

# **This document compiles materials developed for the use of Learning Disability Designees in the Rhode Island Adult Education System.**

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August 2017 Revision**

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# The Role of the Learning Disabilities Designee

developed by Beatrice McGeoch, RI Adult Ed LD Specialist

The Learning Disability Designee's essential role is to coordinate program efforts to make the public service (education) accessible to all in accordance with federal ADA statute (see 5 ADA Administrative Requirements). The Designee makes sure that non-discrimination notices are posted in public spaces and included in handbooks etc., and that students are informed of their right to request the accommodations necessary for them to access the service. The Designee is the contact person for assistance in securing disability accommodations.

Designee tasks that address general ADA compliance include, but are not limited to:

- Checking physical accessibility of building and classrooms at least yearly using ADA accessibility standards.
- Ensuring that up to date non-discrimination notices including Designee's contact information are included in student materials such as handbooks **and** are posted in public areas.
- If organization has a facilities transition plan, knowing what the plan is, and whether it is moving forward.

The LD Designee is responsible for coordinating the efforts within their program and between programs to make the public service of education accessible to all adults who seek it in the state. Designees gather documentation of requests for accommodation and of the accommodations that are provided. Designees also make sure that compliance plans are moving forward and ask RIDE for assistance when necessary.

## ACCESSIBILITY WITHIN PROGRAM

Programs should have consistent practices for determining what "educational programming [is] commensurate with their [the students'] abilities." Factors influencing class placement should be described in program handbook. Program practices should guide students to identify and find accommodations for barriers to their learning and should include student "participat[ion] in decisions about their educational process."

Designee tasks that address accessibility of education within a program include, but are not limited to:

- Making sure that internal program processes and materials are accessible and "fully inform" adult learners about "the educational choices available to them."
- Advocacy for accessibility in instruction and consistency in treatment of students.
- Delivery of disability-related training or distribution of announcements of such training to teachers and staff.

## ACCESSIBILITY WITHIN STATE SYSTEM

RIDE provides regular trainings for Designees both on the state system, and on topics related to LD instruction. Designees or their representatives are required to attend these trainings. Designees are responsible for understanding the "integrated and coordinated adult education delivery system" outlined in state statute.

Designee tasks that address accessibility of education within state system include, but are not limited to:

- Knowing what kinds of "testing, evaluation and accommodation" are available to adult learners.
- Coordinating student referrals to appropriate programs within the adult education delivery system.
- Answering or finding answers to student requests for accommodations in a timely fashion, and seeking support from RIDE when students need accommodations that can not reasonably be provided within the program or by referral through the system.

## Sample Calendar of LD Designee Yearly Tasks:

	<b>Designee Training Will:</b>	<b>At Programs, Designees Work To:</b>	<b>Designees Communicate By:</b>
<b>JUN</b>	- Outline RIDE goals for next year LD services.	- Gather support requests for next year - If program is changing class format, work with staff ensure that new format is non-discriminatory and accessible.	- Sharing support requests with RIDE staff/ LD Specialist.
<b>AUG / SEPT</b>	- Review Designee Role - Offer options for yearly ADA staff development	- <b>Verify physical accessibility using an ADA self-checklist, or verify that a previously completed checklist still applies.</b> - <b>Check that public notices of non-discrimination (and grievance procedures for programs with &gt;50 employees) for students and staff are posted in appropriate locations.</b> - <b>Check that all public notices include the name and contact information of the current designee.</b> - Check that program signage, handbook & orientation: - announce the location, purpose and entry requirements of classes. - show career paths through classes incl. transfer to other programs - include an up to date program schedule of intake & class sessions - Check that classes are accurately listed in CALIS / Resource Hub.	- Sharing schedule and entry requirement information with other Designees. (Preparing to coordinate cross-program referral)
<b>OCT</b>		- <b>Plan ADA related training for all staff.</b> - <b>Verify and help teachers document instructional accessibility.</b>	
<b>NOV</b>		- Ask instructors if they have students with specific support needs.	- Requesting supports.
<b>JAN / FEB</b>	- Workshop ADA training delivery. - Give an update on RIDE progress / new resources - Deliver info about other RI support systems.	- <b>Check that public notices of non-discrimination (and grievance procedures for programs with &gt;50 employees) for students and staff are posted in appropriate locations.</b> - <b>Check that all public notices include the name and contact information of the current designee.</b> - Check that there is a posted schedule including class start times. - Check that the CALIS class information has been updated - Ask instructors if they have specific support needs	- Requesting supports.
<b>APR</b>	- Help Designees meet year-end goals. - Provide useful information	- <b>Complete and / or collect documentation of ADA related training for all staff</b>	Sharing feedback on / requests for future ADA staff training options.
<b>MAY</b>		- Ask instructors if they have specific support needs	Sharing data and support requests.
	<b>As needed:</b> - <b>Orientation for new staff</b> - <b>Answering ADA related questions</b> - <b>Ensuring / documenting that persons with disabilities receive reasonable accommodations</b> - <b>Supporting struggling students to understand their choices for investigating possible disabilities.</b> - <b>Investigating ADA related complaints</b> - <b>Knowledge of program's transition plan (when applicable)</b>		

