,5) - review availability of related career opportunities in the desired geographic location (1) - ensure appropriate courses are selected and meet the requirements of the career choice including any possible training opportunities, cooperative education and apprenticeship courses (1,2,3,4) - select a mentor from the community working in the career choice (1,2,3,4) - examine opportunities within the community - workshops, related courses etc. (2) - identify computers within the school that are accessible (3) - ensure current program contains a course that is goal-specific and teaches the requisite software, eg word pro, database, spreadsheet, graphics program, desktop publishing, etc. (3) - if student has significant language learning disabilities, train speech-to-text and develop a voice file on an accessible computer (3) - train usage of text-to-speech (3) - ensure that technology training is on current I.E.P. also (3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher Advisor/ Resource Teacher, student and parents - Teacher Advisor, Guidance Dept. student and parents - Teacher Advisor, Guidance Dept. and student - Student and parents - Teacher Advisor/ Resource Teacher and student - Resource or Computer Teacher -Guidance Dept. - Resource or Computer Teacher - Resource or Computer Teacher - Resource Teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jan. 04 and June 04 1st semester Jan. 04 Feb. 04 June 04 Sept. 03 Sept. 03 Sept. 03 Sept. 03 Sept. 03
<p>ACTIONS - NEXT YEAR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - continue use of community mentor (1,2,3,4) - gather more specific job postings in the desired geographic location (1) - specific training in job searching including filling out application forms, updating résumés, writing letters of introduction and developing interview etiquette and skills (3,4) - consider co-op placement in desired career choice (1,2,3,4,5.) - ensure that technology training continues (3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher Advisor, student - Teacher Advisor, student, parents - Special Education Department, Teacher-Advisor - Co-operative Education Co-ordinator - Resource Teacher and student 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st semester ongoing all year 1st semester 1st semester 2nd semester
<p>ACTIONS - FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - visit possible career choice locations (1,4,5) - investigate tours, open hours etc. (1,3,4,5) - if needed, arrange for a personal laptop with necessary peripherals and equipped with speech-to-text and text-to-speech adaptive software (3,5) - expand on community living issues, including housing, funding, life skills training, mental health services if required etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - student and parents - Student, Teacher Advisor, Teacher Counsellor - Student and parents - student, parents, Teacher Advisor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all of these sometime during the 2004-2005 school year

ACCOMMODATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS AND/OR TRAINING PROGRAMS LEADING TO PROFESSIONAL LICENSING EXAMINATIONS

The **Ontario Human Rights Code**, 1981, prohibits discrimination on the grounds of disability. What that means is that services, a term which includes education, goods and facilities, cannot be denied to someone because they have a disability. In the **Interpretation and Application** section of the **Code**, disability is defined as (among other things) " *a learning disability or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language*".

Further, the **Code** mandates the establishment and implementation of special programs or services. These are designed to relieve hardship or economic disadvantage, especially where such programs or services are likely to contribute to the elimination of actual or potential discriminatory practices.

In 1989, the **Human Rights Code** was amended by the introduction of a set of **Guidelines for Assessing the Accommodation Requirements for Persons with Disabilities**. In 2000, the Ontario Human Rights Commission issued the revised **Policy and Guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate**. The thrust of these Guidelines is the duty to accommodate so that persons with disabilities have choices about pursuing their individual goals and purposes in life, including the situations in which they work, live, travel, eat, shop, play and are entertained.

The standards established for accommodation are as follows:

The needs of persons with disabilities must be accommodated in a way that most respects their dignity, provided that the accommodation does not create undue hardship. The phrase "respects their dignity" means to act in a way that recognizes the privacy, confidentiality, comfort, autonomy and self-esteem of persons with disabilities. This maximizes their integration and full participation in society.

Accommodations will vary according to a person's unique needs, which must be considered, assessed and accommodated individually.

