



AUTISM TRAINING AND TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE PROJECT

Autism University: Lessons from Beyond the Classroom

Presented by
Haley Moss

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

icsps impacting
educational
equity



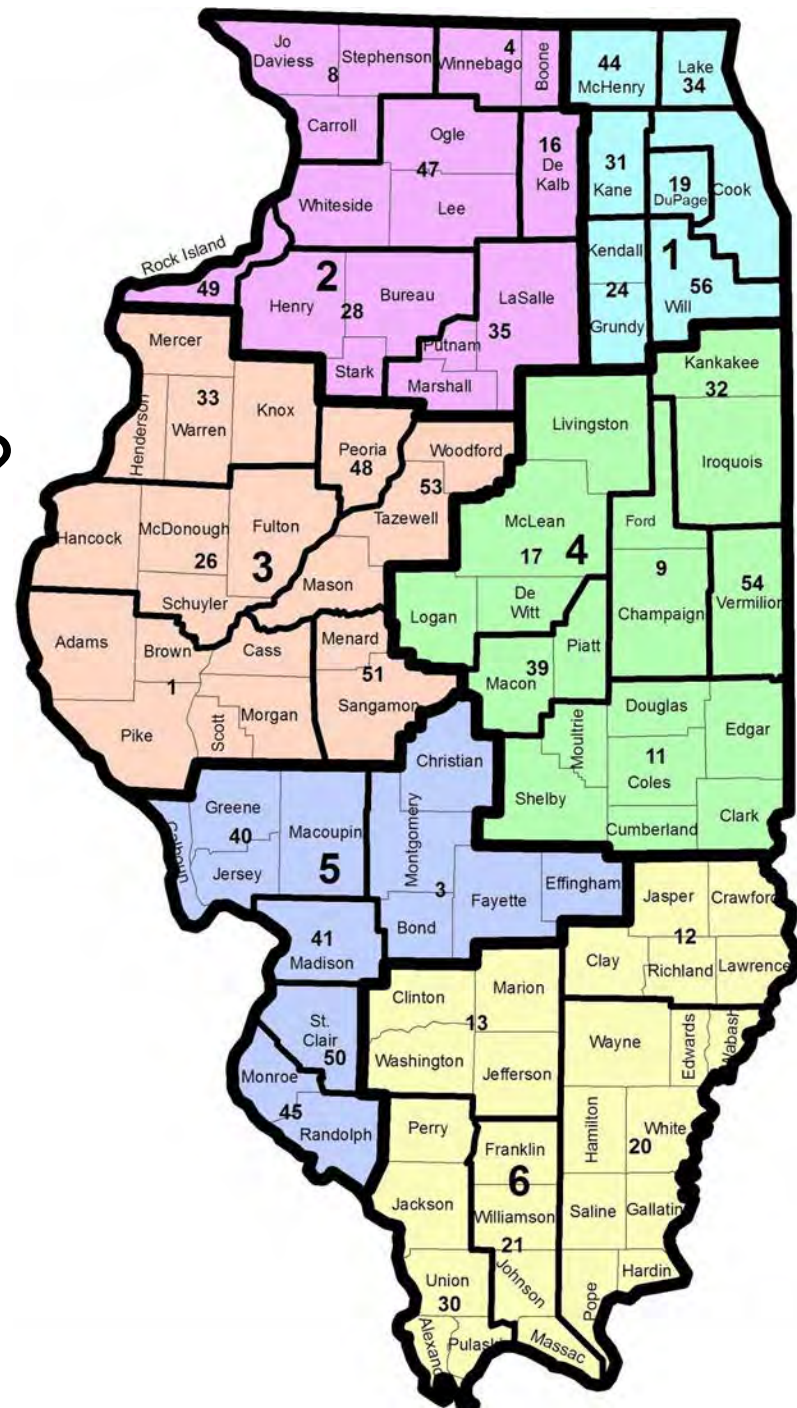
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Which Region are you Located in?

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



Which ATTA Stakeholder do you Represent?



