

Supporting Students with Disabilities

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Please Complete the Pre-Survey

Case Study

First-Time Student with A+ Scholarship

Instructions: As a group, read the following case study and discuss how you would proceed. If needed, use the discussion questions to guide your group discussion. After concluding your discussion, select a group leader who will present the case study and your group's discussion to the larger group.

First-Time Student with A+ Scholarship

You are meeting with Javen (he/him) for the first time. Javen is an incoming student and would like help in creating his first semester schedule. He would also like you to double-check his financial aid and cost of attendance. Javen is a recent high school graduate and first-generation college student. He has completed his FAFSA and is confirmed to be A+ eligible. Javen states he plans to work 15-20 hours a week while attending school and would like to enroll part-time. Javen is afraid full-time enrollment would be too much for him while working.

Discussion Questions:

- What information do you think is missing?
- What follow-up questions would you ask Javen and why?
- What support resources do you think are most appropriate?

**We Don't Know
What We Don't Know**

Feeling Embarrassed by What You Don't Know?

Don't be. Disabilities are often stigmatized and as such...

- You may have never been taught about serving students with disabilities (SWD).
- You may have never been taught to think about discussing disabilities.
- You may feel awkward having open conversations about disabilities.

It's hard to learn about something when it remains taboo. So...

- Let's try to normalize it.
- Let's admit we can't know everything, so we can work towards making fewer assumptions.
- Let's allow ourselves the grace to get it wrong the first time.
- Let's learn about discussing disabilities so we can be the right door, even if we don't work in Disability Support Services (DSS).

What is a Disability?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines a person with a disability as:

A person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity.

This includes people who have a record of such an impairment, even if they do not currently have a disability. It also includes individuals who do not have a disability but are regarded as having a disability.

It is important to remember that in the context of ADA, “disability” is a legal term rather than a medical one. Because it has a legal definition, the ADA’s definition of disability is different from how disability is defined under other laws, such as for Social Security Disability related benefits.



What are Major Life Activities?

- Breathing
- Walking
- Talking
- Hearing
- Seeing
- Sleeping
- Caring for oneself
- Performing manual tasks
- Working

Major life activities also include major bodily functions such as: immune system functions, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions.

What is Not a Disability?

- Anything someone has self-diagnosed
- Speaking English as a second language
- Pregnancy
- Test anxiety in and of itself

*This doesn't mean the student doesn't need or shouldn't receive additional support. DSS just may not be able to provide any accommodations.

Students Don't Always Know What They Need to Know

Why is it Important for Students to Connect with DSS?

- DSS can provide the individual support needed for equal access to success
 - Supporting the student through various college processes
 - Establishing needed accommodations
 - Empowering the student to advocate for themselves
 - Increasing the student's circle of support
- Connecting to DSS can have a big impact on Financial Aid
 - Part-time enrollment (6 credits in fall/spring) may be permitted for students receiving the Access Missouri Grant and/or the A+ Scholarship
- DSS can assist students in connecting with and utilizing other benefits
 - Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation
 - Military Vocational Rehabilitation
 - Rehabilitation Services for the Blind

If a Student Has a Disability, Shouldn't They Already Know About DSS?

- **Aware & Proactive**

- These students are aware OTC offers support services and have already started the process via MyOTC. This is a relatively low percentage of students.
- These students may disclose a disability early in the process and use formal terminology.

- **Aware & Unsure**

- These students are aware of support for SWD, but they don't know how to get started with services at OTC.
- These students will likely need help getting started and may need more assistance through the process.
- These students may not know exactly how to ask about DSS, but may use key phrases like "I had an IEP in high school" or "I have a 504 plan."

- **Unaware & Unsure**

- These students are not aware of supports for SWD and they do not know how to get started.
- These student will require the most assistance through the process and may never say anything to trigger a DSS referral.
- Once enrolled, these students may struggle indicating the need for additional support.

Why Isn't There an Automatic Transition Into DSS From High School?

There are several legal and academic differences between high school and college disability support.

High School	College
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Once approved, accommodations are automatic and mandatory.● Teachers and staff are automatically informed of the student's individual needs.● Accommodations follow the student year to year, and school to school.● Parents are heavily involved in the process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Students are responsible for disclosing a disability to the institution.● It is the student's responsibility to inform instructors and staff of accommodations.● Services must be renewed each semester.● Parents aren't involved in the process unless written permission is given by the student.

