



AUTISM TRAINING AND TECHNICAL  
ASSISTANCE PROJECT

# Talking the Talk About Neurodiversity: Sharing, Advocating, and Telling

Presented by Haley Moss

# Moderator Information



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# The Autism Training and Technical Assistance Project

The Autism Training and Technical Assistance Project (ATTA) develops and presents resources that assist individuals with autism in their transition from secondary education to postsecondary education or employment.

ATTA provides training and support to important stakeholders as they work to provide an equitable experience for individuals on the spectrum.

# The Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support

The Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support (ICSPPS) creates, supports, and delivers professional development for education professionals across Illinois. ICSPPS provides technical assistance, develops publications, and facilitates program improvement strategies for our partners as they relate to college transition, recruitment, retention, and completion—encouraging achievement of special populations learners. ICSPPS was founded in 1977 at Illinois State University and is housed in the Educational Administration and Foundations department in the College of Education.





# Autism Training and Technical Assistance Project (ATTA)

<https://autismcollegeandcareer.com>



## Illinois State Board of Education

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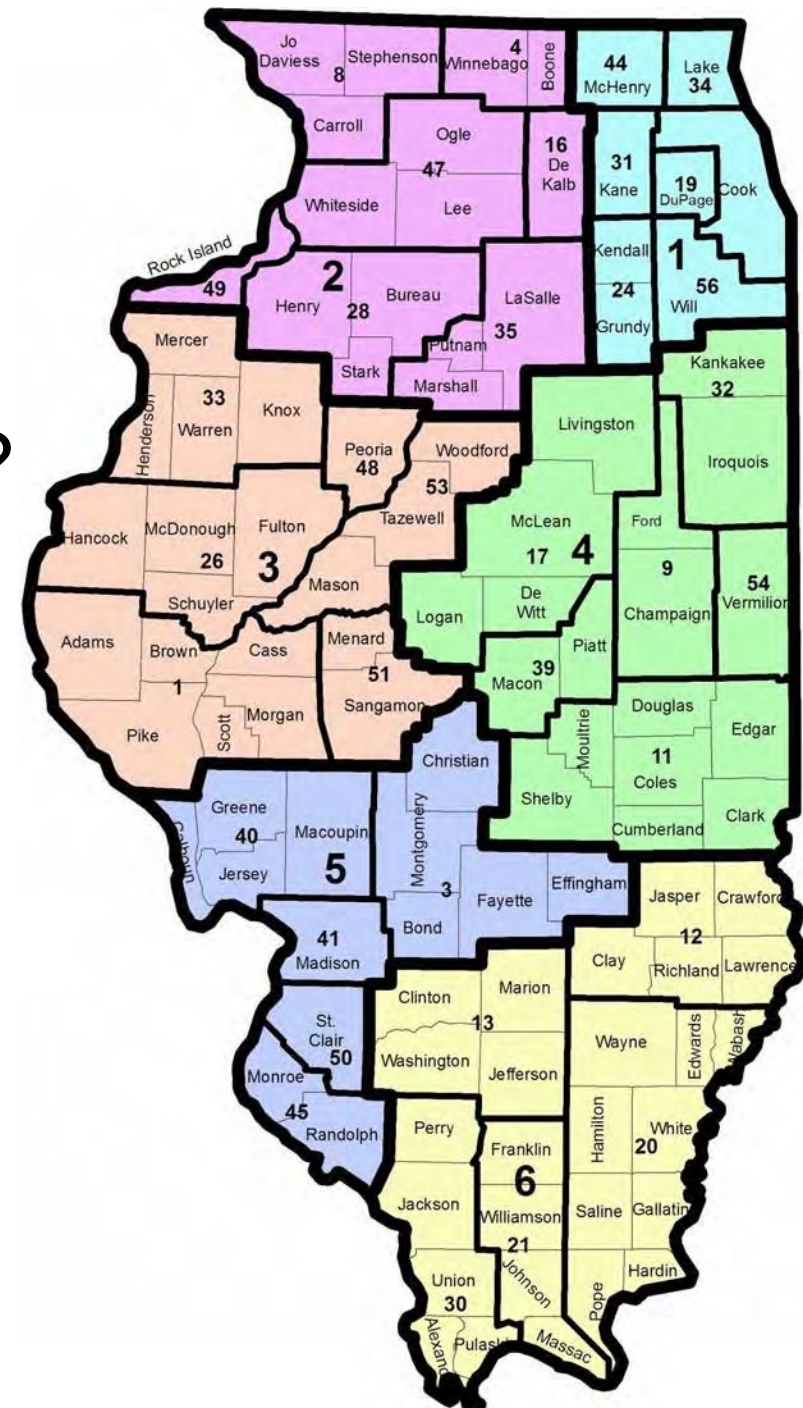
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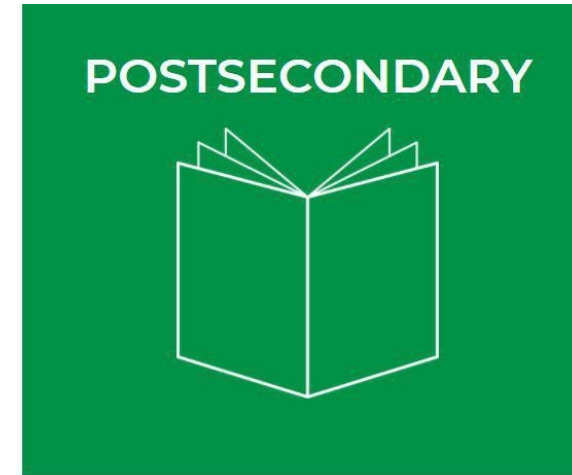
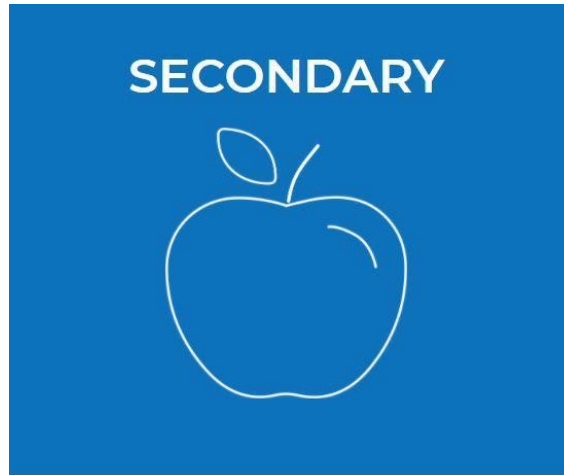
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Which Region are you Located in?