SECONDARY



STUDENTS / YOUNG ADULTS



POSTSECONDARY



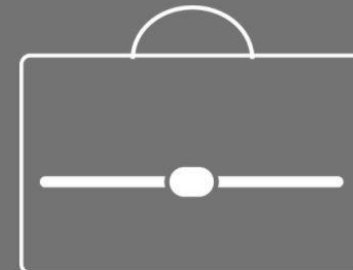
COMMUNITIES



FAMILIES



EMPLOYERS



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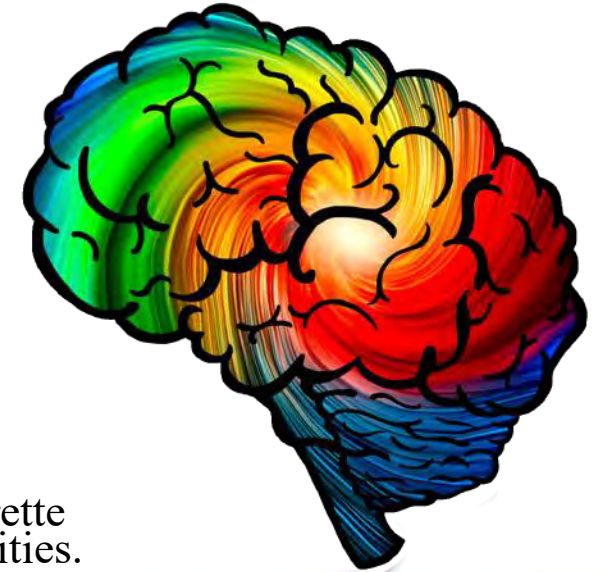
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Neurodiversity: A Refresher

Neurodiversity is a concept where neurological differences are to be recognized and respected as any other human variation

- All brains work differently – whether you are **neurotypical** or **neurodivergent**
- Many forms of neurodivergence include differences in communication & thinking
- 1 in 7 people can be considered neurodivergent



Neurodivergent individuals include those with Autism, ADHD, learning disabilities, Tourette Syndrome, intellectual disabilities, psychiatric disabilities, and acquired cognitive disabilities.

What did young adults with autism do after high school?



I Graduated High School. Now What?

(I had never lived away from home, let alone been to sleepaway camp)
Preparing for the real world: big and small transitions

- New schedules and routines
- Moving
- Services

College and Autism

- More than 44 percent of students with autism receive some type of postsecondary education in the United States
 - About one third attend college. Others attend non-degree seeking programs
- Fewer than 20% graduate college five years after high school (Drexel, 2017)
- How do we best prepare autistics headed to college?

“Adulthood”
(or what my parents call “independent
living skills”)

Surviving As An Autistic Adult

- When I moved to the dorms, I learned (unrelated to my major):
 - How to live away from home
 - How to have a roommate
 - Basic money management
 - How to get around on my own
 - Do laundry
 - How to admit something is too much
 - Be an effective self-advocate



Living Alone

You should know about the following things:

- Nearest pharmacy
- Restaurants/food delivery
- Cleaning up after yourself
- Laundry
- Bookstore
- Mall
- Parking, if you have a car
- Public transportation
- Emergency contacts



Executive Functioning

Executive function and self-regulation skills are the mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully.

Neurodivergent people (such as those with autism and/or ADHD) struggle with executive functioning.