**5 ADA Administrative Requirements for Adult Education Programs**  
**contents drawn from ADA Best Practices Toolkit Ch. 2**  
**<https://www.ada.gov/pcatoolkit/chap2toolkit.htm>**

**1. ADA Coordinator:**

ABE programs must have an ADA Coordinator (In Rhode Island all RIDE funded programs are required to have an LD Designee). The Designee is responsible for ensuring that a program is in compliance with both the federal Adults with Disabilities Act and they are also responsible for duties including, but not limited to: answering ADA related questions; ensuring that persons with disabilities receive reasonable accommodations; investigating ADA related complaints and grievances; ensuring that program policies and practices are non-discriminatory; providing orientation for new staff and ADA related training at least annually for all staff; developing a system that ensures all confidential information is secured in locked files; and verifying and documenting that the program is accessible and usable.

*Required by the ADA for programs with 50 employees or more*

**2. Public Notice:**

ABE programs must establish and post a public notice that a) informs students, employees, and the general public that all programs, activities, and employment opportunities are provided without regard to race, color, gender, religion, creed, national origin, sexual orientation, and disability, and b) provides the names(s), address(es) and telephone number(s) of the (LD Designee) ADA Coordinator(s) responsible for Title II (ADA), Title VI (race, national origin), Title IX (gender), and Section 504 (disability).

*It is recommended that the public notice be posted in at least three of the languages most widely spoken by the student body.*

*Required for all programs regardless of number of employees*

**3. Grievance Procedure:**

ABE programs must establish and publish a written grievance procedure. The grievance procedure should provide a mechanism for staff and students to address issues of non-compliance with state and federal laws relating to discrimination and equal access. The grievance procedure must include the ADA Coordinator's name, office address, telephone number and hours available. An email address is not required by law, but is strongly recommended.

*It is recommended that the grievance procedure be posted in at least three of the languages most widely spoken by the student body.*

*Required by the ADA for programs with 50 employees or more*

**4. Self-Evaluation:**

ABE programs must conduct a one-time self-evaluation to ensure the program's policies are non-discriminatory and the facility is accessible. Use of the self-evaluation helps to ensure that a program is in compliance with the ADA. The original must be submitted to the RIDE and a copy must be kept on file at the program site. If a program moves to another facility, a new self-evaluation must be completed and submitted no later than 30 business days after relocation to the new facility. The guidelines for self-evaluation can be found in the *ADA Title II Action Guide for State and Local Governments and Supplement on Employment*. To purchase a manual, contact Adaptive Environments Center, Inc. at 800-949-4232. A free self-evaluation worksheet developed by the University of Kansas Institute for Adult Studies can be found online. The self-evaluation is part of the *Accommodating Adults with Disabilities in Adult Education Programs* manual. The website is:

<http://das.kucrl.org/AccommodationsNotebook.shtml>

*It is recommended that programs conduct a self-evaluation prior to each new five-year funding cycle.*

*Required for all programs regardless of number of employees*

**5. Transition Plan:**

ABE programs must be barrier free. The transition plan must include a detailed description of any barrier(s) that exist, a description of what is being done to remove the barrier(s), and a target date for completion of the corrective action(s). For multi-step barrier removal activities, a list of the steps to be taken and a comprehensive timeline must be included.

*Required for all programs regardless of number of employees*

## Practical Advice for Designees

Use professionally developed training materials in combination with in-house workshops and trainings. In-house trainings generally fall into one of three areas:

- understanding best practices,
- understanding and improving on your program's best practices, and
- learning about strategies to accommodate disabilities.

When possible, try to coordinate trainings from year to year so that all three types of trainings happen regularly.

### 1: Understanding Best Practices

Several comprehensive trainings that cover information and best practices for making public services accessible to people with disabilities are available. [Learning to Achieve](#) and [WIOA Playlists](#) are both current resources available online. Supplement these by devoting program staff time to discuss, practice and reach consensus on how and when to use terminology. Following are some common terms that could be discussed:

#### Inclusion

Thinking of students with disabilities as a separate group when planning a program is discriminatory and counter-productive. Your program design should work for all students that meet class requirements. Staff should know how the program design can accommodate a student with a diagnosed disability, and they should know how the program design can prevent undiagnosed learning disabilities from remaining hidden.

