



AMERICAN  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

# RESOURCE GUIDE

for psychology graduate students with disabilities





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**Cover photo courtesy of Randall Cox, PhD.**

# CONTENTS

<b>FOREWORD .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>THE INTERNSHIP MATCH PROCESS AND SUGGESTIONS .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>FOR APPLICANTS WITH DISABILITIES</b> Arnold Abels, PhD	
<b>FACTORS TO CONSIDER FOR PSYCHOLOGY PRACTICUM .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>AND INTERNSHIP INTERVIEWS</b> Julie Williams, PsyD Erica K. Johnson, PhD Fong Chan, PhD	
<b>FROM INTERNSHIP TO EMPLOYMENT.....</b>	<b>18</b>
Barbara J. Palombi, PhD	
<b>CAREERS IN ACADEMIA: ISSUES FOR PERSONS .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>WITH DISABILITIES TO CONSIDER</b> Julie Williams, PsyD Dolores Cimini, Ph.D	
<b>CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND SELF-ADVOCACY .....</b>	<b>30</b>
Randall Cox, PhD	
<b>MENTORING.....</b>	<b>33</b>
Julie Williams, PsyD Anju Khubchandani, MA	




# FOREWORD

**The American Psychological Association's (APA) Disability Issues Office in collaboration with members of the Committee on Disability Issues is proud to release the second edition of the *Resource Guide for Psychology Graduate Students With Disabilities*.** This edition of the guide continues where the first edition left off.

Inside, you will find articles devoted to challenges unique to psychology students with disabilities as they embark on internship and career opportunities. Throughout this guide, students with disabilities will discover a plethora of useful information, including strategies to navigate the internship match process, suggestions for honing conflict resolution skills, and important issues to consider for a career in academia.

We hope this guide will be helpful especially to those of you who have felt alone in facing these academic challenges; who are unaware of some of the resources available; and/or who need a little guidance to begin, persevere, and excel in your educational and professional pursuits.

I welcome your feedback and suggestions for future editions of the *Resource Guide*. To receive a copy of this document in alternative format, please contact APA's Disability Issues in Psychology Office at 202-336-6038 (V), 202-336-5662 (TTY), or via e-mail at [akhubchandani@apa.org](mailto:akhubchandani@apa.org).



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# THE INTERNSHIP MATCH PROCESS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR APPLICANTS WITH DISABILITIES

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Choosing an internship site appropriate for your doctoral program requirements and future career objectives can have significant implications, so should be taken seriously.

**2** **A**pplying for internship is both an exciting and stressful experience. Finishing a degree and advancing in professional development has been a goal for students since they entered their doctoral program. Unfortunately the internship–applicant match imbalance has been described as a crisis, with hundreds of students entering the match not being placed with an internship. This can be viewed as a good news–bad news scenario given that almost 75% of those applying for internship will be matched with one of their top three internship sites. The fear of not matching with an internship, however, cannot be ignored. And, students with disabilities who enter the internship match process have unique concerns in the internship process. This article will seek to describe the internship match process and incorporate

suggestions on what applicants with disabilities might consider doing to make themselves strong candidates.

Often referred to as the capstone of doctoral training for students in clinical, counseling, and school psychology, the predoctoral internship is an intense year-long training experience. This training can take place in a variety of different settings within the United States and Canada that include VA medical centers, university counseling centers, schools, community mental health settings, children’s hospitals, military settings, state psychiatric hospitals, consortiums, etc. Internships can be offered by organizations, etc., that are accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA) or are members of the Association of Psychology and Postdoctoral Internship Centers (APPIC)



or organizations not affiliated with APA or APPIC. Choosing an internship site appropriate for your doctoral program requirements and future career objectives can have significant implications, so should be taken seriously. The internship matching program, referred to as “the Match,” is coordinated by APPIC and administered by the National Matching Services Inc. (NMS). The APPIC Match has existed since 1999 and is similar to a system used by other professional disciplines. The Match provides a structured and equitable process for both internship applicants and internship programs to obtain and fill internship positions of their choice. Doctoral students wanting to apply for the Match must meet criteria outlined by APPIC policies regarding needed qualifications related to education and training. These can be reviewed at [www.appic.org](http://www.appic.org).

First, it would be a good idea to talk with the director of clinical training at your doctoral program to ensure that you have met all the program requirements for internship eligibility.

A few suggestions may be helpful if you are a doctoral student at a point in your program where you are ready to apply for internship. First, it would be a good idea to talk with the director of clinical training at your doctoral program to ensure that you have met all the program requirements for internship eligibility. Requirements for eligibility are unique to each program and may include such things as completing comprehensive exams, proposing a doctoral dissertation or doctoral paper, completing academic coursework, etc.

If your program approves your applying for internship, a second step is to identify which internship sites you want to apply to. Starting points in this process may include reflecting on your future career interests, training skills you have developed or want to develop, populations of people you would be interested in providing services to, and other criteria that would lead to a good “fit” with a training site. You can learn about different types of internship training sites in different geographic locations by looking at the APPIC Online Directory, which can be accessed at [www.appic.org](http://www.appic.org). It is important to remember that you should review the directory throughout the sequence of your application process for changes at specific training sites and additional internship sites that become available. Thoroughly reviewing the description of the internship program can be quite helpful in developing your list of sites to apply to. Emphasizing the issue of “fit” is important, as you want to apply to sites that will meet your desired interests and goals for training as well as the internship’s requirements for qualifications for a good potential candidate. For example, a program may indicate that it will only consider candidates from certain types of programs or who have acquired certain skill sets or experiences: If a university counseling center indicates that it requires past university/college counseling center experience and all of your practica have been in other types of settings, your application would probably not be a good “fit” for that program. Determining the number of sites to apply to is an individual decision. It may be influenced by such variables as geographic limitations; moving, for example. Match statistics indicate that applicants on average applied to 14.7 sites for the 2009 Match.

Once you have identified the sites you want to apply to, you should complete the APPIC Application for Psychology Internships

(AAPI). The application, the AAPI Online, developed by Liaison International, was available online beginning in 2009. The AAPI Online can be accessed at [www.appic.org](http://www.appic.org). The AAPI Online will be a centralized system where all application materials can be entered and/or downloaded by applicants, directors of clinical training, and references. The application materials include your cover letter, vita, essays, personal information, etc. In addition, only one copy of official transcripts will need to be forwarded directly to Liaison International to be entered into your application materials. This new electronic application process was encouraged by students and supported by internship programs.

Because other individuals will be contributing to the completion of your application (i.e., director of clinical training, professional references), you should be in contact with these individuals as early as possible.

4 For those completing the AAPI Online, attention to detail is important. Once you have completed an item (e.g., a cover letter, vita, essay, etc.), a good practice is to have several people read your materials and give feedback on wording, content, spelling, and grammar to ensure your materials are flawlessly and professionally developed. For some aspects of your application, such as a cover letter or essay, there are opportunities to individualize items for a specific site. Utilizing this option may be important to communicate your knowledge of the program and demonstrate your “fit” with that specific internship site. Because other individuals will be contributing to the completion of your application (i.e., director of clinical training, professional references),

you should be in contact with these individuals as early as possible. This will help those providing information to support your application with sufficient time to complete this task and to help ensure you meet the unique application deadline for each site you apply to. You should ensure your director of training has all the necessary information to complete the section of the AAPI Online s/he is responsible for. Identify references who have supervised your academic and clinical work and can effectively talk about your strengths and areas for continued growth. Ask your references if they can write an extremely strong and positive letter of commendation for you and inform them of the new AAPI Online process and how they will be electronically submitting their letters of recommendation.

Another step you will need to take is to register with National Matching Services (NMS) to obtain your individual match number. Information about how to register with NMS can be obtained at [www.appic.org](http://www.appic.org). Once you are approved to apply for internship, you might register with NMS early to obtain your personal match number to include on your materials. Registering with NMS is a required for participation in the Match and the mechanism by which you will be ranked by sites along with how you will be submitting your Rank Order List.

After you've submitted your application materials to internship sites, there's usually a waiting period. During this time internship sites are reviewing all candidates that have applied to their program to determine which candidates they will interview. In most cases applicants will learn of their application status by December 15, which has been established as an application notification day. Please note there are some exceptions to this so you should look on each program's website for its applicant notification timeline and process.

## You will need to consider advantages and disadvantages for the different interview formats, especially if different formats are offered.