See a comprehensive list of differences in [*Understanding the Differences Between High School and College: A Guide for Students with Disabilities*](#).



Connecting Students with Disability Support Services

What if My Student Says Something DSS'y?

What it might sound like...

- "I had special help"
- "I've never been good at school"
- "I have trouble with..."
- "College makes me nervous"
- "Do I have to take general education classes?"

Don't stop asking questions!

You can respond by asking...

- "What kind of special help?"
- "Why do you think you've never been good at school?"
- "Do you know why you struggle with...?"
- "What makes you so nervous about college?"
- "Can you tell me a bit about why you feel reluctant to take general education courses?"

My Student Isn't Saying Anything DSS'y, but I Have a Hunch. How Can I Dig Deeper?

While some SWD can be reluctant to disclosure, they might be willing to express other concerns...

- “I want to drop my general education courses.”
 - Normalize this experience for the student.
 - “That’s a tough spot to be in. It’s hard to make this decision. I’m glad you came by to talk about this. Let’s talk more... Can you tell me a little more about what’s making you feel like you need to drop the course?”
- “I’m not quite failing, but I’m really struggling to keep up”
 - “Would you feel okay to tell me a bit more about that? Do you have any thoughts on the source of that struggle?”
 - “Have you experienced a situation like this before? Maybe in high school or another college experience? What have you done historically in these circumstances to get help? Did you seek assistance? Where?”

Once a student self-discloses having a disability, you’re free to discuss openly with the student!



Who commonly refers students to DSS?

- Voc Rehab
- Student Services
- Advisors/Navigators
- High School
- Instructors
- OTC Cares
- Rehab Services for the Blind (RSB)
- The Tutoring & Learning Center
- Writing Center
- OTC Foundation
- Adult Education and Literacy

How Can I Help Create a Warm Handoff to DSS?

- Provide assistance with locating and completing the DSS application in MyOTC.

MyOTC > Getting Started > Disability Support Application

- After the student has submitted their DSS application, you and the student can call DSS to schedule their intake appointment. If you don't make this call, DSS will reach out to the student.
- You can walk the student to the DSS office so they are familiar with the location.
- You can follow up with the student after you've made a referral or connected them to DSS.
- You can help relieve anxiety by briefly discussing the intake process.

What if My Student is Not Interested in Connecting with DSS?

- Just because a student appears to have or discloses having a disability does not mean they're required to seek accommodations.
- Your goal is to make sure students are aware of DSS, not necessary that they register with DSS.

Disability Support Services Picks Up to Further Support the Student

Why is There a DSS Office?

- Because the law says so! The ADA states:

No qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of services, programs, activities of a public or private entity, or be subjected to discrimination by any such entity.

- The DSS office is tasked with ensuring OTC students have equal access to educational opportunity.

What is the Role of DSS at OTC?

- Disability Resource Counselors (DRC) collaborate with the campus community to promote an inclusive environment and remove barriers to educational access for SWD.
- DRC assist with the development of an Accommodation Plan specific to a student's needs and academic goals.
- DRC partner with faculty to fulfill the required accommodation needs of SWD while balancing the course's essential functions and curriculum expectations.
- DRC are also available to answer questions, provide support, and work through specific challenges as they arise.

What Does the Accommodation Process Look Like?

- You and your students can review the intake and accommodation process on the [DSS website](#).



What is an Accommodation?

- An accommodation is a legally mandated modification or service that gives a SWD an equal opportunity to benefit from the educational process.
- It may be useful to think of accommodations as adjustments to how things are normally done.
- Accommodations can be grouped into the following categories:
 - Changes to a classroom environment or task that permit a SWD to participate in the educational process
 - Removal of architectural barriers
 - Modifications to policies, practices, or procedures
 - Provision of auxiliary aids and services
 - Other adaptations or modifications that enable a student to enjoy the benefits and privileges of the college's programs, services, and activities.

What is a “Reasonable Accommodation?”