Inevitably, the question arises "what is undue hardship?" Undue hardship is defined in the **Code** and the **Guidelines** in terms of costs and/or health and safety risks for the individual, organization or institution which is being asked to provide the accommodation. It is important to note that the onus for establishing the potential or actual undue hardship claim is on the institution. The individual who is seeking the accommodation is not required to prove that his or her request does not represent undue hardship.

The types of accommodation for enabling persons with learning disabilities to be successful in a university, college or training program setting include:

- Access to assistive devices, such as computers, calculators, tape recorders, etc.
- Access to extra time to carry out time-related tasks such as the writing of examinations, etc.
- Access to an alternative format for assignments and examinations, for example use of technology such as Kurzweil readers and voice dictation systems, based on the individual

student's strengths and needs.

- Access to support systems such as a scribe, a reader, a note taker, the ability to hand in assignments for a preview, an alternative or reduced reading list, etc.
- Access to tutoring, remedial programming, if needed, special courses, diagnostic assessments, counselling, advocacy support and a reduced course load.
- Ability to take a reduced course load, and take a longer period to complete a program.

Clearly, the kinds of accommodations that a person with learning disabilities may require in a postsecondary educational or training setting is not likely to present an undue financial hardship for the institution.

For educational and training programs and institutions the concern is often whether the accommodation calls for or allows an interference with the integrity of the program or the institution. In other words, are they being asked to lower the standards?

This is a false concern, since none of the above examples or other potential accommodation practices should alter the academic standards or requirements. In other words, fewer credits, lowered pass marks or the elimination of essential program components are not accommodations, nor should people with learning disabilities need them if they are in a program that is appropriate to their strengths.

The most important ongoing requirement is the establishment and maintenance of mutual respect between the learner with the learning disability and the educational or training institution and its staff. Learners should be enabled to maintain their personal dignity and should not be exposed to ridicule, harassment or other inappropriate treatment because they need to have certain accommodations to be successful in reaching their goals. They should not be obligated to keep offering proof that they still have learning disabilities or that they still need to be accommodated, although clearly the onus of disclosure and self-advocacy is on them.

Postsecondary educational institutions are urged to create and utilize a special needs policy, which is known and accepted by students and faculty. Such a policy should focus on enabling all students with special needs to reach their potential.

When it comes to the issue of professional licensing examinations administered by bodies, such as the College of Nurses, unions, etc., each has its own process. However, that process cannot exempt them from abiding by the legislation of the Province in which they are located. Therefore, in Ontario, for example, the **Human Rights Code** clearly applies.

Sometimes, the undue hardship issue that arises relates to public safety. For example, should a nurse be licensed who cannot accurately dispense medication due to her tendency to reverse the digits in a number? Should a firefighter be approved to work on a pumper when he or she cannot reliably assemble a hose and its couplings? It is not easy to offer an absolute. Each case needs to be considered and judged on its own merits.

Effort should be made to enhance the training to meet the needs of the students. This may include accommodations such as offering extra time, alternative formats for training materials, etc. However, if the candidate cannot, with reasonable accommodation, fulfill the essential job duties, then they should be helped to consider work in a different capacity, but preferably still based on their training.

LOOKING AT EMPLOYMENT ISSUES FOR PERSONS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Freud described work as man's strongest tie to reality. Often we view ourselves and others in terms of what we do as a job. While having a job, whether paid or not, is very important for everyone, research has shown that it is even more important for persons with learning disabilities. The two most significant effects of having a job relate to self-esteem and peer relationships. These are particularly critical for students with learning disabilities who are moving into employment directly from secondary school.

The impact of learning disabilities on employment

The terms "employable" and "job ready" are often used interchangeably. As a result, persons with disabilities who are not job ready are sometimes declared to be unemployable. Such a designation can create a major barrier to current and future employment. It helps if employers as well as people with learning disabilities understand the difference between these terms.

If a person is permanently unemployable then he or she will have major, chronic and severe barriers to holding a job and/or dealing with the tasks and activities of daily living. The majority of persons with learning disabilities **are** employable, provided that they receive the necessary training, support and accommodation to obtain and maintain employment.