#### Person-First Language

“The language a society uses to refer to persons with disabilities shapes its beliefs and ideas about them. Words are powerful; Old, inaccurate, and inappropriate descriptors perpetuate negative stereotypes and attitudinal barriers. When we describe people by their labels of medical diagnoses, we devalue and disrespect them as individuals. In contrast, using thoughtful terminology can foster positive attitudes about persons with disabilities. One of the major improvements in communicating with and about people with disabilities is “People-First Language.” People-First Language emphasizes the person, not the disability. By placing the person first, the disability is no longer the primary, defining characteristic of an individual, but one of several aspects of the whole person. People-First Language is an objective way of acknowledging, communicating, and reporting on disabilities. It eliminates generalizations and stereotypes, by focusing on the person rather than the disability.” (excerpt from “What is People First Language,” The Arc, <http://www.thearc.org/who-we-are/media-center/people-first-language> . Accessed 1 September 2017.)

The following table offers examples of person-first language compared to other common expressions used to describe disabilities. Taking time to discuss the grammar and reasoning that make the difference can be a great exercise.

Say:	Instead of:
He has a mental health condition/diagnosis.	He's emotionally disturbed/mentally ill.
Children without disabilities.	Normal or healthy kids.
She uses a wheelchair/mobility chair.	She's confined to/is wheelchair bound.
He receives special ed services.	He's in special ed.
She has a developmental delay.	She's developmentally delayed.

## Learning Difference and Learning Disability

The terms “Learning Difference” and “Learning Disability” are similar, but not interchangeable. All students have different ways of learning, but a learning difference can only be a disability when it is diagnosed by a professional as a barrier to a major life function (in this case, education).

Some prefer “difference” because the term “disability” implies that an individual is damaged or lacking in some way. Some prefer “disability” because it carries legal weight. The law requires that appropriately identified individuals with disabilities receive supports and services and/or equal access to opportunities such as employment.

Whether a student's learning difference is ALSO a diagnosed learning disability usually matters most when requesting accommodations for a formal assessment such as a high school equivalency exam. Further discussion of when and whether to seek professional evaluation can be found in the section on “Paths to Diagnosis in RI” on page 13.

In a strict legal sense, the D in “LD Designee” stands for “Disabilities” because the role of the LD Designee meets a requirement of the American’s with Disabilities Act (ADA); however, in the day-to-day of adult education, the use of the term “differences” can be part of an inclusive approach that helps all students understand how they learn best.

## Accommodation

An accommodation is a change made to HOW your student learns material or is evaluated. For example, on the GED exam, a student might get extra time as an accommodation for their dyslexia. The student will have to achieve the same passing score as everyone else, but they will have more time to do so. Accommodations are made informally every day as teachers adapt their instruction and assessments to meet the needs of specific students. Accommodations such as extra time on the GED exam must be requested formally, and students must provide documentation of a professional evaluation to support the request.

## ADA and IDEA

The ADA is the Americans with Disabilities Act. It protects the rights of most adult education students. Under this law, an adult must request the accommodations that they need in order to access public services. The IDEA is the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act. It applies to youth until they turn 22. Under this law, schools are responsible for providing both accommodations and additional resources that students need to participate in public education.

## Intervention

Interventions are extra steps taken to help students who are not progressing. K-12 teachers document interventions because the first criteria for a professional diagnosis of a Specific Learning Disability is: “Difficulties learning and using academic skills... that have persisted... *despite the provision of interventions* [emphasis added] that target those difficulties” (APA, 66).

An adult education class is equivalent to an intervention for two reasons. First, adult education students are already “behind” their peer group either in English proficiency or by EFL. Second, with the limited time and resources available in adult education, teachers and students cannot afford to miss an opportunity to connect students with resources they need. Following this reasoning, programs should be prepared to document the instruction they offer for any student as they cannot predict which student may need to collect supporting materials to support the request for a professional evaluator.

## Confidentiality and Privacy

A disability diagnosis is also personal health information. At least two principles follow from this:

One: A request for accommodations does not have to include details about the disability. For example, a student might request an accommodation of frequent movement breaks. A letter from a health care provider supporting this request does not have to include details as to why the accommodation is needed, and the program can make the accommodation without needing to know or ask after the reason. The student may choose to disclose the nature of their disability, but programs can not ask directly what the disability is.

Two: Basic health care privacy rules still apply after a student has made a disclosure of disability to program staff. Discussions that regard the disability should be held in private to the greatest extent possible, and the student should choose what information to share with class mates.