Interviews are conducted in a variety of methods, such as on-site individual interviews, on-site group interviews, telephone interviews, open house programs, etc. Interview scheduling can come at a rapid pace, so be prepared with your calendar to explore options for scheduling interviews. The scheduling process may be done via e-mail or telephone by the internship training director or administrative personnel. Open house dates may be communicated in advance in the site's internship materials. You will need to consider advantages and disadvantages for the different interview formats, especially if different formats are offered. Your personal circumstances may influence your interview choice, depending on travel costs, geographic preferences, interest in a site, arrangement of other interviews, etc. In most cases if you need to change an established interview date or time, while training directors will try to be flexible, you need to contact them as far in advance as possible. Your attitude in how you approach this can also influence impressions that a site has of you as a candidate. Be courteous, humble, and equally accommodating. Interviewing in December and January in different parts of the USA and Canada can be filled with challenges with delays due to snow, ice, and fog and delayed or cancelled flights. Again, communicate as quickly as possible when you become aware of a problem with your travel schedule with an internship site. When scheduling interviews, make sure you take into account time zone differences to ensure you have the correct time on your calendar.

While your application will help you get an internship interview, your interview, itself, may be a more important factor in how you are ranked by a specific site. It would be useful to engage in multiple practice interviews with your department, others going on internship, your career services office, or family members to get valuable feedback about your ability to answer questions and your presentation prior to real interviews. In-person and phone interviews are quite different, so practicing and audio or video recording for your own review and development can be helpful. Some applicants have scheduled interviews with less-desired internships early in their process to gain more experience and enhance their confidence for later interviews. Writing out answers to prepared interview questions and practicing your responses can also help build your confidence and fluidity when interviewing. Do not, however, read answers when doing phone interviews. Your interviewers will recognize you're doing that.

Using a cell phone can be challenging, given the potential for dropped calls and poor quality reception. You will want to make sure your cell phone is well charged and/or that you have a back-up plan to use a landline for telephone interviews. A clear and professional voice message on your answering system also reflects on your presentation as a candidate.

It is important to come prepared with thorough knowledge of the internship site you are interviewing with and have an extensive list of questions to ask about the program. It is better to have too many questions prepared, even if you do not use them, as opposed to not having enough, which may suggest a lack of interest on your part. Thinking of each contact with the agency as an interview whether it is with administrative personnel, interns, staff, or the training director is also helpful. Always

behave with courteousness, respect, dignity, and appreciation.

Once you have completed your internship interviews (usually conducted in December and January), you will need to develop a Rank Order List of the sites you would prefer to attend. You will need to submit this information to NMS and confirm its receipt by the identified submission deadline. Applicants should remember that once a match is made, it is a binding contract, thus, if there is a site you would really prefer not to match with, you should not include it on your Rank Order List. Internships will also submit a Rank Order List of desired candidates. After receiving the Rank Order Lists, NMS uses a computer program to generate a match between applicants and internships based on the most preferred placement on the applicant's Rank Order List and desired positions not yet filled. Although you will find out if you have matched or not with an internship the Friday before Match Day, you will not know the specific site you have

matched with until Match Day. This allows individuals who have not matched to prepare for the "Clearinghouse," an extremely active process where unmatched interns and sites with unfilled positions connect to fill these open slots. Information about the Clearinghouse process can be found on the APPIC website.

One dilemma internship candidates with disabilities confront is if, when, and/or how to disclose about their disability. There are differing perspectives on this issue and, ultimately, the candidate with a disability will need to make the final decision. Some suggest that candidates should not disclose anything related to their disability on a cover letter or vita as it is believed potential employers will automatically screen these individuals out as candidates. Others support disclosing in a manner that might support their candidacy to a particular agency that, for example, has a strong commitment to diversity. Candidates might suggest how a candidate with a disability might add another component of diversity

## SOME ADDITIONAL HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS

**Be prepared:** Recognize what you have control over regarding collecting information, submitting materials, practicing for interviews, and knowing Match timelines.

**Be ready for the unexpected:** Accept in advance that you will not know the answer to every question you are asked. That's OK. Realize that you have extensive knowledge you can apply and generalize to questions. Know that it's OK to acknowledge that "while I do not have such and such experience, that is one reason why I excitedly applied to your program in order to gain that opportunity to enhance my professional development."

**Enjoy the experience:** Some applicants become overwhelmed by stress and vicariously pick up stress from other applicants. While this process is important and stressful, learn to manage and control your anxiety. Remember, the interview and rank process is a two-way street. You are also evaluating each site you visit to determine if or how *you* will rank the program.

**Network:** Talk with other professionals with disabilities, internship applicants with disabilities, and current interns with disabilities to learn as much about the process of internship and how you can make yourself a desirable candidate. The APA Office on Disability Issues in Psychology and Committee on Disability Issues can be a great resources in this process.

or serve as an effective liaison to disability populations, and so on. If you decide to disclose, it would be advantageous to frame your disability in a positive and constructive manner. It is quite possible that at some point, you will need to disclose. For example, if you didn't disclose on a vita or cover letter that you are blind and you obtain an on-site internship interview, revealing your disability might be both helpful to the site and to you in case there is something you need to prepare for the interview. Not disclosing could lead to a sense of distrust by a site wondering what else you may not be sharing. A candidate with an invisible learning disability who needs more time to complete a task may need to disclose this after the Match so that the site understands the candidate's challenge and how the candidate deals with the disability. Not disclosing could be detrimental to the intern as the site might view the intern as inefficient in time management.

While it is illegal for sites to ask certain disability-related interview questions, you may need to articulate how you will perform specific aspects of the internship position. Being prepared with specific examples from prior work or practicum experiences regarding how you dealt with any obstacles associated with your disability would be appropriate.

While most accommodations for individuals with disabilities are relatively inexpensive, when you match with a program, having an early and open discussion with the site about any accommodations you might need would be helpful. For example, if you are blind or visually impaired and generally bring your own voice output software, the training director would need to know in case there are policies regarding installing personal software on an agency's computer system. Similarly, communicating that you need a

specific accommodation from the site early will help clarify if the accommodation can be obtained and made available when the internship begins. Having personal comfort and confidence about your disability will help you be an effective self-advocate and aid in educating others who may not be familiar with your specific disability.

Another thing that applicants with disabilities who are relocating to a different and unfamiliar geographic area need to consider is learning as much about the community and available resources as early as possible to aid in their transition to internship.

Another thing that applicants with disabilities who are relocating to a different and unfamiliar geographic area need to consider is learning as much about the community and available resources as early as possible to aid in their transition to internship. For example, if you need some type of transportation assistance, you may need to apply beforehand to have this service arranged. This may include transferring medical or social service records to the new community.

If you have a negative experience as an applicant with a disability in the internship selection process (i.e., you encounter some form of discrimination), go to the AAPIC website for help. The website has a confidential consultation service where you can engage in informal problem consultation with one of its board members. This consultation will help identify your rights and options regarding any negative experiences. ■

# FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN PSYCHOLOGY PRACTICUM AND INTERNSHIP INTERVIEWS

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Telephone interviews and in-person interviews are part of the application process to obtain an American Psychological Association (APA)-approved or Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) internship.

## DISABILITY-RELATED STRESSORS AND THE SITE INTERVIEW

8

The practicum and internship may be the first clinical and employment-like experiences of some students with disabilities. Other students may have had previous work experience, and as such, may have had experience negotiating the interview process as a qualified individual with a disability. Either way, the interview process for both practica and internships represents opportunities and challenges the qualified student with a disability may encounter in terms of accommodation needs and identification of a good fit at a training site.

In the current training climate, applying for a predoctoral psychology internship can be one of the most difficult and competitive steps toward becoming a psychologist (Seawell, Krohn, Gorgens, & Cornish, 2009). The number of students entering the internship market has consistently exceeded the number of available slots by about 25% since 2007 (APPIC Board of Directors, 2010; Hutchings, Mangione, Dobbins, & Wechsler, 2007). Seemingly as a result of the competitiveness of this process, students are acquiring increasing numbers of practicum hours in hopes of ensuring internship placement (Kaslow & Keilin, 2006), although questions have been raised over the necessity of such a practice (Kaslow, Pate, & Thorn, 2005).

Interviews for practicum and internship positions represent opportunities for the student with a disability to consider strategies

for maximizing performance during the job-seeking process. Telephone interviews and in-person interviews are part of the application process to obtain an American Psychological Association (APA)-approved or Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) internship. For applicants with disabilities, the experience can be particularly stressful as they must wrestle with disability-related issues such as:

- Whether or not to disclose disability status,
- How and when to discuss accommodation needs, and
- How to respond to and manage employers' perceptions about their disability.

## **WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?**

The big deal is that negative societal attitudes toward people with disabilities still exist and are well documented in the research literature (Brodwin & Orange, 2002; Chan, Cardoso, & Chronister, 2009; Cook, 1998; Livneh & Antonak, 1997). Further, and most relevant to psychology applicants with disabilities, is the finding by Cook (1998) from his comprehensive review of the research literature that rehabilitation health professionals, including counselors and psychologists, appear to be as likely as the general population to have negative or potentially biased attitudes. The implication here is that health professionals, including psychologists, on the whole do not hold different attitudes toward people with disabilities relative to the general population. As such, it is not accurate to assume that psychologists will have more positive attitudes toward students with disabilities.