People with learning disabilities are often disadvantaged in their search for productive employment because they lack the necessary job readiness and job search skills. In particular, they frequently have difficulties with demonstrating a reasonable match between the essential requirements of the job, and their skills, coping and compensatory strategies and accommodation needs.

Employability

Most people are **employable**. What that means is that they can successfully hold down a job. Some people, including some people with learning disabilities, are **employment disadvantaged**, which means that they are often unemployed or underemployed. In other words, they are in and out of jobs, often work part time or at an entry-level job, even if they have the education and skills for more.

To move from being **employable** to **employed**, people with learning disabilities need specific training, support and accommodation, and an actual job.

Job readiness means having the knowledge and skills to move from being employable to applying for a job. To become job ready, each person, not just those who have learning disabilities, requires:

- a viable occupational or career goal
- the education, training, skills and experience to achieve that goal
- job search skills, i.e., knowing how to write a resume, complete a job application form, write a cover letter, present oneself at an interview, etc.

- the ability to demonstrate that he or she can meet the requirements of the job with appropriate training
- the ability to keep the job, by working hard and satisfying the employer's ongoing requirements

For a person who has learning disabilities a key need is the ability to discuss and demonstrate that the impact of the learning disabilities will not create a major barrier and that he or she can carry out the required essential job duties, with or without accommodation.

Essential job duties

The term essential job duties is used to describe those tasks, skills or parts of a job, which:

- make up a large part of the work involved in the job, i.e., what you do most of the time;
- are involved in most parts of the job, i.e., a skill without which you could not do the job;
- cannot under any circumstances be delegated to another person, even if they do not take up too much time.

Students with learning disabilities can learn how to approach these employment-related issues, provided that they are taught directly and in a structured manner.

Social skills

Employers want to hire employees who not only can do the job for which they were hired, but can also fit into the work environment successfully. This calls for appropriate social skills, punctuality, good communication skills as well as a series of independent living skills. One of the key reasons why people with learning disabilities are so frequently unemployed is that they often have problems with mastering and demonstrating these skills. Teaching such skills to students with learning disabilities is a critical part of transition planning.

Adapted from the Learning and Employment Assessment Profile, LDAO, 1999 by Eva Nichols

LEARNING DISABILITIES DISCLOSURE CHART FOR POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS

TIME OF DISCLOSURE: On preliminary application

Advantages:

- Honesty. Peace of mind.
- Allows postsecondary educational institution to make Individual considerations on admission when your average is lowered by marks in a particular subject.
- May allow you to be considered for a space under the institution's affirmative action and equity program.
- Allows you to contact the special needs office even before you are admitted and discuss accommodation and other LD- related issues.
- May allow you to enter a program with limited enrolment.
- If you are entering directly from high school, it enables your school I.P.R.C. records, IEP and/or Student Profile to be considered as part of the admission process.

Disadvantages:

- May result in your not being considered or accepted for a course that may be in line with your interests and aptitudes, but which somebody thinks would be too difficult for a student with learning disabilities.
- If you are not accepted, you may always wonder whether this was due to someone's lack of understanding of LD or because you were not qualified.
- Once you have disclosed the presence of your learning disability, you cannot retract it and you may not have the opportunity to explain it.

Other issues to consider:

- Can you present information about your learning disabilities in a succinct and comprehensible way?
- Do you have the necessary documentation if you are required to produce it?
- Do you know whether the institution has an effective special needs policy and special needs office?

TIME OF DISCLOSURE: Once you have been accepted but before your course has begun or before you have run into any difficulties due to a lack of accommodation

Advantages:

- Honesty. Peace of mind.
- Allows you to approach the special needs office and raise relevant accommodation issues in a positive manner.
- Allows you to present yourself and your learning disabilities in a positive manner and to deal with questions from faculty and other students.
- Allows you to consider a reduced course load.
- May prevent difficulties arising right at the start, due to a lack of understanding of what accommodations you might need.
- If you require further documentation or a new assessment, this can be done sooner rather than later.