## 2: Understanding and Improving on your Program's Best Practices

Put the challenges of providing education to adults into a manageable context for program staff by supporting the development of systems that set clear expectations and respect both students and teachers.

Much of the challenge comes not from the adults themselves, but from the larger social and educational systems that they and their teachers are working within. Most established systems of measuring and classifying disabilities presume that an elementary or secondary school will identify a student's disability before they reach the age of 17 and that a family or community network will support their transition into adult life.

The students with disabilities in adult education are likely to have struggled in school, never been formally evaluated, and then struggled as working adults before returning to school. Program staff can be tempted to focus on the students' missed opportunity in youth, or challenging life circumstances, but while staff should acknowledge students' past experiences, their effort is best spent on working with the student to identify interventions that might work, and documenting whether they do work.

Use program staff time to establish consensus on who is responsible for what, and how student progress will be documented.

Sample questions to use in staff meetings:

- How do we deliver information about student rights and responsibilities in orientation and intake?
- How do we document accommodations requests, and where is documentation kept?
- When and how are teachers notified of accommodations requests?
- Who is responsible to follow up with student and teacher about accommodations requests?
- How do we document progress and challenges for all students, and where is the documentation kept?
- How do we document the options that students have for next steps (entering next class level, referral to other programs, referral to evaluation) and where is the documentation kept?

### 3: Learning About Strategies to Accommodate Disabilities

If you are looking for how to make accommodations for a specific disability, the Job Accommodations Network provides a list of accommodations and strategies searchable by disability diagnosis. Links to this and other sites are on the [Resources for Teachers on Differentiation and Accessibility](#) page at [riaepdc.org](http://riaepdc.org). Following is information based on statistics from the American Psychiatric Association about disabilities that affect academics and their rate of incidence in RI.

#### Disabilities that Affect Academics: Specific Learning Disability and Intellectual Disability

There are two main types of disability that specifically affect academic ability: Specific Learning Disability and Intellectual Disability. Approximately 4% of adults have a Specific Learning Disability (American Psychiatric Association (APA), 70). Specific Learning Disabilities include diagnoses such as Dyslexia and Dyscalculia. In Rhode Island, Specific Learning Disabilities affect roughly 33,000 adults! Even if only 1% of these adults seek education each year, we are talking about 330 students statewide, and it is much likely to be a higher number because the functional consequences of these disabilities are a higher rate of high school dropout and unemployment (APA, 73).

The rate of Intellectual Disability is 1% of population (APA, 38). In Rhode Island, this translates to roughly 8300 adults. Intellectual disability can be mild, moderate, severe or profound. Adults with moderate, severe and profound intellectual disabilities typically receive training and support from the Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals (BHDDH) and/or Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS); however, adults with mild intellectual disabilities regularly enroll in adult education, and programs can expect to serve 1-3 intellectually disabled adults per year.

#### Hidden or Undiagnosed Disabilities

Many students enroll in adult education either unaware of, or without disclosing, a disability that affects their academic ability; therefore, as part of their work on accessibility, LD Designees help their programs define consistent screening processes that verify whether each student is able to access the means of learning. Programs must document the success or failure of academic instruction for every student because they cannot predict which entering students may have disabilities that affect their progress.

Processes that should be consistent include:

- how teachers prepare differentiated instruction following Universal Design best practices.
- how teachers evaluate and document their work with students;
- how teachers or other staff support the student to identify when a disability may be the cause of academic challenges;
- and how to discuss and document a referral recommendation for the student.

All students benefit from an evaluation that helps them understand their strengths and weaknesses, but for students with undiagnosed learning disabilities this evaluation may also provide essential information that helps them develop strategies to overcome barriers and/or to recognize when they should seek help. A student may use this documentation to convince a health care provider to recommend professional evaluation.

The RIDE Adult Education LD Specialist will support designees to connect students with professional evaluation if students have a record of academic challenges despite receiving quality instruction.

Calculations above based on RI 2010 population of 1,052,567. 78.7% aged 18 and over results in 828,370 adults. (U.S. Census Bureau).

American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (DSM-5). 2013. American Psychiatric Publishing. Washington, DC. London, England.

## Screening for Learning Disabilities: 5 Program and 4 Teaching Components

The following pages offer information about the components of a quality screening process first in text and then in diagram form. The program components are numbered 1-5. They overlap with teaching components which are listed as A-D in diagrams. Links to detailed planning tools are on the [Resources for Teachers on Differentiation and Accessibility](#) page on the PDC website.

What is the purpose of the screening process?

- To educate all students about their rights and responsibilities as adult students, and scaffold selection of classroom success strategies.
- To provide students with disabilities an early opportunity to request accommodations.
- To review and document the effectiveness of instruction and accommodations for student and program reference.
- To provide students with options for progressing in their education including referral for formal evaluation.