## **WHY DO APPLICANTS WITH DISABILITIES NEED TO KNOW ABOUT NEGATIVE ATTITUDES?**

Knowing that negative attitudes exist and where they come from are offered here not to discourage but rather to empower students

with disabilities to prepare, anticipate, and identify strategies to combat the negative effects on the practicum and internship interviews *and* to remind students that the negative attitudes society holds are not their fault, nor are these attitudes based on accurate information.

## **WHAT ARE THE ATTITUDES APPLICANTS WITH DISABILITIES ARE UP AGAINST?**

The literature identifies the following negative attitudes toward people with disabilities:

- Fear
- Negative experiences
- Lack of knowledge and/or disability-related skills (Cook, 1998)
- Assumptive errors, such as:
  - Linking one known/or obvious disability variable (e.g., visual impairment) to another unrelated disability variable (e.g., deafness) (Wright, 1960)
  - Tendency to give one known and/or obvious disability undue weight, ignoring all other important data (Strohmer & Leierer, 2000)
  - Tendency to look for information confirming incompetency (Strohmer & Shivy, 1994)

Without a doubt, disability biases could be detrimental to people with disabilities seeking employment. In the case of predoctoral psychology practica and internships, psychologists who are reviewing and selecting candidates can be viewed similarly as hiring managers and human resources managers in business and industry with the exception, ironically, that psychologists often have received even less training on job accommodations, the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), and ADA considerations as related to employment interviews (Olkin

& Pledger, 2003; Pape & Tarvydas, 1993). Consequently, they may be prone to make many of the same attitudinal mistakes as hiring managers in the industries. Therefore, students with disabilities must be trained to counter these tendencies and shift the weight of the attention of hiring psychologists in internship interviews to the students' competencies.

## WHAT CAN AN APPLICANT WITH A DISABILITY DO?

First of all, do not give up! Again, the purpose of this chapter is not to discourage individuals with disabilities, but rather to acknowledge and validate that barriers can be real. Further, the information is provided to empower applicants with disabilities by providing realistic and balanced information about the disability issues that arise when interviewing for a job. Identifying important factors that are evaluated in job interview situations and effective strategies for interviewees to deal with interviewers' questions related to these job performance factors will be helpful to know.

## GOOD NEWS: WE KNOW WHAT EMPLOYERS LOOK FOR IN INTERVIEWEES

The good news is that much is known about what interviewers typically assess in employment interviews as critically related to effective job performance. This enables students to anticipate questions and discuss any effect their disability may or may not have on these factors. Below is a list of several qualities that are typically assessed in employment interviews (Huffcut et al., 2001):

1. **Basic personality tendencies** refers to basic interpersonal skills, including appearing likeable, friendly, warm, caring, polite, tactful, and helpful.
2. **Applied social skills** refers to oral communication skills, interpersonal skills, leadership, and persuasiveness.

3. **Mental ability** is the ability to learn and process information, including judgment, decision making, creativity, flexibility, problem-solving, and planning abilities.
4. **Knowledge and skill** refers to a general demonstration of competency as related to the job you are pursuing.
5. **Organizational fit** refers to the applicant's fit with the organization's unique culture or climate, defined by characteristics such as values, goals, norms, and attitudes.

The major psychological constructs identified here can be used to help students answer questions that are typically asked in job interview situations.

## WHAT ARE THE TYPICAL QUESTIONS ASKED IN PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP INTERVIEWS?

The following questions, compiled by Johanna Tiemann and Barbara Nusbaum, were published in their article "How to Survive the Search for an Internship" in the January 1998 issue of the *APA Monitor*.

1. How did you decide on a career in psychology?
2. What are you looking for in a psychology internship?
3. What are your goals for the internship year?
4. What are your strengths and weaknesses as a clinician? As a tester? As a supervisee? As a diagnostician?
5. What do you plan to do once you have finished your training?
6. What do you see yourself doing 5 years from now?
7. What is your dissertation topic and how far along is your work on it?
8. What do you look for in supervision?
9. Which of our electives/rotations appeals to you?



10. What will your schedule be? Can you work evening hours?
11. What is your theoretical orientation?
12. What are your specific clinical interests?
13. Do you have any questions?

## CASE PRESENTATION TIPS FOR INTERNSHIP INTERVIEWS

Some employers may be interested in examining work samples that you submit during the interview application process.

- Be prepared to answer questions on the intake and testing reports you've submitted with your application.
- In addition to the cases discussed in the intake and testing reports submitted with your application, have two cases ready to present in a somewhat structured format.
- Prepare cases that are relevant to the work you would be doing at the internship (e.g., child, adult, family).
- Try to choose cases that will naturally allow you to answer to the following questions:
  - What would you have done differently in your work with this case?
  - What did you think went well with this case?
  - What diagnosis did you give the patient, and why?

## WHAT STRATEGIES CAN APPLICANTS WITH DISABILITIES USE TO IMPROVE INTERVIEW OUTCOMES?

The positive effect of self-presentation strategies or impression management tactics on interview outcomes is well documented (Stevens & Kristof, 1995). Stevens and Kristof conducted a field study to examine the effect of applicant impression management during job interviews and interview outcomes. They analyzed the contents of 78 job interviews in detail and found that impression management tactics used by job applicants can be

classified into two broad categories: assertive management tactics and defensive impression management tactics.

*Assertive tactics* refers to attempts by the job applicant to actively construct an image of himself or herself as a particular type of person with particular beliefs, opinions, characteristics, or experiences (Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984). Specific tactics include the following:

- **Self-promotion:** To demonstrate the possession of desirable qualities such as competence, competitiveness, successfulness, and resourcefulness
- **Personal stories:** To recount specific past events or actions (e.g., work experiences in a particular instance) to demonstrate the possession of certain applied mental or social skills
- **Entitlements:** To claim responsibility for positive events
- **Enhancements:** To claim that the value of a positive event for which the interviewee was responsible was greater than most people might think
- **Overcoming obstacles:** To describe efforts and strategies used to circumvent problems or barriers impeding progress toward a goal
- **Opinion conformity:** To express beliefs, values, or attitudes consistent with the interviewer and the organization
- **Other-enhancement:** To make positive statements about (e.g., flatter, praise, and compliment) the interviewer and the organization

*Defensive impression management tactics* refers to attempts made by the job applicant to respond to a perceived potential or actual threat to his or her image in the conversation during the interview. Specific tactics include the following:

- **Excuses:** To deny responsibility for the negative consequences of an action

• **Justification:** To accept the effects of his or her behavior but deny the negative implications of such responsibility

Stevens and Kristof (1995) examined the effects of applicants' impression management tactics on interview outcomes (i.e., perceived applicant suitability and likelihood of organizational pursuit of the applicant). They found that applicant self-promotion, personal stories, fit with organization, other-enhancement, nonverbal behavior, and opinion conformity to be highly predictive of interview outcomes, whereas gender, grade point average, and job type were unrelated to interview outcomes.

Chan, Pruett, Kubota, Lee, and Kwok (2009) argued that it is equally important to empower people with disabilities to address disability stigma at the micro level in everyday situations including job interviews using self-presentation/impression management tactics.

Disability legislation can be considered an attitude change strategy at the macro level. Chan, Pruett, Kubota, Lee, and Kwok (2009) argued that it is equally important to empower people with disabilities to address disability stigma at the micro level in everyday situations including job interviews using self-presentation/impression management tactics. Impression management is the process through which people try to control the impressions other people form of them. It is a goal-directed conscious or unconscious attempt to influence the perceptions of other people about a person, object, or event by regulating and controlling

information in social interaction. It is usually synonymous with self-presentation, if a person tries to influence the perception of his or her image.

As a demonstration, Chan et al. (2009) conducted an experimental study to examine the effect of impression management on job interview outcomes of people with disabilities. Eighty-six business students were randomly assigned to three experimental conditions to view one of the three 15-minute video clips of a job applicant interviewing *competently* for a technical sales consultant position. The three experimental conditions were (1) a job applicant without disability, (2) a job applicant with a spinal cord injury who did not use impression management tactics, and (3) a job applicant with a spinal cord injury who used impression management tactics. After watching the job interview video representing their experimental conditions, these students were asked to rate the job applicant in terms of general impression and hireability for the position.