- Federal laws mandate OTC make “reasonable accommodations” for SWD to have equal access to educational opportunity.
- SWD must meet all of the same standards (academic, technical, behavioral, and professional) as non-disabled students.
- “Reasonable accommodations”:
 - Are modifications or adjustments that allow a SWD to participate in a program or have the same rights and privileges as students without disabilities.
 - Make it possible for a SWD to fully engage in the educational program and for an instructor to fairly evaluate the student’s understanding of the material without interference from the disability.
 - “Level the playing field” without changing the curriculum. This provides SWD the right to fail or succeed.

When is a Request for an Accommodation Not Reasonable?

- An accommodation is not reasonable if it is:
 - A threat to the health and safety of others
 - An undue financial or administrative burden
 - A substantial change in an essential function of the course or curriculum
 - Disruptive or a substantial alteration in the manner in which the program or services are offered
- A college is not required to change a course or program to fulfill a student's desire to be in that course or program.
- An accommodation can not be requested retroactively. Once established, accommodations are for that date forward.

What are Common Accommodations?

- **Alternative Testing** - Extended time, use of a reader or scribe, etc.
- **Course Notes** - Digital voice recording, in-class note taker, taking pictures of notes written on a whiteboard, etc.
- **Accessible Technology** - Read & Write Literacy Software, Natural Readers, Livescribe Smartpen, Fusion-Zoomtext Screen Enlargement, (JAWS) Screen Reader, a large letter keyboard, etc.
- **Alternative Formats for Textbooks or Course Materials**
- **Speech-to-Text Captioning**
- **Closed Captions and Transcription for Course Content**
- **ASL Interpreting**
- **Flexible Course Attendance**
- **Other Accommodations** - Emotional Support Animals, reduced course load, etc.

My Student is Accompanied by an Animal. What Do I Do?

- **IMPORTANT:** Service animals are **not** accommodations! Students with service animals are not required to register with DSS.
- Emotional Support Animals (ESA) are not service animals and **do** require DSS accommodations.
- If a student is accompanied by an animal, and it is not obvious they are a service animal, you may only ask the following two questions:
 - “Is the animal a service animal required because of a disability?”
 - “What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?”
- You are not allowed to request documentation for the animal, require the animal demonstrate its task, or inquire about the nature of the person’s disability.

Once a Student has Established Accommodations, How do They Utilize Them?

- Once accommodations are established, the student will be provided an accommodation letter.
- The student decides to disclose or not disclose their accommodation letter and, therefore, their need for accommodations to their instructor(s).
- If the accommodation letter is disclosed, the instructor(s) will make the required academic accommodations or adjustments (updating the time limit on quizzes through canvas, etc).
- If the student will be utilizing accommodations for an exam, the student must complete the [DSS Exam Request Form](#) in advance of their exam.
- It is the student's right to utilize or not utilize an accommodation. Students should never be made to utilize an accommodation if it is not desired.

Can DSS Assist Students With Temporary Disabilities?

- A temporary disability could be a broken limb, concussion, scheduled or unscheduled surgery, etc.
- If a student is impacted by a temporary disability, DSS can provide the following accommodations:
 - Use of a reader or scribe (temporary blindness, broken limb, etc.)
 - Flexible attendance policy (doctor appointments, hospitalizations, etc.)
 - Classroom accommodations (sitting/standing for comfort, preferential seating, ability to have food in a lab, etc.)
- **REMEMBER:** Since Title IX covers accommodations for pregnant and parenting students, pregnancy is not considered a temporary disability by DSS.

Can I Contact DSS About my Student?

- Yes, if the student has signed a DSS Release of Information form allowing their DRC to share information with you. If the student has not signed this form, the DRC is unable to share information with you.
- DSS staff will determine which college personnel fall under the “need to know.”
- A SWD has a right to privacy. Confidentiality must be maintained by the DSS office, staff, and instructors. DSS staff and instructors should refrain from discussing a student’s circumstances and necessary accommodations in front of other students or staff who have no educational “need to know.” DSS cannot normally discuss information about a student’s progress with a third party, including parents, unless the student has given written authorization to do so. DSS uses that authorization to release specific information only. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and OTC’s policy regarding the release and disclosure of student information generally prohibits DSS from disclosing confidential information to anyone but the student.

How Does a Student Release Their Information?

- In order for DSS personnel to release information about a student, a Disability Support Services Release of Information form must be completed by the student.
- A Release of Student Information Authorization form with the Registrar's Office is **not** sufficient for DSS related information release.