\*A complete screening for LD must include an offering of “consistent, sustained, quality” education, and a review of student progress. Further materials to support teachers in offering quality instruction based on the principles of Universal Design and the Danielson framework for evaluating teacher effectiveness can be found at the RI Adult Education Professional Development Center website.\*

### **A note on consistency:**

All typical interactions with students in the intake process should have a script to guide them, and scripts should be referred to regularly (posted by phone, referred to in interviews etc.). Established steps with scripts and instructions ensure that you are offering consistent, non-discriminatory service. New or inexperienced staff can feel confident in following a set process, understand how to communicate with students about what they do know, and to partner with students to solve problems. Experienced staff can use a tool to move through the process efficiently, and will avoid the trap of pre-judgement (“I recognize this type...”).

The same applies to typical interactions with teachers including but not limited to:

- orientation to classroom policies,
- procedures and routines, and
- teacher evaluation of student participation and progress.

New teachers should be provided with models of orientation, differentiation and evaluation to use in their classrooms

### **1: Inform Learners of their Rights and Responsibilities**

In addition to required ADA notices of non-discrimination, the first information and orientation sessions a program gives should include an explanation of the rights and responsibilities of adult students. Explanation should highlight the legal difference between minor and adult students, and should prepare adults to work with staff to identify the means of representation, expression and engagement that work best for them.

Programs can collect student signatures to document receipt of handbook / non-discrimination notices.

## **2: Provide Early Opportunities to Disclose and to Request Accommodations**

The first detailed application or intake form that a student completes when joining a program should include an optional section or question that provides an opportunity for the student to disclose a disability and request accommodations. The program should have a method for getting accommodation requests to teachers in advance of the start of classes.

## **3: Student Identification of Class Success Strategies,**

The program should describe the type of instruction offered (lecture, 1:1, small group, distance learning, self paced etc.) to the student and provide prompts to guide the student to self-check vision, hearing and physical capacity to participate. If challenges are identified, program should work with student to determine what they need to do to be ready to actively participate in class. With permission, copies of student self-assessment can be kept in program file, shared with teacher, and reviewed each session.

## **4: Teacher and Student Mutual Evaluation of Progress**

Accessibility in the classroom includes the work of the teacher, and the interaction between the student and teacher. Programs should support teachers to use evaluation tools that go beyond NRS required testing and generate detailed information on the type of instruction students need.

### **Some common methods for teacher identification of student needs:**

- In language classes: interview rubric, decoding evaluation, fluency evaluation, vocabulary evaluation, comprehension evaluation, writing sample rubric
- In math classes: Empower / TIAN assessments, GED pre-tests

While it is unreasonable to require that adult education lesson plans be as comprehensive as K-12 plans, programs should support teachers to prepare, document and deliver differentiated instruction for at least one core standard in each class. The instruction for this standard should be developed using principles of Universal Design and in accordance with the Danielson model that is used in K-12.

A class schedule should identify dates or weeks when teachers review class progress on this standard and offer feedback to students in one on one meetings.

Student and teacher should meet one on one for a brief review of progress during the class and again at the end of a session. The meeting script should include a prompt to define instructional adjustments or alternate means of engagement if the instruction is not effective. Notes from these meetings are used in the end of session summary of students' next step options, so they should document both successes and ideas for improvement. The document should be signed by both student and teacher and kept in student file.

## **5: Student and Program Summarize Students' Next Step Options**

Program structure should include a review of student progress at the end of each class session. The review should summarize progress in class including the success or failure of strategies and/or accommodations. The discussion should also generate a list of student's next step options including:

- confirming or adjusting class placement,
- referral for a different form of instruction and/or
- referral for professional evaluation.

If teacher and student agree that the student is not progressing toward their goal despite best efforts, the student should complete a valid LD screening tool such as the Washington or Empire before re-enrolling. If indicated by the tool, student should be advised of their options for pursuing formal evaluation.

*A program that designs its facilities, processes and instruction as if every student might be a learning disabled student will have better outcomes for all students, and in addition, less stress for staff.*

## Making Adult Education Accessible to Students with Learning Disabilities

Five steps (1-5) programs can take and four steps (A-D) teachers can take to ensure that students with disabilities can access education and understand their options for evaluation.

1. Programs orient student to their rights and responsibilities.

2. Programs provide the opportunity for a student to disclose their disability.

Teachers plan activities and instruction (A).

1: Orientation  
to rights

2: Opportunity  
to disclose

3. Teachers orient students to classroom (B).

Teachers evaluate student progress (C).