The effect of impression management tactics on interview outcomes was analyzed statistically through analysis of variance (ANOVA). The ANOVA results for hireability were significant ( $p < .01$ ,  $r^2 = .11$ ). The effect size of impression management with partial eta squared ( $r^2$ ) of .11 is considered medium. Posthoc analysis indicated that the average hireability rating for the job applicant with disabilities and impression management condition was significantly higher than for the job applicant without disability condition. There was no difference between the disability without impression management and disability with impression management groups. Impression management was also found to have a significant effect on business students' general impression ratings of the job applicant ( $p < .01$ ,  $r^2 = .07$ ).

Importantly, the significant effect of impression management on job interview outcomes suggests that impression management can be used to offset negative perception of employers about the potential of people with disabilities as productive workers. Chan et al. (2009) concluded that impression management/self-presentation can be a powerful strategy that empowers people with disabilities to change disability stigma behavior on a one-on-one basis in daily life situations.

## **TO DISCLOSE OR NOT TO DISCLOSE? THAT IS THE QUESTION!**

Generally, students with unapparent disabilities may find it most beneficial to disclose information prior to a practicum offer or internship matching only if they need accommodations for the interview process itself. Otherwise, waiting until after confirmation of a job offer, when the applicant has a clearer understanding of the essential functions of the position, is appropriate. For people with apparent disabilities, discussing their disability early in the context of any accommodation needs and how the disability will not affect performance—more importantly, discussing how the individual has successfully met job performance expectations and contributed to a diverse employment environment—is appropriate. Practicing or rehearsing effective communication regarding disability, needs, skills, and abilities is recommended for all qualified applicants with disabilities.

## **THE BOTTOM LINE: ACCOMMODATIONS AND THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT**

Qualified students with disabilities have the right to ask for accommodations to perform their work as a practicum student or intern in the workplace under the Americans With Disabilities

Act and Amendments of 2008 (ADA). The ADA provides protection to any qualified individual with a disability. Under the ADA, a person with a disability is a person with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity (e.g., cognitive, social, emotional, and physical). The impairment must be severe, not temporary, and must have a permanent or long-term impact on the individual.

A person may also be protected by ADA if he or she has a record of impairment or is regarded by others as a person with impairment. The “regarded as” standard applies to a person who is excluded from any basic life activity (e.g., employment) or otherwise discriminated against because of a covered entity’s (e.g., an employer) negative attitudes toward that person’s impairment. To be protected by the ADA, the individual must also be *qualified* for the employment. To be qualified as defined by ADA, the individual with a disability must satisfy the requisite skill, experience, education, and other job-related requirements of the employment position and with or without reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential functions of the position.

This definition, which implies that the individual must be able to perform the essential functions of the job, requires a determination of essential versus marginal functions of a job.

This definition, which implies that the individual must be able to perform the essential functions of the job, requires a determination of essential versus marginal functions of a job. In general, essential functions are the basic job duties that an employee must be able to perform, with or without reasonable

accommodation. Factors to consider in determining if a function is essential include:

- Whether the reason the position exists is to perform that function,
- The number of other employees available to perform the function or among whom the performance of the function can be distributed, and
- The degree of expertise or skill required to perform the function.

An employer must carefully examine each job to determine which functions or tasks are essential to performance of the job. In interviewing for an internship, if a student were to discuss his or her job accommodation needs, he or she should be able to discuss accommodation and the concept of essential functions from the context of the ADA.

## THINKING ABOUT ACCOMMODATIONS

The interview experience offers an excellent opportunity to collect information about the training site both in terms of attitudes, essential job functions, and administrative contacts for making an accommodations request.

The practicum experience is particularly interesting, as a university-based classroom experience may accompany a student's agency-based clinical experience. A student may need separate sets of accommodations: (1) those for class (i.e., university-based practicum seminar/group supervision), which would be negotiated through the same channels the student has used for other class-based accommodations within his or her home institution; and (2) those for engaging in the essential functions required at the practicum site, which would involve negotiating with the human resources representative or disability coordinator at the clinical site.

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The internship setting is somewhat different—a student no longer attends a program-based class and, instead, acquires didactic education and, supervision through the internship site itself. Thus, students do not necessarily need to seek accommodation from the university associated with their doctoral program, but rather from the internship site.

In preparing for practicum and internship experiences, qualified students with disabilities may think through the following points:

- It is possible that accommodation needs for the academic setting do not translate to the work setting (e.g., extended time on tests). As such, it is important to think through (a) your classroom-based accommodation needs separate from (b) your clinical accommodation needs. The requests for classroom-based accommodations will continue to be made through your doctoral program institution, whereas the requests for clinical accommodations will be made through administrators at the training site.
- Psychology trainees with disabilities may or may not have functional limitations that affect their ability to perform essential job duties. As such, it may not be entirely necessary for you to make an accommodation request. What are the required duties for psychology trainees at the site? Do you have functional limitations that could affect your performance of the required duties? What specifically are they?

- If you plan to request accommodations, what reasonable accommodations do you need to be able to perform the essential functions of your position? Think in terms of categories of accommodation. That is, you may need: a change in work duty procedure (including schedules), a physical modification of the work station, some type of assistive equipment or technology, or personal assistance services to successfully fulfill your responsibilities and benefit from training (Fraser, Johnson, & Uomoto, 2010; Solovieva, Walls, Hendricks, & Dowler, 2009).

## **REQUESTING ACCOMMODATIONS**

Think about the communication strategies described above relative to negative attitudes when you're formulating your request for reasonable accommodations. The accommodation process must begin with a request from the trainee with a disability. That is, you as the student are responsible for letting the training site know that you need an accommodation to participate in the application process and perform essential job functions. Employers are not required to accommodate you if you have not stated a need (Chan, Cardoso, Copeland, Jones, & Fraser, 2008). Chan and colleagues state that while not required, it may be most helpful to document the accommodation request in writing, providing the following information:

- Identification as a person with a disability,
- Statement that this request is being made in accordance with the ADA,
- Identification of the specific problematic job/training tasks,
- Identification of your specific accommodation ideas,
- Statement of request for your employer's accommodation ideas,
- Attachment of medical documentation if appropriate, and

- Statement of request for response within a reasonable time period.

Keep in mind that the way you specifically describe your accommodation needs can be of great assistance to your employer when it comes to implementing the accommodations. A thorough understanding of the scope and process of your work duties can help you identify whether a change in procedure would meet your needs for a reasonable accommodation. Other requests, such as work station modifications and assistive technology, can be implemented with various devices and as such, it may be helpful to have some suggestions in mind but to also be open to exploring resources and possibilities in partnership with your employer for other types of equipment that will reasonably meet your needs.

## **RESOURCES FOR IDENTIFYING AND OBTAINING ACCOMMODATIONS**

The process of identifying and implementing reasonable accommodations for a psychology trainee may vary from site to site. Research indicates one barrier to successfully accommodating qualified individuals with disabilities is employer fears of accommodation costs (Unger & Kregel, 2003). Fortunately, research indicates that 50% of workers with disabilities do not require accommodations and of those who do, the majority of accommodation costs are under \$500 (Bruyere, Erickson, & VanLooy, 2006; Job Accommodation Network, 2009). Having information on hand regarding resources for accommodations (if appropriate for your situation) can assist in providing more accurate information to your training site and demonstrate your ability to proactively contribute to problem solving.

Often, direct employee supervisors (i.e., your clinical supervisor) have some reservations about their ability or authority to identify or develop accommodations (Unger & Kegel, 2003).

Additionally, the accommodation request process is not universal. That is, some employers indicate that human resources staff is responsible for receiving and implementing accommodation requests, whereas others indicate that such decisions are made among the upper ranks of management (Bruyere et al., 2006). Some organizations may also involve safety or ergonomic staff, disability management and benefits staff, and unit managers. Often, direct employee supervisors (i.e., your clinical supervisor) have some reservations about their ability or authority to identify or develop accommodations (Unger & Kegel, 2003). As such, it is important to think about how and which personnel to approach at your training site for accommodations.

It is also important to keep in mind that there is variability around employers' experiences implementing accommodations; that is, some companies, particularly if they are smaller, are less likely to have previously made accommodations for employees; whereas in larger organizations, the situation may be much more familiar to staff (Bruyere et al., 2006). The last chapter of this guide has been specifically designed to provide information for you to use and share with your organization to assist you in navigating the accommodations process and to support effective problem solving and collaboration in meeting your training-related needs.

## REMEMBER

The practicum and internship interview process can be a time of positive anticipation and at the same time be a little stressful. You have invested time and energy in your training and preparation for the job market, you want to obtain a great training match, and interviews represent key investments in that process. Keep in mind that employers are eager to get to know you. Regardless of your disability, you can use impression management strategies during the interview to put your best foot forward to demonstrate your personality and social skills, asking thoughtful questions that demonstrate your interest in the job and providing and collecting useful information that will help you and the employer formulate an impression about organizational fit.