Disadvantages:

- Puts responsibility on you to deal with advocacy and accommodation issues at a stressful time, i.e. just as you are starting a new phase of your life.
- Might precipitate a negative reaction from uninformed or prejudiced faculty prior to your being able to prove that the accommodation that you require is not a hardship for them.
- Might force you into a defensive mode of presenting yourself, rather than being able to "market" yourself in the most positive way.
- Even if everything goes well and you are in fact managing very well without any accommodation, once you have disclosed that you have learning disabilities, you cannot retract the statement.

Other issues to consider:

- You need to be able to explain learning disabilities as well as your specific strengths and difficulties in such a way that people will react positively.
- You need to have done a great deal of homework on your own skills, accommodation requirements and the cognitive demands of the program in which you are enrolled.

TIME OF DISCLOSURE: After you have run into difficulties which might have been averted through the provision of the appropriate accommodations

Advantages:

- You have already proven yourself to some extent.
- You have established some positive relationships with fellow students and faculty.
- You have a better understanding of the institution's policies, practices, etc.
- If your disclosure at this stage leads to denial of accommodation and even failure and you are pretty sure that with the appropriate accommodation you could have passed, then you could consider appeal processes.

Disadvantages:

- It may be too late to drop courses without penalty.
- Even with accommodations it may be too late to pass a course.
- You may damage your positive working relationships, since your fellow students or faculty may see you as not being honest with them.
- It may be more difficult to access services from the special needs office.

Other issues to consider:

- Can you present the necessary information at this stage and avoid defensiveness and learned helplessness?
- Is this the situation that led to failure for you before?
- As difficulties begin to appear, should you approach faculty and/or the special needs office and disclose your situation or should you wait and hope that things will smooth over? Should you be proactive or wait and react?
- Do you have the time, energy and, if needed, funds to use appeal processes?

TIME OF DISCLOSURE: Never

Advantages:

- You will never have to discuss learning disabilities, face or deal with negative stereotypes or attitudes that sometimes greet disclosure.
- If you do not need accommodations to be successful in your chosen program your self-confidence may improve.

Disadvantages:

- You may always have to be extra careful or vigilant.
- You will never be able to ask for and expect to be given accommodations that may be easily available.
- You may always have to work a lot harder than other people.
- Your marks may not be as high as they would be if you had accommodations.
- You may always face a great deal of stress and never be completely relaxed.

Other issues to consider:

- If you have a good record, if you are naturally a hard worker, if you have developed successful coping and compensatory strategies which you can utilize without having to involve others or explain them to others, then why would you open the door to any potentially negative outcomes?
- On the other hand, if people like you do not disclose and show how successful people with learning disabilities can be, then are you perpetuating society's negative stereotypes and attitudes?

Adapted from LD Disclosure Chart by Eva Nichols, 1995

LEARNING DISABILITIES DISCLOSURE CHART FOR WORKPLACE SETTINGS

TIME OF DISCLOSURE: On preliminary job application

Advantages:

- Honesty. Peace of mind.
- Allows employer to decide whether learning disabilities are an issue
- May allow you to be considered for a job under a company's employment equity program.
- Allows you to raise accommodation and other LD-related issues at the interview.

Disadvantages:

- Employer may confuse learning disabilities with developmental disabilities and reject you without talking to you.
- May result in your not being considered for a job which is in line with your interests and aptitudes.
- If you do not get an interview you may always wonder whether this was due to the employer's lack of understanding of LD or because you were not qualified.
- Once you have disclosed that you have a learning disability, you cannot retract it and you may not have the opportunity to explain it.

Other issues to consider:

- Can you present information about your learning disabilities in a succinct and comprehensible way?
- Do you have the necessary documentation if you are required to produce it?
- Do you know whether the company has a good reputation around employment equity issues?