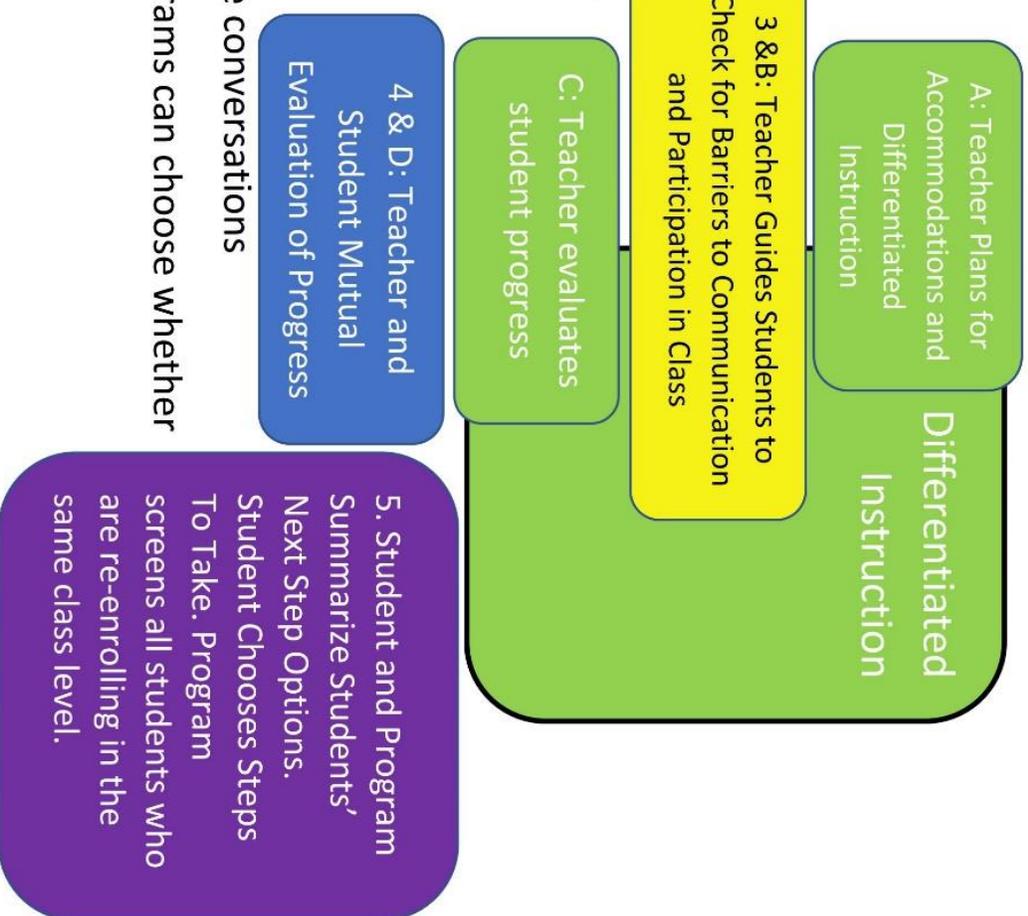
4. Teachers discuss progress evaluation with