Recognize also that the interview process raises a number of questions that students with disabilities need to address. These questions include: "Should I disclose my disability?" "How should I disclose my disability or ask for accommodations?" "When and to whom should I disclose and make my request?" The information in this resource guide is intended to assist you in this exploration. Keep in mind that there is no one right answer to these questions. Rather, thinking through them should assist you in formulating a plan that best suits you in your journey toward employment as a psychologist. ■

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# FROM INTERNSHIP TO EMPLOYMENT

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The internship provides an opportunity for IWD to develop the clinical, research, assessment, and consultation skills necessary to practice psychology as a competent professional

**18** In today's world of professional psychology, obtaining an internship is an important step in becoming a psychologist. With increased competition for internships, securing an internship is considered a major career achievement and requires considerable perseverance, determination, and tenacity (Noonan, Gallor, Hensler-McGinnis, Fassinger, Wang, & Goodman, 2004); an ability to effectively present one's skills and attributes to possible internship sites (Hauser, Maxwell-McCaw, Leigh, & Gutman, 2000), and an ability to identify the best match of an internship site to one's professional interests and abilities (APPIC, 2002). Several articles have been written that identify the challenges faced by individuals with different types of disabilities with their internship experience and in

employment settings. (Borg, 2005; Fassenger, 2008; Hauser et al., 2000; Lawn, 1989; Maggio, 2007; Noonan et al., 2004; Vande Kemp, Chen, Erickson, Friesen, 2003). This article will focus on specific challenges and stressors that interns with disabilities (IWD) may face during internships and professional employment settings including: (a) added demands of daily living, (b) determining the need for accommodations, (c) maintaining personal health, and (d) moving from internship to professional practice.

The internship provides an opportunity for IWD to develop the clinical, research, assessment, and consultation skills necessary to practice psychology as a competent professional (Fouad, Grus, Hatcher, Kaslow, Smith Hutchings, Madon, Collins, & Crossman,



2009). It also provides an opportunity for IWD to develop interpersonal skills to connect with faculty, staff, and colleagues that provide a foundation for their professional career. IWD may also face stressors not experienced by their internship colleagues. Iwasaki and Mactavish (2005) studied stress and persons with disabilities (PWD) and identified several areas of stress unique to PWD: (a) added demands associated with daily living and the complications of disability, (b) health concerns, (c) interpersonal relationship and attitudes toward PWD, and (d) issues regarding employment. These areas of stress may become more pronounced and distressing for IWD during the internship and employment experiences.

## **DISABILITY AND THE ADDED DEMANDS ASSOCIATED WITH DAILY LIVING**

Disability and the added demands associated with daily living serve as a constant reminder of how disability may affect an individual's life (Iwasaki & Mactavish, 2005; Noonan et al., 2004). The demands of daily living may include finding accessible transportation to the internship site and the additional time needed to read files, learning how to navigate the internship site, becoming comfortable with new service providers (e.g. personal service provider, interpreters), and becoming familiar with the internship's clinical demands. These demands may be of little concern for able-bodied colleagues, yet frequently require additional time, energy, and effort for IWD.

The added demands associated with a disability become more salient when considering the question of whether to disclose or not disclose information with the internship training staff. Some IWD fear that disclosure may impact their careers and prevent them from advancing within their place of

employment (Goldberg et al., 2005; Noonan et al., 2004). For example, in a survey of college graduates with learning disabilities, 46% of the participants chose not to disclose a disability due to the fear of negative consequences (Madaus, Foley, McGuire, & Ruban, 2002).

IWD who have unapparent disabilities are especially challenged by the decision to disclose (Vande Kemp et al., 2003). In graduate school these interns may have completed their academic requirements without disclosing. Yet an internship contains unique demands and expectations that differ from academic and practicum experiences. For example, classes and practica are scheduled on specific days and at specific times. During the day there may be blocks of time to complete assignments, catch up on class reading, handle personal concerns, or to rest. With an internship, flexibility in one's schedule may no longer be available. Every hour of the day may be scheduled with clinical activities, including psychotherapy with clients, completing clinical assessments, providing psycho-educational workshops, etc. No longer is there time to rest or recuperate from the daily demands of the internship.

Concealing a disability may affect a person's affective, cognitive, and behavioral well-being (Pachankis, 2007). Also, those who choose not to disclose may be negatively affected by the threat of discovery (Pachankis, 2007), especially in situations such as internship or employment that challenge or question a person's status or identity (Rosenthal, Chan, & Livneh, 2006). In a study focused on individuals with psychiatric disabilities and the decision of whether to disclose or not disclose, a variety of responses and reactions to this dilemma were reported. Some individuals believed it was a positive decision to disclose. They felt that

the employer was aware of their disability, accommodations were made, and they were treated like other employees. Some individuals only disclosed the more socially accepted part of their disability. Another alternative was to “strategically time” disclosure after being in a position for a period of time. This method of disclosure allowed the PWD to develop mutual trust and support of staff and coworkers. Individuals who selected this response perceived themselves as being able to function without accommodations. Yet later it became apparent that accommodations would assist them with their work responsibilities. The Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) permits individuals to forego disclosure until accommodations are necessary (Falender, Collins, & Shafrane, 2009; Foote, 2000; Vande Kemp et al., 2003).

The decision to disclose prior to internship may be based on the question “Would any of my clinical experiences, required tasks, or work environments during my internship be hampered by my disability?” If interns conclude that their disabilities would not affect their work performance, all clinical experiences would be available to them, and all environments accessible, there may be no need to disclose. If interns are unable to complete particular tasks, develop specific clinical competencies, or function in certain environments, such findings may necessitate disclosure.

## 20 **NEED FOR ACCOMMODATIONS**

To invoke the right to seek an accommodation, a person must first disclose information regarding the disability to the employer (Falender et al., 2009; Foote, 2000; Vande Kemp et al., 2003). The possibility of considering reasonable accommodations requires an interactive process (Falender et al., 2009; Vande Kemp et al., 2003) and a mutual conversation between the employer and the employee to explore and

identify possible accommodations (Falender et al., 2009). The intent of the ADA is for employers to make existing facilities usable for and accessible to PWD by restructuring or modifying work schedules, assignments, equipment, examinations, training materials, or policies. Adjustments to the work environment may range from allowing schedule flexibility to accommodating medication regimens to providing or permitting assistive equipment, like computers, to providing or permitting services such as sign language interpreters (Foote, 2000; Vande Kemp et al., 2003).

Interns with unapparent disabilities are especially affected when requesting accommodations employers may perceive as unreasonable (Vande Kemp et al., 2003).

Employers regard the following requests as reasonable: “flexible scheduling, assistive/adaptive equipment, special parking, physical change of office space, and temporary assignment of job duties to a co-worker to accommodate sick leave” (Roessler & Sumner, 1997 (p. 31)). The same employers regarded as unreasonable those “accommodations [that] include work at home, afternoon rest and nap periods, transportation to work and provision of a support person” (p. 33). Interns with unapparent disabilities are especially affected when requesting accommodations employers may perceive as unreasonable (Vande Kemp et al., 2003). Therefore, interns with invisible disabilities may be hesitant to share this information and may resort to invisible accommodations: working in the evening and on weekends to make up for lost time for rest and taking extra time required to complete work responsibilities, lowering their achievement goals, and spending personal

money on ergonomic aids and assistive technology needed to perform internship responsibilities (Vande Kemp et al., 2003).

Interns with other types of disabilities also face unforeseen challenges. Olkin and Bourg (2001) surveyed 120 practicum/internship sites and found: 50% involved traveling to less-accessible secondary sites; nearly all sites had a floor not accessible by elevator; 20% lacked handicapped parking; 25% had no ramps; 81% had no automatic door openers; most had outside doorways at least 36" wide, but often inside doorways fewer than 32" inches wide. The investigators also found that access was particularly poor for trainees with sensory impairments. Of the sites responding to the survey, only 16% had Braille signage; 38% had emergency alarms with both visible and audible warnings; 12% provided no TTY (Telecommunication Device for the Deaf); even fewer listed TTY numbers on letterhead (Olkin & Bourg, 2001). Even though the ADA assures that PWD have the right to access and to employment, it is not specific in regard to the degree of architectural and sensory accessibility required (U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2008). To identify possible unforeseen challenges, IWD may want to assess the internship site and clinical training program to determine the degree of programmatic, architectural, and sensory accessibility prior to arriving on site.

Another means to determine if accommodations are necessary is to review the recently published *Competency Benchmarks* (Fouad et al., 2009). In this document the work group identified foundational competencies—the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that serve as the foundation for the functions a psychologist is expected to perform (e.g., an understanding of ethics and individual and cultural diversity issues, awareness, knowledge

of the scientific foundations of psychology) and functional competencies—the major functions that a psychologist is expected to perform, each of which requires reflective integration of foundational competencies in problem identification and resolution (e.g., assessment, intervention, consultation, research). Reviewing this document may assist IWD in determining if they possess the competencies currently needed for internship and identify those required to enter practice. If the outlined competencies needed for practice prove to be difficult to achieve without accommodations, disclosure may be beneficial.