TIME OF DISCLOSURE: During your job interview

Advantages:

- Honesty. Peace of mind.
- Allows you to raise relevant job, training and accommodation issues in a positive way.
- Allows you to present yourself and your learning disabilities in a positive way.
- Allows you to deal with questions directly.
- May reduce the chances of direct discrimination due to prejudice, ignorance or lack of understanding of learning disabilities.
- Opportunity for any employment equity policy to help you.

Disadvantages:

- Might focus the whole interview on “the issue” rather than you and your skills.
- Puts responsibility on you to be an effective advocate at a stressful time.
- Might disqualify you from being considered for a job that you could do well and where your learning disabilities would not interfere.
- Might force you into a defensive mode, rather than being able to market yourself and your strengths.

Other issues to consider:

- You have to be able to discuss learning disabilities in the abstract as well your own strengths and weaknesses so that the interview panel recognizes the value of hiring a person with LD.
- You may have to cope with open or hidden prejudices on the part of the interviewer(s).
- You need to have done a great deal of homework on your skills, strengths, accommodation requirements and the cognitive demands of the job that you hope to be hired for.

TIME OF DISCLOSURE: *After the interview when you are offered the job, but before you have begun work*

Advantages:

- Honesty. Peace of mind.
- Opportunity to discuss your accommodation needs with the person who will train and/or supervise you.
- Opportunity for the employer to look good in hiring a person with a disability and/or to help meet the company's employment equity goals.

Disadvantages:

- The employer may react negatively and feel that you should have disclosed information at the interview.
- May withdraw job offer if your accommodation needs are seen as complex or onerous.
- If they would like to withdraw the job offer but are worried about a human rights complaint, then you may face some negative working relationships at work.

Other issues to consider:

- Are you comfortable with presenting the information at this stage?
- Do you know your legal rights under these circumstances?
- Do you have the patience and fortitude to persevere with the job if the working climate is decidedly chilly due to their concerns about your late disclosure?

TIME OF DISCLOSURE: After you have begun work, but before you have run into any problems or difficulties which could conceivably relate to your learning disabilities

Advantages:

- Honesty. Peace of mind.
- Allows you to prove your capabilities before disclosure.
- Allows you to have a feel for the optimum timing and process for disclosure.
- Allows you to identify potential allies among your fellow employees.
- If the disclosure results in punitive action (for example, firing or demotion), then you could resort to legal action or a human rights complaint.

Disadvantages:

- You may feel nervous about people thinking you are incompetent because they don't understand leaning disabilities.
- You may constantly worry that any difficulty, however minor, will be attributed to your LD.
- People may be reluctant to ask you to do things just in case your learning disabilities may interfere.

Other issues to consider:

- When, what and whom do you tell?
- To what extent does stress influence your performance at work, and will you feel more or less stressed if you disclose?

TIME OF DISCLOSURE: After you have run into difficulties which might have been avoided if you had asked for and used the accommodation(s) that you need to assist you in the workplace

Advantages:

- You have already proven yourself to some extent on the job.
- You have established some positive working relationships with your supervisor and fellow employees.
- You have a better understanding of company policies and practices.
- If your disclosure at this stage leads to being fired and yet you are pretty sure that with the appropriate accommodation you could do the job quite successfully, then you could consider legal action.

Disadvantages:

- Your employer may accuse you of dishonesty.
- You may be demoted, placed on probation or even fired.
- You may hurt your working relationships, since others may view you as untrustworthy.
- You may feel guilty, which could add to your stress level. This could damage your performance level even further.
- You may contribute to negative stereotypes and attitudes toward persons with disabilities.

Other issues to consider:

- Can you present the necessary information at this stage and still avoid defensiveness and learned helplessness?
- How would you feel about trusting a fellow employee, if the situation were reversed?
- Is this the situation that led you to resign in a previous job?
- As difficulties begin to appear, should you approach your supervisor and disclose your learning disabilities? Or should you wait a while, hoping that things will smooth over?

TIME OF DISCLOSURE: Never

Advantages:

- You will never have to discuss learning disabilities, face or deal with negative stereotypes or attitudes that frequently greet disclosure.
- You will never be fired because you have a learning disability.
- You may get a job that you want. If your learning disabilities do not get in the way, then your self-confidence is bound to improve.