It really shows during the transition to adulthood and in college

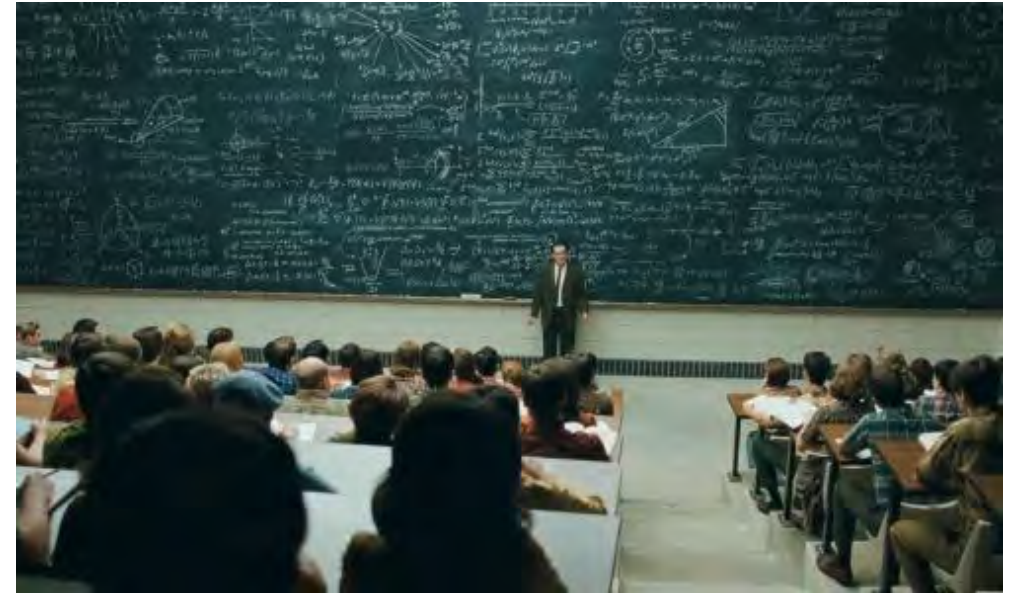
Executive Functioning

- “How do I balance literally everything?”
- School/life balance impact on executive functioning
- Ability to start, stop, and prioritize tasks



Neurodiversity in the Classroom

- Accessible syllabi
 - Disability is not just a statement at the end
 - Accommodations – not substantially altering the course content
 - Visual and auditory information
- Different ways of presenting information for different types of learners
- Communication, communication, communication!
 - Deadlines, information, expectations





Self-Advocacy Skills

SELF-ADVOCACY



What Self-Advocacy Actually Is

Advocacy is a form of communication!

Can be as simple as saying "yes" or "no" or as complex as speaking for a group of people to lawmakers

Anybody Can Self-Advocate

People with disabilities and people without disabilities self-advocate everyday.

We make decisions for ourselves constantly from the second we wake up until we go to bed

We speak up for ourselves and make decisions at home, in school, at work, in friendships, in relationships, etc.

In college, we especially learn to self-advocate because we are expected to be independent and we are (most likely) legal adults.

Using Self-Advocacy Skills

- The disability community is full of self-advocacy and advocacy opportunities
- Skills can be used with:
 - Employers
 - Policymakers
 - Your university
 - Accommodations!
 - Starting student organizations
 - Learning from other people with disabilities



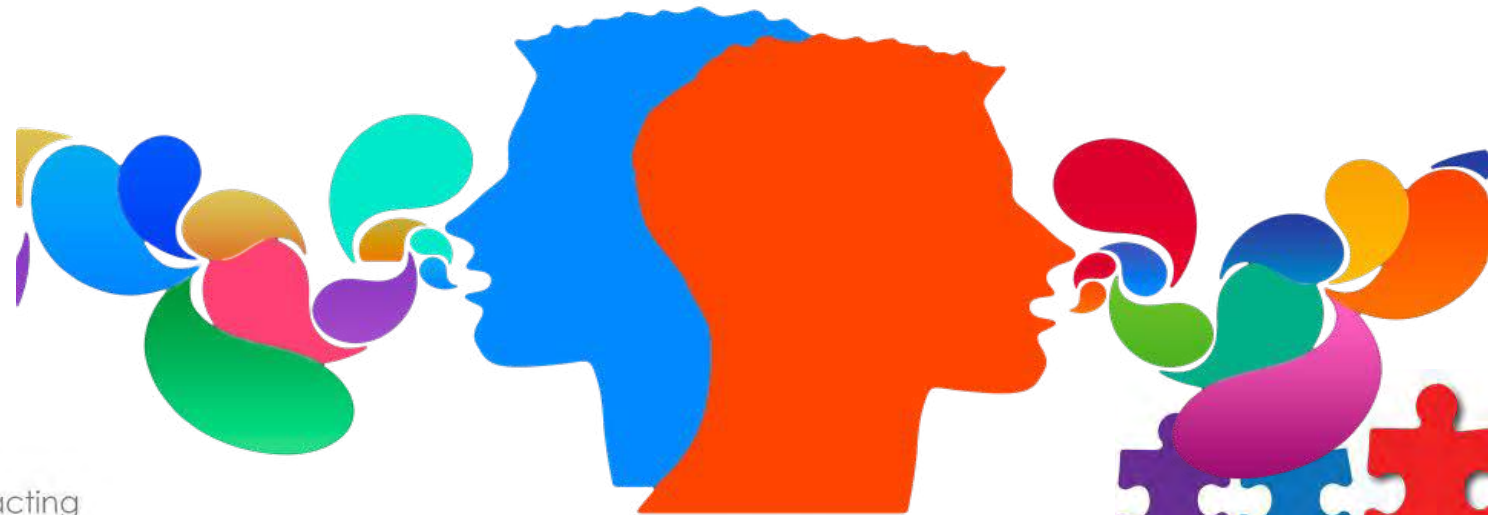
Asking for Accommodations

You do NOT have to do it all alone

But you are also probably over 18 and are an adult

Leveling the playing field is not a sign of weakness

Disability resource centers or specialists



The Role of an IEP

- IDEA governs public schools and covers students up until high school graduation or age 21, whichever comes first
- Under IDEA:
 - A school district must provide a student with a disabilities a **free and appropriate education**
 - That must be in the **least restrictive environment**
- Schools also can evaluate students for disabilities under 13 eligibility categories (one of which is autism)
- If the child is eligible to receive special education services, the school, educators, family and team will craft an **Individualized Education Plan (IEP)**.