As previously mentioned, accommodations are a joint process of negotiation between the training director and the intern. When the training director is not informed about an intern's disability, no accommodations either can or need to be made (Foote, 2000). Also, if aspects of the training experience are not accessible to IWD, the training staff may not be able to identify and/or develop alternative clinical experiences without prior information. Yet, the decision to disclose is always determined by the IWD.

## **MAINTAINING PERSONAL HEALTH**

The clinical demands of the internship may affect a person's physical and emotional health. Yet the person's maintaining physical and emotional health is necessary to successfully complete the internship. Previous studies have demonstrated that poor health is detrimental to overall well-being and life quality (Janssen et al., 2002; Putnam et al., 2003) and has a behavioral and cognitive impact on persons with disabilities (Yorkston et al., 2003). Sherman and Thelen (1998) found that problems in close relationships and major personal illness/injury caused the most distress and impairment. Stratton, Kellaway,

and Rottini (2007) related their experiences as graduate students struggling with issues related to death and illness. They recounted that fellow colleagues perceived them as being unapproachable and uptight. Their personal reactions to stress also contributed to further emotional and physical suffering (exhaustion, irritability, depression, anxiety, and emotional breakdowns in clinical/classroom situations).

When dealing with stressful life events, psychotherapists tend to feel less satisfied in their personal lives (Sherman & Thelen, 1998). In addition to feeling less satisfied, therapists also report canceling, being late, and missing therapy sessions with clients. Thus, psychotherapists' ability to function adequately in terms of certain basic requirements of their role (e.g., promptness, availability, and conscientiousness) may be compromised when they experience significant stress. During times of increased stress and demands of the internship, IWD may determine personal self-care may be sacrificed. They may not attend to the physical aspects of their health—including diet, sleep, and regular exercise—or they may forego their emotional and personal needs—including sustaining or developing interpersonal relationships, expressing emotions, and spending time meditating, which are all aspects of self-care (Harrison & Westwood, 2009). Self-care provides balance and allows practitioners to be more present in both personal and professional relationships.

*Competency Benchmarks* (Fouad et al., 2009) identifies self-care (attention to personal health and well-being to assure effective professional functioning) as a foundational competency. An essential component of this competency consists of interns monitoring issues with supervisors related to self-care and understanding the central role of self-care in effective practice. To be prepared for practice IWD must be able to self-monitor issues

related to self-care and promptly respond with interventions when disruptions occur.

Lack of attention to self-care may increase IWD's vulnerability to being labeled as "impaired" due to their inability to perform required skills (Falender et al., 2009). IWD's sacrificing their physical and emotional health may also hinder supervisors and other members of the training staff from seeing IWD as competent professionals. It is important for IWD to consider their health as a priority.

## **MOVING FROM INTERNSHIP TO PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE**

An important component of the internship is developing collegial relationships with faculty, staff, and fellow interns. These relationships often serve as the foundation for a person's professional career. The ability to develop interpersonal relationships has been identified as a crucial clinical competency for successful practice as a psychologist (Fouad et al., 2009). Relationships have also been identified as a major source of stress for PWD (Iwasaki & Mactavish, 2005). PWD often have negative experiences that are directly attributable to misinformed public perceptions and culturally based stereotypes created and perpetuated by dominant majority groups without disabilities (Lenney & Sercombe, 2002; Noonan et al., 2004). PWD have identified the inability to navigate the social systems as being a major source of stress, including trying to get help, trying to get to work, and constantly being faced with a society that does not accommodate the needs of PWD.

Mental health practitioners have been trained to be sensitive to issues related to discrimination and prejudice regarding different aspects of diversity. Yet due to the lack of training mental health practitioners receive regarding prejudice and disabilities, IWD

may be perceived with conflicting positive and negative emotions (Gill, 2001). Open devaluation of people with disabilities conflicts with society's prevailing values of protection, charity, and nurturance. Consequently, disability prejudice is seldom expressed overtly in the way racial bigotry or antigay views are often communicated (Hahn, 1997).

Supervisors and colleagues may be reluctant to provide IWD with honest feedback about their interactions with others and how these interactions are perceived (Gill, 2001). Borg (2005) shared his experience supervising an intern with a visual disability. At the internship site, it was the customary practice to hire interns as permanent staff members. During the deliberation process, staff members indicated that the intern had troublesome ways of subtly pulling for help from other staff members. Without directly asking, the intern would have other staff complete her paperwork, guide her from room to room, and usher her patients into session. The consensus was that her presence in the clinic was disruptive and taxing.

When these types of situations occur, IWD may be labeled as "problematic peers." The disruptive behaviors associated with problematic peers were inadequate social skills, deficient interpersonal skills, supervision difficulties, unprofessional demeanor, personality disorders, emotional problems, and academic dishonesty (Rosenberg, Getzeman, Arcinue, & Oren, 2005). Other students/interns experience problematic peers as affecting (a) class functioning, (b) cohesion in group supervision, (c) the individual's learning process, (d) ability to work collaboratively or participate in class discussions, and (e) the willingness to self-disclose. Responses to problematic peers by other students/interns include (a) gossip among themselves, (b) consultation with each other, and (c) withdrawal

from the problematic peer (Rosenberg et al., 2005). These responses to problematic behavior may leave their peer feeling socially isolated and alienated (Gill, 2001; Iwasaki & Mactavish, 2005).

Research indicates that persons with disabilities may not receive optimal assignments/jobs and are more likely to have reduced hours or have a position terminated (Fassinger, 2008).

Being a member of the work force poses challenges for IWD. Research indicates that persons with disabilities may not receive optimal assignments/jobs and are more likely to have reduced hours or have a position terminated (Fassinger, 2008). PWD may also be subject to internal barriers, such as underestimation of capabilities, poor self-efficacy expectations, and low outcome expectations. A group of high-achieving women with sensory and physical disabilities identified challenges faced in the work environment (Noonan et al., 2004). The women reported experiences of disability prejudice, including stupid, hostile, and condescending attitudes and behaviors. These experiences of prejudice also included: (a) restricted educational opportunities, (b) discrimination in hiring, (c) biased performance evaluation, (d) job tracking, (e) pay inequities, (f) lack of support and mentoring, (g) negative attitudes and chilly workplace climate, (h) lack of accommodations, and (i) general discouragement.

IWD have to develop an awareness of ableism attitudes in the work environment. Depending on the nature of the disability, IWD

may or may not have dealt with these attitudes. These attitudes may not be as apparent during the internship, but may arise in different work environments. It is easy for IWD to become negative and cynical regarding these attitudes. It is important to develop strategies to address these challenges. The group of high-achieving women (Noonan et al., 2004) discussed strategies used to address the challenges of ableism including: (a) ignoring it as much as possible; (b) getting support from each other; (c) internally reaffirming their goals and worth; (d) using humor to de-escalate hostility and put others at ease; (e) challenging it personally, collectively, and legally; and (f) working actively toward social change (Noonan et al., 2004).

Attitudinal and response styles that may enhance the employment opportunities of IWD, include: (a) confidence regarding the skills offered to employees, (b) enthusiasm about learning new tasks, (c) enjoyment in helping others, (d) focus on what they enjoy rather than what they cannot do, and (e) regarding work as enhancing self-esteem and a strong positive influence on psychological well-being (Chapin & Kewman, 2001).

One of the most salient factors identified that separated those who were employed from those who were unemployed was optimism—viewing disability from a positive perspective; setting goals, embracing change, and being satisfied with supervisors. Optimism also had a positive effect on the number of job offers received (Chapin & Kewman, 2001). Individuals who made a concerted effort to locate employment were successful. Interns with disabilities who want to secure professional employment need to possess the necessary clinical skills and competencies, but also be aware of the moderating variables (e.g. confidence, enthusiasm, optimism, etc.) that may influence employment decisions.

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The move from internship to professional practice challenges interns with disabilities to be cognizant of their disability; possible accommodations; maintaining physical and mental health as priorities; focusing on personal impact with colleagues, supervisors, and peers; and developing a positive attitude in clinical competencies. In reviewing these challenges, it may seem overwhelming for people to focus on their clinical responsibilities in the present and also be concerned with future ramifications. Being able to focus on the present and the future will provide IWD both the foundational and fundamental competencies required for professional practice. ■

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# CAREERS IN ACADEMIA: ISSUES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES TO CONSIDER

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A graduate degree in psychology can open many doors to career opportunities including, but not limited to, clinical work, consultation, teaching, and/or administration. Likewise, a career in academia can be realized with careful planning, preparation, and perseverance.