Disadvantages:

- You may always have to be extra careful at work.
- You will never be able to ask for job accommodations which may be easily available at your company.
- You may always have to work a lot harder than other people.
- You may find that you do not move up the corporate ladder.
- You may always face a lot of stress and never can relax completely at work.

Other issues to consider:

- If you have a good work record, you are naturally a hard worker, you have developed successful coping strategies which you can use without having to involve others or explain to others, then why would you open the door to any potentially negative outcomes?
- On the other hand, if people like you do not disclose and demonstrate that people with learning disabilities can be successful, then are you perpetuating society's negative stereotypes and attitudes?

Adapted from LD Disclosure Chart, Eva Nichols, 1995 and LEAP, 1999

A RESOURCE LISTING ON TRANSITION ISSUES FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Books and Booklets

AHEAD, **From Screening to Accommodation: Providing Services to Adults with Learning Disabilities**, 1997

AHEAD, **Guidelines for Documentation of a Learning Disability in Adolescents and Adults**, 1997

AHEAD, **Testing Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities: a Guide for Licensure, Certification and Credentialing**, 1992

Benezra, Esther et al, **Learning Disabilities and the Workplace**, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, 1993

Brinckerhoff, L., Shaw, S., & McGuire, J., **Promoting Postsecondary Education for Students with Learning Disabilities: A Handbook for Practitioners**, PRO-ED, Inc. 1993

Brown, Dale S., **Learning a Living: A Guide for Planning your Career and Finding a Job**, Woodbine House, 2000

Cramer, Shirley C. & Ellis, William, **Learning Disabilities: Lifelong Issues**, Paul H Brookes Co., 1996

Crux, Sandra, C. **Learning Strategies for Adults, Compensations for Learning Disabilities**. Wall & Emerson, 1991

Eaton, Howard, Coull, Leslie, **Transitions to Postsecondary Learning**, Eaton Coull Learning Group Ltd. Publishing, 1998

Gerber, Paul J., Brown, Dale S. **Learning Disabilities and Employment**. PRO-ED Inc., 1997

Gerber, Paul J., Reiff, Henry B. **Learning Disabilities in Adulthood; Persisting Problems and Evolving Issues**. Austin, Texas: PRO-ED Inc., 1994

Hayes, M. L., **You Don't Outgrow It**, Academic Therapy Publications, 1993

Herriot, Carol **Postsecondary Screening Inventory for Suspected Learning Disabilities**, University of Guelph, 1996

Hoffman, Arlyn J., **Meeting the Challenge of Learning Disabilities in Adulthood**, Paul H. Brooks Publishing Co., 2000

Johnston, Janet, **Adults with Learning Disabilities: the Road to Success**, Sureen Publishing/Learning Potentials, 1996

Johnston, Janet, **I Always Hated School: Making Sense of the Frustration**, Sureen Publishing/Learning Potentials, 1996

Latham, Peter S. & Latham, Patricia H., **Succeeding in the Workplace**, JKL Communications, 1994

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, **Job Interview Tips for People with Learning Disabilities**, 1990

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, **Destination Literacy - Identifying and Teaching Adults with Learning Disabilities**, 1999

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, **A Family Affair, Preparing Parents and Students with Learning Disabilities for Postsecondary Education**, 1998

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, **Together for Success - Guidelines and Self-advocacy for Postsecondary Students with Learning Disabilities**, 1996

Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, **Invisible No Longer: a Self-advocacy Manual for Adults with Learning Disabilities**, Toronto, 1995

Murphy, Stephen T., **On Being LD: Perspectives and Strategies of Young Adults**, Teachers College Press, 1992

Nichols, Eva. **Design for Success, an Employer's Guide to Learning Disabilities**, Toronto, Ont.: Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, 2nd edition, 1994

Nichols, Eva. **Learning to Say No - Dealing with Workplace Harassment**, Toronto, Ont.; Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario. 1998