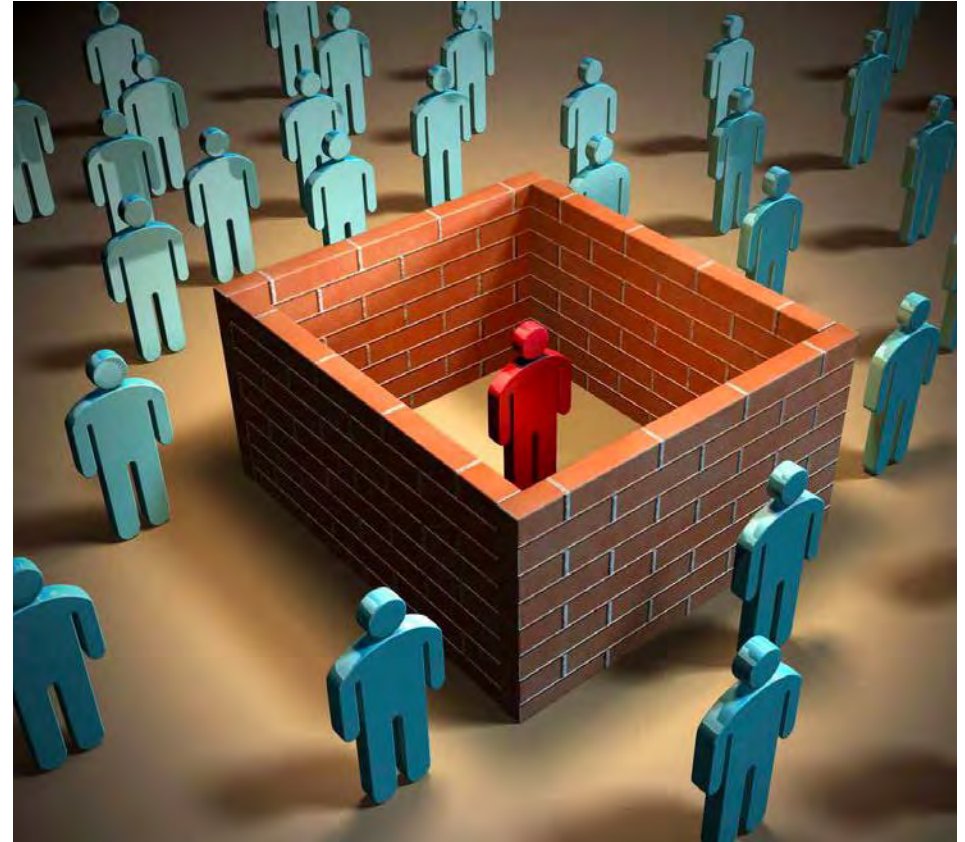
Colleges do not follow IEPs, but may use them to inform the accommodation process.



Avoiding Social Isolation

Social Isolation

- People on the spectrum are more likely to experience social isolation
- Concerns about mental health
- Adjusting to a transition
- Social rejection and struggle to meet people



The “Typical College Experience”

- I did not want to be perceived as “different”
- Social events
 - But also realizing if it’s too much
- Getting involved on campus



Making Friends

- Don't be afraid to say hello!
 - Many new freshmen are nervous and looking for friends
 - Saying hello to someone could make their day
 - You never know!
- Join clubs!
 - You will meet people with similar interests
 - Keep a list or planner to stay organized
 - Use calendars and other reminders to help you
- Volunteer
 - Meet people who are passionate about the community and same things you are
- Free events!
 - Lots of free events on campus to meet people
 - Known for the free food, usually
 - Check out if they are accessible (makes it even easier to meet people)!



Self-Identity

Social Justice & Disability Education

- College was the first time I really learned about social justice & disability
- Self-acceptance & emerging identity
- Finding your people
- Mentor/mentee relationships
- Exploring passions





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Questions and Discussion