Based on the experiences of persons with disabilities who are thriving and successful in the academic arena, there are three important steps you must take to survive and thrive in academia. These include completing a solid, broad-based graduate education, developing an interest area/focus of expertise early in your career, and diversifying skill sets. While these steps are relevant for all individuals interested in pursuing academic careers, adding the presence of a disability in the mix brings forward the need to consider some additional, very unique factors.

With this in mind, this chapter serves to remind graduate students with disabilities of the academic and scholarly career opportunities available to them and to speak specifically to disability-related variables that may arise when

they work within academic settings. A complete review of academic variables is beyond the scope of this article but can be found in the bibliography offered by Deb Lee (2003) in her article titled: "Surviving and Thriving in Academia: A Selective Bibliography for New Faculty Members."

## **WHY A CAREER IN ACADEMIA?**

Generally speaking, individuals with disabilities are underrepresented in educational and vocational settings (Fairweather & Shaver, 1990; Freeman & Wise, 1982). A smaller number of individuals with disabilities relative to individuals without disabilities attend college and/or obtain degrees (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). Specific to psychology, there is a lack of coverage of the topic of disability within psychology curricula, and more disappointing,



within diversity training curricula (Olkin & Pledger, 2003). Rather, if disability is covered at all, it is restricted to and framed within the medical model as pathological, something to be diagnosed and treated. Finally, attitudes by others, including psychologists, academicians, and researchers, toward individuals with disabilities are largely negative. The view of disability within psychology needs to be expanded and challenged within academic settings, and individuals with disabilities are the conduit for this change.

## **IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS**

If you are a graduate student with a disability and thinking about an academic career, there are several important considerations to keep in mind. Some of these considerations are similar to those encountered in graduate school, and others are very unique to you as a new professional. These considerations may include, but are not limited to, the following:

### **Development of teaching skills:**

Graduate school offers an opportunity to avoid a common problem among academic instructors—a lack of teaching ability. The literature indicates that inexperience in teaching is a common problem in college settings; while college instructors have often received training on how to write and conduct research, they have received comparatively little or no training in teaching technique (Lee, 2003). Further, colleges and universities often do not provide or implement ongoing in-class teaching practicum experiences or course observations by more senior colleagues and/or administrators in an effort to provide corrective feedback. Thus, evaluations by students enrolled in their course become the only source of feedback for new instructors; such feedback is restricted in its degree of helpfulness in that it is complimentary and/or critical but not corrective. This is problematic for the instructor

who may be receiving repeated negative evaluations from students without the benefit of constructive feedback, as student course evaluations and comments are many times used in promotion decisions.

### **Accommodations in the classroom and research laboratory:**

Probably one of the most important things to consider in teaching and setting up a research laboratory is to engage in anticipatory planning around disability accommodation needs in these settings. Remember, as cited previously, most professors have had little or no training in teaching and laboratory administration techniques. Complicated by the need for accommodations, this mix can serve as a recipe for potential disaster. Below are several suggestions to avoid pitfalls concerning academic accommodations in classroom and laboratory settings.

- **Secure** opportunities to teach while in graduate school. Consider co-teaching with a faculty member who is looking for a teaching assistant and/or co-instructor. Sit down with this individual prior to the term and discuss career goals and possible accommodation needs.
- **Go** to the assigned classroom or laboratory and practice moving about the room and using the equipment prior to the first day of class. Take someone who can provide feedback regarding teaching style, voice volume, and other relevant factors.
- **Obtain** support from appropriate individuals on campus who can be helpful to this process, such as those in the Office of Disability Services. However, go beyond the obvious, given that many accommodations will involve physical, environmental, and audiovisual equipment; consider utilizing the campus audiovisual and computer department as well as environmental services.

- **Remain** open to students' feedback. This is the primary vehicle by which people can EVALUATE and DEVELOP teaching and laboratory administration skills. At the conclusion of every course and laboratory-based independent study experience, students will complete evaluations that usually consist of a combination of Likert scale items and qualitative written comments. When the day comes for course evaluations, it is important to take a deep breath and read every item and every word written by students within every evaluation. Develop a database to summarize and track instructor ratings and areas of strength and weakness across time. Convey to students that their input matters. It is important to be available to students before class, after class, or during office hours to discuss course concerns as they arise. It is very helpful to obtain a midpoint course evaluation from students in order to solicit feedback early enough to make adjustments in teaching and/or laboratory administration strategy and content as indicated.

Probably one of the most important things to consider in teaching and setting up a research laboratory is to engage in anticipatory planning around disability accommodation needs in these settings.

#### **Disclosure of disability to students:**

As has been the case in graduate training, the infamous question arises as to whether to disclose disability status or not. The answer to this often difficult question is "It depends." There is no law that says you must disclose the

presence of a disability to anyone, including students. However, common sense must prevail in making a determination to disclose or not to disclose the presence of a disability. For example, if an instructor must use significant or very visible accommodations, disclosure of the disability may serve as a means to facilitate openness in the classroom and laboratory and increase comfort within the learning environment.

#### **Involvement in scholarly activity:**

Scholarly activity is an essential skill to nurture early in your graduate training, despite the fact that this can be intimidating. Several strategies can be useful in developing this skill. First, as a graduate student, consider every assignment given in class as a possible scholarship opportunity. Scholarly activity refers to everything from a poster, a paper, or an article to a chapter or a presentation. The sooner students begin developing this skill, the sooner they can open doors to futures in academia. Frequent reasons given among graduate students for not pursuing scholarship activity are feeling insecure about their skills and not having enough time. Regarding insecurity, everyone has to start somewhere. It is essential to utilize faculty relationships and professional organizational supports (e.g., APA's Committee on Disability Issues in Psychology) to review, edit, and discuss ideas. It is important as well to be prepared to have ideas and written submissions rejected and recommended for a rewrite or resubmission. Within the domain of academia, there is no room for a fragile ego. Regarding the issue of time, scholarly activity is an aspect of academic work that benefits from good organizational and time-management skills, two skills often not found naturally within clinicians.

There are a number of strategies that can be used to enhance time-management

and organizational skills, including: (a) developing a filing system for ideas, and (b) dedicating a consistent time period for writing. Scheduling an hour twice a week adds up to many dedicated hours of work by the end of a year. Additionally, a person can be motivated to move forward in scholarly activities by spending time at least once a month, or even just twice a year, searching for upcoming conferences in related areas of interest, such as investigating the work of the divisions of APA and joining relevant Listservs. After locating upcoming conferences, it is important to look for program proposal submission requirements and deadlines to guide your work effort. It is helpful to utilize faculty relationships, join fellow classmates and colleagues to develop a group presentation to share the workload, confront insecurities, and develop a presentation portfolio and skills. With competition for internship being high and academic positions being scarce, the sooner you can position yourself in the profession to be seen and heard, the more that doors to future opportunities may open. Remember that academia is a setting in which being seen and heard is critical.

### **Involvement in professional organizations:**

Membership in related professional organizations is an important first step in effective career development, whether this is in academia or another area of specialty. As a graduate student, it is important to look for opportunities to interact or obtain student representative positions within professional organizations. In APA, there are several leadership opportunities for graduate students, and involvement in them may also lead to networking and collaborative opportunities with other professionals in the field.

**Finding a mentor:** A discussion of the value of mentors for graduate students appears in

a separate chapter in this *Resource Guide*. Specific to academia, it is imperative to negotiate a strong alliance with a mentor while you are a graduate student as well as after you have secured that first academic position.

## **SUMMARY**

The past several decades have seen many advances in career opportunities in academia. Specifically, more and more doors are being opened for persons with disabilities. A key factor in moving forward in your career involves knowing when the doors are open and walking into the areas of opportunity with an eagerness to learn, a motivation to succeed, and the determination to address challenges that may arise. Along this journey, be aware of the many supports, including mentors, colleagues, and the resources of APA and its many committees and divisions. ■

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# CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND SELF-ADVOCACY

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The student with a disability will need the skills to speak directly with program directors and instructors about expectations for training and associated reasonable accommodations.

## UNRESOLVED CONFLICT CAN LEAD TO ANGER, RESENTMENT, AND POOR HEALTH

**30** **W**ithout question, pursuing graduate-level education and training in psychology will inevitably lead to conflict in some situations. This statement is particularly true for a student with a disability who will undoubtedly face circumstances that require negotiating conflict in order to have a successful education and training experience. A student with a disability will need the skills necessary to effectively communicate with instructors, clients, and colleagues about his or her disability and its impact on education and training. Conflict resolution skills provide invaluable tools for

dealing assertively and appropriately with situations that arise that are affected by disability status.