Nichols, Eva. **Nobody's Perfect, an Employer's Introduction to Learning Disabilities**, Toronto, Ont. Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, 1994

Nichols, Eva. **Learning and Employment Assessment Profile**, Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, 1999

Nichols, Eva, **Tools for Transition: a Counsellor's Guide to Learning Disabilities**, Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, 1994

Nosek, Kathleen, **Dyslexia in Adults: Taking Charge of Your Life**, Taylor Publishing Co., 1997

Reiff, Henry B., et al, **Exceeding Expectations: Successful Adults with Learning Disabilities**, PRO-ED Inc., 1997

Smith, Cathy. **For You: Adults with Learning Disabilities**. Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, 1991

Vogel, Susan A., & Reder, Stephen, ed., **Learning Disabilities, Literacy and Education**, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 1998

Wren, Carol, **Hanging by a Twig: Understanding and Counseling Adults with Learning Disabilities and ADD**, W.W. Norton & co., 2000

PERSONAL STORIES

Lee, Christopher & Jackson, Rosemary, **Faking It: A Look into the Mind of a Creative Learner**, Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1992

Schmitt, Dr. Abraham (as told to Mary Lou Hartzler Clemens), **Brilliant Idiot: An Autobiography of a Dyslexic**, Good Books, 1994

Simpson, Eileen, **Reversals: A Personal Account of Victory over Dyslexia**, The Noonday Press, 1979, 1991

Upham, Dayle A. & Trumbull, Virginia H., **Making the Grade: Reflections on Being Learning Disabled**, Heinemann, 1997

Relevant Journal Articles

Blalock, G., et al, **Transition and Students with Learning Disabilities: creating sound futures**, Journal of Learning Disabilities, January 1996

Brandt, M. D., et al **Transitioning College Bound Students with LD**, Intervention in School and Clinic, May 1991

Brinckerhoff, L., et al **Promoting Access, Accommodations and Independence for College Students with Learning Disabilities**, Journal of Learning Disabilities, September, 1992

Brinckerhoff, L., **Making the transition to higher education: a checklist for high school seniors with learning disabilities**, LDA Newsbriefs, March/April, 1996

Coutinho, M. J., **Who will be learning disabled after the reauthorization of IDEA? Two very distinct perspectives**, Journal of Learning Disabilities, December, 1995

Ferri, B. A., et al **Profiles of college students demonstrating learning disabilities with and without giftedness**, Journal of Learning Disabilities, October 1997

Gerber, P. J., et al **Identifying alterable patterns in employment success for highly successful adults with learning disabilities**, Journal of Learning Disabilities, October 1992

Houck, C. K., et al **Students with learning disabilities in the university environment: a study of faculty and student perceptions**, Journal of Learning Disabilities, December 1992

LDA Postsecondary Education Subcommittee, **Transition Planning: preparing for postsecondary employment for students with learning disabilities and/or attention disorders**, LDA Newsbriefs, March/April 1996

Levine, P., and Nourse, S.W., **What follow up studies say about post-school life for young**

Transition Planning Resource Guide for Students with Learning Disabilities

men and women with learning disabilities: a critical look at the literature, Journal of Learning Disabilities, May/June, 1998

Malcolm, C. B., et al **A descriptive study of adults with suspected learning disabilities**, Journal of Learning Disabilities, 1990

Miller, M., **Resilience in university students who have learning disabilities**, Learning Disabilities Focus and Research 1997

NJCLD Secondary to postsecondary education transition planning for students with learning disabilities, LDAA Newsbriefs, Spring 1995

Patton, J. R., et al **Learning disabilities: the challenge of adulthood**, Journal of Learning Disabilities 1992

Reis, S. M., et al **Case studies of high-ability students with learning disabilities who have achieved**, Exceptional Children 1997

Rich, R., et al **Integrating content and strategy instruction at the college level**, Intervention in School and Clinic, November 1995

Rich, R., et al **Serving college students with learning disabilities: a model program**, LD Forum 1995 Richard, M. M. **Students with LD/ADD win landmark court decision over Boston University**, Attention, Fall 1997