OZARKS TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES RELEASE OF INFORMATION

I give permission for the Disability Support Services (DSS) staff at Ozarks Technical Community College to share information with my OTC instructors and necessary OTC staff about my disability and how it may affect my educational progress. I further understand that the law of confidentiality (FERPA) binds OTC employees to protecting my information within the limits of that law.



Case Studies

Currently Enrolled Student Struggling in a Course

Instructions: As a group, read the following case study and discuss how you would proceed. If needed, use the discussion questions to guide your group discussion. After concluding your discussion, select a group leader who will present the case study and your group's discussion to the larger group.

Currently Enrolled Student Struggling in a Course

An instructor reaches out asking you to contact an advisee of yours who is enrolled in their BIO-100 course. The instructor reports the student, Jax (them/them) is struggling to keep up in class and is on the verge of failing. Jax's performance has also begun to affect others in their workgroup, bringing tension to the classroom. The instructor has tried to discuss the situation with Jax, but they are "hard to understand and the conversation seems to go nowhere." While you are not familiar with Jax, you agree to reach out to them.

Jax is enrolled in 15 credit hours and is in their 3rd semester at OTC. They have a 2.43 GPA and have had success and struggles in a variety of disciplines. It appears English is a second language for Jax and they acknowledge they aren't doing well in the course but that is just how they've always been. They get behind but catch up, doing fine in the end. Past instructors have never had a problem with Jax's performance and have been easy to work with, sometimes providing extra time or additional study materials. They admit they are disorganized and have trouble focusing, but that is because they don't enjoy school and "are only here to make their mom happy."

Discussion Questions:

- What information do you think is missing?
- What follow-up questions would you ask Jax and why?
- What support resources do you think are most appropriate?



Incoming Student Working with Rehabilitation Services for the Blind

Instructions: As a group, read the following case study and discuss how you would proceed if you were the student's Disability Resource Counselor (DRC). Use the discussion questions to guide your group discussion. After concluding your discussion, select a group leader who will present the case study and your group's discussion to the larger group.

Incoming Student Working with Rehabilitation Services for the Blind

Melanie (she/her) is visiting you for her Disability Support Services intake appointment. During your appointment you learn that Melanie is legally blind, uses a cane, and sometimes utilizes her service animal, Butch, to navigate. Melanie shares with you that she was blind at birth and has little vision. Melanie reports she can see some objects when held close to her face and that she is able to discriminate between lightness and darkness. While Melanie can read braille, she much prefers to read electronically with text-to-voice software. Melanie will be a transfer student, having attended college previously. Melanie shares that her Disability Counselor at her previous college “wasn’t really very helpful” and that she “found her own accommodations for the most part.” Melanie wants to be enrolled in 6 credit hours. She loves Biology and knows she “needs to take math.” Melanie would like to have an hour break between classes so she can eat lunch. She also prefers to come to campus Monday, Wednesday, and Friday so her classes are shorter in duration and she is able to be on campus more frequently to make new friends. Melanie reports her family is a great support and that transportation to and from campus will not be an issue. During your meeting, Melanie shares that she will be receiving financial and vocational support from the State of Missouri’s Rehabilitation Services for the Blinds (RSB).

Discussion Questions:

- As Melanie’s DRC, what things do you need to consider to ensure Melanie will have equal access to success at OTC?
- What specific accommodations might Melanie’s Accommodation Letter contain?



Incoming Student Working with Rehabilitation Services for the Blind

Considerations for the DRC

- Will Melanie need to receive Orientation and Mobility Training (O&M) from RSB staff? This is a service RSB provides, not OTC. O&M would assist Melanie in learning to navigate campus.
- Will Melanie be receiving FAFSA and/or RSB financial assistance for the upcoming semester?
- Have we had Melanie sign a Release of Information allowing us to speak with her RSB Counselor during the intake? We will need to coordinate efforts between DSS and RSB.
- Does Melanie have the necessary equipment (laptop equipped with assistive tech software) to participate in college? RSB typically provides this for students.
- What will Melanie require to have the needed access to her classes and classrooms?