1. Chicago
2. Northeast
3. Northwest
4. East Central
5. Southwest
6. Southeast



# Which ATTA Stakeholder do you Represent?



# Presenter Information



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# What's the Deal with Disclosure?

**Disclosure** refers to a variety of **processes and tools** that a person uses to **share their disability status** with others in order to receive **support, accommodations, and acceptance.**

Autistics and allies all have different perspectives and roles to play when it comes to disclosing.

# Some Goals of Disclosure and storytelling



# Is There Any Point Where It Is Actually Mandatory?

If you need accommodations or services to be successful at work or school, **you must disclose** in order to receive them.

These processes are typically covered by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

# Each Situation Is Different

How (and when) to disclose looks different with different people!



# Parents: Who (And What) Do I Share About My Kid's disability?

- Consider balancing your interests with your child's interests
- Relationship with the person
- Potential support for your child
- Purpose of sharing
- Can your child consent to sharing information?



# Parents: Why Should I Tell My Kid?

- Creation of a **disability self-identity and pride**
- Self-awareness and self-esteem building
- Building **self-advocacy** skills
  - Open doors for new self-advocacy opportunities
- Your kid **already knows** they're different
- Continue building a **loving and trusting relationship** with your kids

# Talking to Young People About Autism

- Don't hide this information from them!
- Use **developmentally appropriate** language and concepts to explain
- Share **accurate information** and **presume competence**
- Normalize disability in your household
- Be **affirming** – you love them and nothing is “broken”
- Allow them space to be **curious** and answer their questions

# Additional Tools to Use

- Media is a great way to introduce people who share your child's neurotype or disability
- People they know from your life are helpful too!

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# 9-Year-Old Me



# The Self-Advocate's Disclosure Roadmap

- Personal self-acceptance and identity
- Workplace
- Friends/family/relationships
- School



# Disparities in Disclosure

- **Disclosure** is a personal decision
- Why wouldn't you disclose?
  - Fear of being perceived as weak
  - Avoid perception of receiving special treatment
  - Internalized ableism
  - Preexisting stereotypes
  - Potential discrimination
  - Concerns with professionalism and licensing



# Shaping Your Narrative

- Figure out the reasoning behind your disclosure
- How you do it might influence how others react



# Context Dependent: Reactions

- Most people (should) be supportive and accepting – or curious
- If someone is mean or unreceptive...



# Workplace Disclosure Strategies

- **Soft disclosure**
  - When the person might hint at having a disability – but you might not be able to confirm or deny it
  - Mentioning they are members of an allyship or affinity group
  - Asking for support in a vague way
- **Hard disclosure**
  - When someone precisely mentions they have a disability
  - They describe it in a cover letter, resume, or other application materials
  - They request an accommodation under the ADA



# Encouraging Authenticity

- People **feel they must disclose** when:
  - They need an accommodation under the **Americans with Disabilities Act**
  - They are unable to keep adapting and self-accommodating
  - There are breakdowns in **communication or performance**
  - There is a change in life circumstances
- Others choose to **disclosure voluntarily**:
  - They want to bring their full selves to work and take **pride in their identities**
  - They want to be proactive and limit misunderstandings
  - They view neurodiversity and/or disability as a **strength**

# The Role of the Ally: Creating Space

**Figure out why** someone is sharing this information with you

- Accommodation request?
- Fun fact?
- Spirit of transparency?

Find out who else knows so you don't end up "outing" someone

Listen and respond with **empathy** – it takes trust!

**“How can I support you?”**





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# Questions and Discussion