Roffman, A. J., et al **Helping young adults understand their learning disabilities**, Journal of Learning Disabilities, September 1994

Vogel, S. A., et al **The success of college students with learning disabilities: factors related to educational attainment**, Journal of Learning Disabilities, September 1992

Vogel, S. A., et al **Educational and Psychological Factors in Successful and Unsuccessful College Students with Learning Disabilities**, Learning disabilities Research and Practice, 1993

Woodman, E. **Transitions: the personal journey of an adult's experience living with learning disabilities**, LDAA Newsbriefs, Winter 1995

Videos

ABOUT US: Adults with learning disabilities (33 minutes)

Four adults with LD, all from different backgrounds, speak about their personal experiences.

A DIFFERENT WAY OF LEARNING (10 minutes)

Four successful adults with LD discuss how they compensate for their difficulties in their workplaces.

HOW DIFFICULT CAN THIS BE? Understanding learning disabilities (70 minutes)

A workshop to help people experience second hand the frustrations faced by persons with LD.

IT'S ABOUT BELONGING (15 minutes)

Students who have been involved in the Learning Opportunities Task Force pilot programs at Ontario colleges and universities talk about the supports that have worked for them.

A QUESTION OF PERCEPTION (25 minutes)

Interviews with university students, a professor and psychologist at Carleton University, highlighting students' difficulties, frustrations and triumphs.

STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES (15 minutes)

Experiences of students with LD at Memorial University in Newfoundland.

SUCCESS IN COLLEGE & CAREER WITH ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDERS (46 minutes)

Information on how to be successful in postsecondary studies and make good career decisions when ADHD is an issue.

SUCCESS AT WORK: TRANSITIONS TO EMPLOYMENT (60 minutes)

High school students with LD and/or ADHD develop career choices, workplace strategies and self-advocacy skills in the workplace. The video is accompanied by a discussion guide and student workbook.

TRANSITIONS TO POSTSECONDARY LEARNING (48 minutes)

Students with LD and/or ADHD at university discuss their transition from high school to postsecondary studies. Topics include knowing your strengths, learning to self-advocate, and dealing with different expectations at the postsecondary level. The video is accompanied by a discussion guide, student workbook and self-advocacy handbook.

Most of the above resources as well as many other books, journals and videos are available from the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario at:

**365 Bloor Street East,
Suite 1004, Box 39
Toronto, Ontario M4W 3L4
Tel: 416-929-4311 Ex. 42
Fax: 416-929-3905**

www.ldao.on.ca library@ldao.on.ca

Additional Resources

The Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario has **chapters and satellites** throughout Ontario. Many of these locations have offices with a resource centre, provide information to parents and the community and are able to arrange for speakers to attend daytime and evening events. An up-to-date listing of chapters can be found on the LDAO website: www.ldao.on.ca.

The four **Provincial Demonstration Schools**, in addition to their residential programs, provide support for teacher training and are a resource to school boards in programming for students with learning disabilities:

Amethyst School

1090 Highbury Avenue
London, Ontario N5Y 4V9
Tel: 519-453-4400, Ext. 527
Fax: 519-453-2160

Trillium School

347 Ontario Street South
Milton, Ontario L9T 3X9
Tel: 905-878-8428
Fax: 905-878-7540

Sagonaska School

350 Dundas Street West
Belleville, Ontario K8P 1B2
Tel: 613-967-2830
Fax: 613-967-2482

Centre Jules-Leger

281 Lanark Avenue
Ottawa, Ontario K1Z 6R8
Tel: 613-761-9300
Fax: 613-761-9301

Community colleges and universities in Ontario provide services, supports and accommodations to students with learning disabilities through their Special Needs offices. All of these institutions should now have a Learning Strategist and Assistive Technologist on staff to help students with learning disabilities. For contact information on Special Needs offices in Ontario colleges and universities go to the LDAO website: www.ldao.on.ca and click on LD Directory.