Incoming Student Working with Rehabilitation Services for the Blind

Further Considerations for the DRC

- Are OTC classrooms brailed in the event Melanie gets turned around, lost, or otherwise disoriented?
- What in-class accommodations will Melanie require? Does she need preferential seating?
- How will she obtain information relevant to class (notes, lecture materials presented on the whiteboard, etc.)?
- For her BIO class, how will Melanie use the microscope or do lab projects? How will she be able to interpret the slides presented in the lab?
- For her MTH class where will she need to sit? How will she be able to interpret the problems on the whiteboard?
- Should Melanie digitally record class lectures?
- Does she need to notify her instructors for when she chooses to bring her service animal, Butch?
- How do we begin to locate a person to sit in class with Melanie to be her reader? Who pays for that (RSB or OTC)?
- How will Melanie's books be converted into PDFs for electronic accessibility?

Incoming Student Working with Rehabilitation Services for the Blind

Possible Accommodations

Out-of-Class Testing for Quizzes and Exams:

- Extended time (typically double class time allotment)
- Use of assistive technology
- Use of a reader
- Use of a scribe

In-class Accommodations:

- Audio record lectures
- Provide a copy of lecture notes, PowerPoints or an outline of material presented in class
- Preferential seating which may include sitting in the front, the back, or by an exit
- A Service animal will accompany the student to class - the student must remain in control of the animal at all times and the animal should not be a disruption to the classroom environment
- Seating space for student's service animal
- A separate seat for a person serving as the student's READER while they participate in class

Incoming Student Working with Rehabilitation Services for the Blind

Possible Accommodations Continued

Alternative Formatted Books

- Books in electronic/digital format
- Printed Materials such as the syllabus, handouts, and exams need to be provided to the student in an electronic/digital format, preferably a plain text file document.

Assistive Technology and Adaptive Equipment

- The student will require an accessible workstation - this may include a raised or adjustable desk/table, adjustable and/or oversized monitor, adapted keyboard and/or mouse or other equipment. DSS staff will provide these accommodations.
- The student will require the use of software which may include JAWS, ZoomText, Dragon Naturally Speaking, Read and Write, etc.
- The student will require the use of assistive technology and/or adaptive equipment which may include a laptop, magnifier, smart pen, digital audio recorder, adapted writing utensil, book holder, etc.

OTC Student Perspective

What Are Some of the Biggest Fears Expressed by Current Students?

- Experiencing change and having to confront the unknown.
- The “awkwardness” of a big transition.
- Getting lost or not knowing the way around campus.
- Not knowing anyone who they can call on for support.
- Having to ask for help from strangers whom they are vulnerable to.
- Feeling like they made the wrong decision and that college is “not for them.”
- Disappointing themselves or, especially, their parents.
- Onlookers! If they are student with an obvious disability, being stared at due to their wheelchair, service animal, or physical disfigurement.
- Being forgotten! Students who are visually impaired or specialized public transportation have a big fear of literally being forgotten by those who provide their transportation.
- Feeling like an interruption or intrusion when having to ask questions.

Increase Your Confidence

What Do Our Students Want Us to Know?

- “Courtesy is our common currency!” Just be your normal nice self—seriously!
- Empathy is key—Sympathy is belittling!
- You may find yourself feeling as awkward as the student feels. Yes, it’s okay to feel all that you feel. Just proceed as naturally as possible.
- Student with disabilities won’t break! You are not going to say anything that can offend them as long as you are naturally fulfilling the role of your job.
- Please try to avoid staring at a person’s wheelchair, equipment, service animal, scars, disfigurement, etc.
- Students enjoy staff who are cooperative and exude a helpful disposition/demeanor.
- You may not know how to help a person! But you can ask this: “Is there someone I can contact that you would prefer assisting you?”
- Most students have a general hesitancy to talk about themselves. Go ahead and ask them questions, though.
- Trust yourself that you can assist the student or guide them towards someone who can.
- Learn to make friends with the unexpected...

Resources

- [OTC Disability Support Services website](#)
- [OTC Disability Support Services Intake and Accommodation Process & Policies](#)
- [OTC Disability Support Services Release of Information](#)
- [Americans with Disabilities Act](#)
- [ADA National Network: Information, Guidance, and Training on the Americans with Disabilities Act](#)
- [Don't be scared to talk about disabilities. Here's what to know and what to say.](#)

Save the Date

NACADA Live Webinar Viewing

*Building a Trauma-Informed Advising Practice
for Racially & Ethnically Diverse Students*

Thursday, April 21st

1pm-3pm

ICW-108BC



Please Complete the Post-Survey