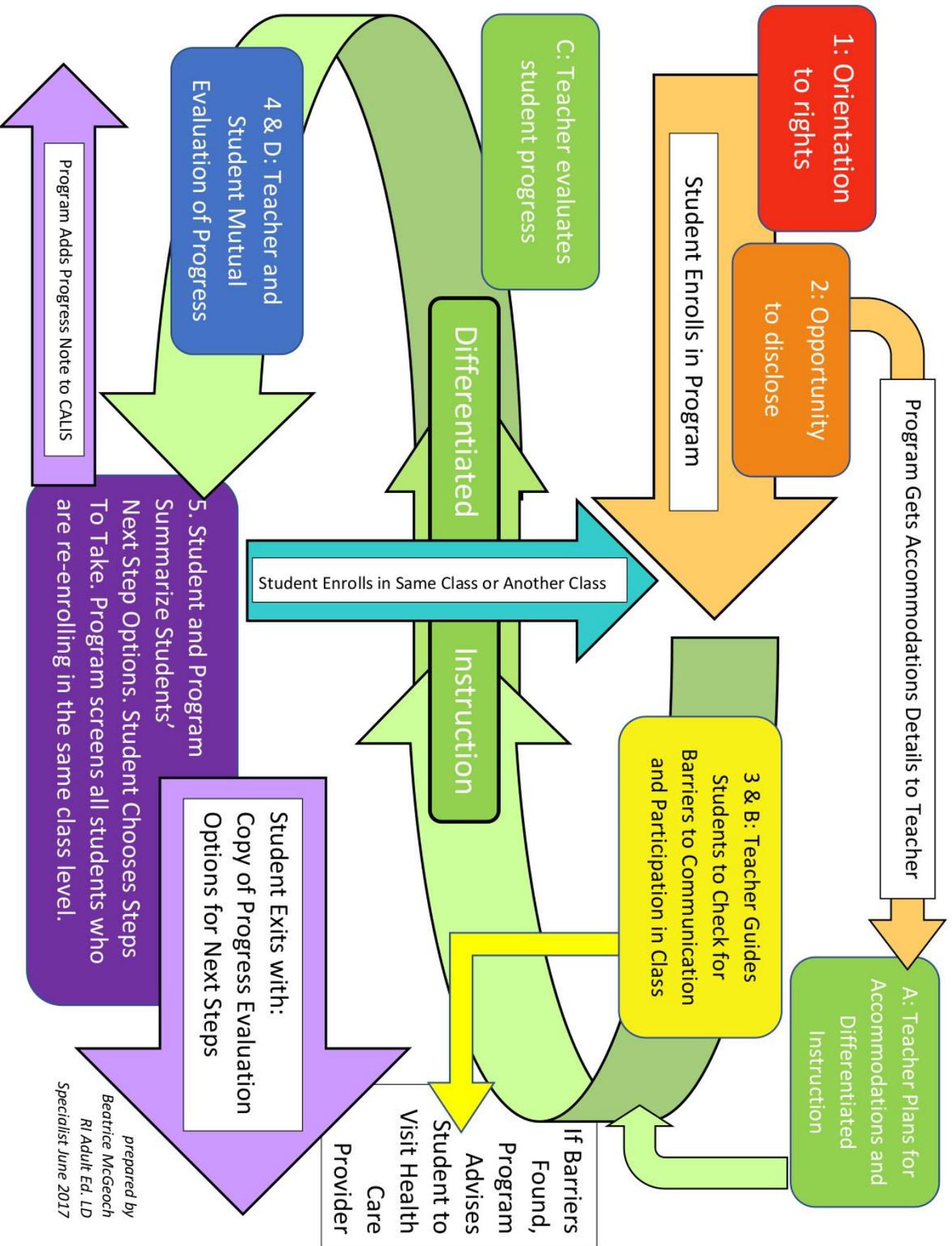
student and document with notes (D).

5. One type of staff position should be responsible for guiding and documenting the conversations

that list next step options for students. Programs can choose whether this is the teacher or another support staff.

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## Documenting Disability for Testing

Links to general information about the adult learning disability assessment process can be found through the PDC web page: [Learning Disability Designee Resources](#)

To apply for accommodations on the GED exams, start [here](#). Before applying for the accommodation of extended time on a GED exam, a student can take a GED Ready (practice exam) with extra time. GED Ready can only be purchased to run with extended time by calling 1-800-392-6433. GED extended time accommodation will be 125%, 150% or 200%. The most common accommodation is 125% time, but since students do not know what kind of time that they will get, they should purchase a GED Ready at 200% time, then time themselves as they take the practice test.

Students who had IEPs or other extra supports in K-12 within the past 5-10 years might find old records useful. A student may find documentation of diagnosis and/or information about accommodations that they have had in the past when they request a COMPLETE copy of their educational record from the last district that they attended. Programs can use the worksheets at the end of this document to support students in this process; they can also be found as a stand-alone document on the PDC designee resources page.

## Paths to Diagnosis in RI

In RI, an adult student has three possible ways to connect with a professional evaluator to determine the nature of their learning difference: through individual health care, through the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) and through the URI Psychological Consultation Center.

*PLEASE NOTE: **If student is under 22**, local school districts have an obligation to evaluate a person for possible disabilities if the person has not graduated, and is suspected of having a disability. This responsibility is identified in Federal legislation; it is not a state or local option. Please contact RIDE for assistance promptly if you believe a student meeting this condition may be enrolling in your program.*

An adult student may access evaluation for a condition that significantly impacts their life functioning by asking for a **referral through a primary care physician**. Anecdotal reports on the success of this path vary greatly, but a student with the ability to self-advocate (or with a family member as advocate) might try this path. Some programs keep a list of doctors who have worked with past students successfully.

If the adult student is interested in finding or keeping a job and their educational difficulties are the barrier, the **Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS)** is an option. If you have questions before discussing this option with a student, search for the Learning Disabilities Project contact information to connect the student with a VR Counselor who is experienced in Learning Differences. To begin the process, a student fills out the application, which is on the website, and sends it in. Once the application is submitted, they are assigned a VR Counselor and they will determine if an evaluation is the best next step on the path to employment

From the ORS site: “To be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, you must – 1) have a physical, intellectual or emotional impairment which is a substantial barrier to employment, and 2) require vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment, and 3) be able to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services in terms of an employment outcome. If you are receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), your vocational rehabilitation office will presume that you are eligible for vocational rehabilitation services.”