For example, consider the situation of a graduate student with a visual impairment who is expected to demonstrate competency in psychological assessment. A number of psychological measures require visual acuity to administer, score, and interpret (e.g., Block Design on the WAIS-IV, Rorschach Inkblot Test, etc.). The student with a disability will need the skills to speak directly with program directors and instructors about expectations for training and associated reasonable accommodations.

Here are some ways to promote successful conflict resolution:

**Get in touch with emotional awareness/mindfulness/self-awareness.** Get in touch with what's going on for you; in other words, what you are experiencing. Become aware of how you feel and why you feel that way. David Burns' book entitled *Feeling Good*, while primarily a book addressing the topic of depression, provides useful information.

**Deal with internal and external conflict.** Conflict occurs when an individual's actions or goals are perceived as incompatible with the actions or goals of another person. The book entitled *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In* by Fisher, Ury, and Patton is another good resource.

**Develop active listening skills,** which allow you to understand the other person's perspective and lets the other person feel heard and understood.

## **MAINTAIN A GOOD ATTITUDE, WHICH INCLUDES NEUTRALITY, CONFIDENTIALITY, OBJECTIVITY, RESPECT FOR DIFFERENCES, AND HONESTY.**

**Practice assertive communication.** Discuss what's on your mind in a way that is clear and assertive, without being aggressive or putting the other person on the defensive.

**Work collaboratively to find a solution.** It is important to come to a point of understanding and to try to work things out in a way that's respectful to all involved. *Problem-Solving Therapy: A Social Competence Approach to Clinical Intervention* by Thomas J. D'Zurilla and Arthur M. Nezu is a potentially good resource.

**Evaluate effectiveness (is it working?).** Keep lines of communication open and re-evaluate how things are going (e.g., "checking-in").

A more sophisticated knowledge of conflict resolution includes the following:

Ability to:

- Understand the psycho-physiological and behavioral aspects of conflict
- Understand the cross-cultural considerations in dealing with conflict
- Understand the positive opportunities that can be presented by conflict
- Understand the basic theories of individual and organizational dynamics
- Identify personality and conflict management styles, strengths, and challenges
- Understand the conflict cycle (i.e., how it begins and escalates)
- Understand the differences between the roles, responsibilities, process, and expected outcomes of mediation, arbitration, and negotiation
- Understand the differences between compromise, cooperation, collaboration, and consensus building

It is important to always be mindful that the experience of conflict and distress is natural. Although it is not uncommon for individuals to avoid stressful situations and experiences that are ambiguous or produce feelings of uncertainty, it is typically the case that choosing not to address these experiences head on only serves to exacerbate the situation. Things that can get in the way of successful conflict resolution include:

- **Avoiding the Conflict**—This leads to anger, resentment, and poor health.
- **Being Defensive**—Denying responsibility may seem to alleviate stress in the short run, but it creates long-term problems because others do not feel listened to and unresolved conflicts continue to grow.

- **Overgeneralizing**—Statements with the word “always” serve to increase the level of conflict.
  - **Being “Right”**—Insisting on being “right” will only compromise the chances of successful conflict resolution.
  - **Making Assumptions or “Mind-Reading”**—This creates hostility and misunderstandings.
  - **Forgetting to Listen**—Interrupting or rehearsing what others are going to say next keeps you from seeing their point of view.
  - **Playing the “Blame Game”**—Criticizing and blaming the other person for the situation instead of trying to view conflict as an opportunity to analyze the situation objectively is not productive.
  - **Trying to “Win” the Argument**—The point of conflict resolution is to discuss and reach a mutual understanding, thereby coming to an agreement or resolution that respects everyone’s needs.
  - **Making Personal Attacks**—Doing this creates negative perceptions; it’s important to remember to respect others even if you don’t like their behavior.
- and weaknesses in the context of your disability.
  - Maintain a positive attitude.
  - Request reasonable accommodations and be willing to discuss alternatives.
  - Offer to assist with the logistics of the accommodations.
  - Be collaborative and avoid appearances of “entitlement.”
  - Be creative with your accommodation options/problem solving.
  - Evaluate and discuss how you anticipate how disability may impact learning and training.
  - Practice discussing your disability—recognize the importance of mentoring relationship.
  - Get to know important support staff—build the relationship/allies.
  - Contact and establish a relationship with office of disability services.
  - Obtain professional documentation of your disability—updated and current—for the purpose of accommodations.
  - Access and utilize available resources such as the Centers for Independent Living, <http://www.cilberkeley.org/>. ■

### Self-Advocacy

A self-advocate is someone who is able to speak up for himself or herself. As a graduate student with a disability, the onus is upon you to make certain that your needs are adequately addressed to ensure your full participation and success in graduate-level training and education. Below is a list of things that you can do to promote self-advocacy.

- Know and value yourself—No one knows your needs better than you do.
- Make informed choices—This is the idea that students are empowered when they actively choose among prescribed accommodations rather than passively accept the options they are provided.
- Know your legal rights and responsibilities.
- Plan for future needs, be proactive.
- Be prepared to objectively discuss strengths

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# MENTORING

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Women and members of minorities that are underrepresented in the workplace may find it especially helpful to seek out mentors/role models of the same background so they can identify with the success of someone who has made it in a diverse workforce.

## **WHAT IS MENTORING?**

**M**entoring is the process by which a more-experienced person imparts advice, support, insight, and knowledge to a less-experienced person. A mentor provides guidance in the form of teaching and support and helps the mentee achieve his or her goals, encourages and motivates the mentee, assists the mentee with career and professional development, serves as a sounding board, and links the mentee to others who can enhance the mentee's growth and development.

## **SOME BENEFITS OF MENTORING**

Mentoring has been shown to increase the success of underrepresented groups in

graduate and professional schools and in entering professions. In various studies across fields, mentoring has consistently been linked with academic and professional development. Mentees attain an increased understanding of a discipline, receive guidance and advice, gain higher confidence levels, and acquire access to networks and other resources.

## **WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A MENTOR**

Mentors want to work with people they can respect. They may even desire to mold their protégés in their own image. This is fine as long as the mentor is not too obsessive about it, and you, as the mentee, are comfortable with the image into which you're being molded. In that sense, a mentor can be a role model—someone you'd like to model yourself after—but does not

have to be. Women and members of minorities that are underrepresented in the workplace may find it especially helpful to seek out mentors/role models of the same background so they can identify with the success of someone who has made it in a diverse workforce.

You should have a good feel after a few meetings or exchanges as to whether the rapport is right for a mentoring relationship. At that point, you can either come right out and ask the person to be your mentor, if that feels appropriate, or you can simply tell the person how much you've benefited from his or her wisdom so far and you hope he or she will continue to share it with you.

You should bring trustworthiness and the ability to keep confidences to the mentoring relationship, suggests the group Women Unlimited. This group also suggests that mentored relationships benefit when the mentee approaches mentoring with openness, honesty, introspection, realistic expectations, accountability, and the ability to admit mistakes and share failures. Look for similar qualities in a mentor, the group advises, as well as a sense of humor, good listening skills, a high comfort level in giving feedback, and the ability to discuss a wide range of issues. Jeffrey Patnaude, author of *Leading From the Maze*, also suggests that mentors possess emotional intelligence, intuition, a drive to keep learning, and a desire to bring about change. Avoid a mentor who is too controlling, judgmental, or a know-it-all. Look for a positive, upbeat attitude—someone who will become invested in and celebrate your success. The mentorship is especially productive when the mentor believes he or she can learn from you and the relationship is a two-way street. The mentor may tend to give a lot more than you do to the relationship, so be sure to express regularly that you value and appreciate your mentor's guidance. The feeling of being needed and making a difference in a protégé's life will often

be a rewarding payoff for the mentor, but don't be afraid to supplement that reward with a token gift, flowers, or by picking up the check when you share a meal. You could also send a note to the mentor's supervisor praising his or her contribution to your professional growth.

## **WHAT DO MENTORS DO?**

Your mentor can help you assess your strengths and weaknesses, as well as help you develop skills for success and a long-range career plan. If you and your mentor share the same employer, your mentor can foster your sense of belonging within the organization, help you navigate the company culture and politics, and let you know who the organization's key players are. You can also work through career and workplace problems with your mentor's assistance. A mentor can provide a fresh perspective—a new way of looking at a problem or issue. You can bounce ideas off your mentor. Look for a relationship in which the mentor is more coach than adviser—one in which the mentor facilitates your decision-making process by suggesting alternatives rather than telling you what to do. ■

APA's Office on Disability Issues in Psychology is pleased to announce its Mentoring Program. The program seeks to support psychology students with disabilities, psychologists with disabilities entering the field, and psychologists in the field who develop a disability. To participate in this program, please visit <http://www.apa.org/pi/disability/resources/mentoring/index.aspx>.



## **NOTES:**