If the adult student does not have employment as a goal, but needs more detailed information and a professional diagnosis (for ex: when transitioning to college), the **URI Psychological Consultation Center** in Kingston offers complete evaluations at a reduced rate. The full 3 day evaluation and preparation of written documentation is \$495 (as of spring 2016) and can be paid in 2-3 installments. RIDE support should be requested if the URI path seems the only option and the fees are a barrier to student access.

## **Transition for LD Students into Post-Secondary and Employment**

### **Post Secondary:**

Colleges and universities make accommodations for students with disabilities when students work with a student services office to request accommodations before classes start. Students with documented disabilities should be referred to these offices as they are transitioning from adult into post-secondary education.

#### **CCRI** Disability Services for Students

<http://www.ccri.edu/dss/>

#### **Rhode Island College** Disability Services Center

<http://www.ric.edu/disabilityservices/>

#### **URI** Disability Services for Students

<http://web.uri.edu/disability/>

### **Employment:**

Links to employment resources for programs serving individuals with disabilities can be found at the bottom of the PDC web page: [Learning Disability Designee Resources](#)

# HOW TO GET RECORDS FROM YOUR OLD SCHOOL DISTRICT

## Will the district still have my old records?

Most school districts keep student files for 5-7 years after you leave. In some cases, they wait until 5-7 years after you would have graduated. If you are in doubt, call the district and ask them if they have it.

*Example: Joe leaves school in 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 2009. The class he was a part of graduated in 2012. The school district might have his records until 2019.*

## What do I need before I call?

- A photo identification, or a release signed to the program that you have already provided identification to.
- What was the last year you were in school? \_\_\_\_\_
- What was the year that would have been your graduation? \_\_\_\_\_
- Read through the **STEPS TO FIND SCHOOL RECORDS** on the second page and make sure you have the right addresses, phone and fax numbers.

## Why should I get my records from my old school?

Your records can be useful:

- When you want to understand your skills so that you can do better in work, school and life.
- When you are working with a new teacher or counselor who could help you better if they knew more about how you learn.
- When you need to ask for accommodations on an official test. Ex: asking for extra time on the GED exam.

## Save yourself a trip:

Most school districts have a separate office for records. They will probably not be at your old school. Find out the right address, and call before you go.

Ask how long it will take to find records. They may ask to call you back; have a number ready.

If they do have your records, they should tell you how many days it will take to get them ready. Wait the right amount of days before you go, and **DON'T FORGET TO BRING I.D.**

## STEPS TO FIND SCHOOL RECORDS:

<p><b>You will have to provide identification at some point in the process. This protects your confidential information. If your program has checked your identification already, you can sign a release and the program can request the records on your behalf.</b></p>		
<p><b>1) Decide how you want to get the record.</b></p>		
<p>by fax </p>	<p>by mail </p>	<p>pick up in person </p>
<p><b>You will need to know:</b></p>	<p><b>You will need to know:</b></p>	<p><b>You will need to know:</b></p>
<p>The district phone number:</p>	<p>The district phone number:</p>	<p>The district phone number:</p>
<p>The name and address of the office where the records should be on file:</p>	<p>The name and address of the office where the records should be on file:</p>	<p>The name and address of the office where the records should be on file:</p>
<p>The fax number, and the name of the person who will receive the fax:</p>	<p>The address where the records should be mailed to:</p>	<p>The address where you will go to pick up. It should be the same as above.</p>
<p><b>2) Call district office, and ask if they still have your records.</b></p>		
<p><i>The district office may ask to call you back, have a number ready for them:</i></p>		
<p><b>3) Ask for copies of ALL records. They may ask you to send a written request. Your program may have a letter prepared that you can use.</b></p>		
<p>Fax release and request for records.</p>	<p>Mail release form and request for records.</p>	
<p><b>4) Ask about how long the process will take. A reasonable time is 10 business days, but sometimes it can be faster.</b></p>		
<p>Alert the person who works with the fax to look out for your papers, and to let you know when they arrive.</p>	<p>Check the mail.</p>	<p>Set a reminder on a phone or calendar for when records should be ready. At that time, call to confirm they are ready, then go to the district office with an ID to pick them up.</p>
<p><b>5) Once you have the documents, use them! Read them over yourself. Share them with a teacher or counselor. They may not contain everything you had hoped, but having copies of your own records is an important step in taking charge of your education.</b></p>		