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DCDT WEBSITE www.dcdt.org

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



As we return from delivering transition virtually, my hope is that each of you spent some time recharging this summer and reflecting on lessons learned since March of 2020. Excitement is high as we be-

gin the new school year, and DCDT is committed to supporting and connecting with you. Our intent is to offer a wide array of professional development, resources, and advocacy to meet your needs as a transition professional in 2021.

As my presidency comes to a close, I am proud of the tremendous strides DCDT has made with regard to member engagement. From the monthly townhall meetings to the West Coast Symposium and the movement to monthly virtual committee meetings, member engagement is at an all-time high. A special thank you to our committee chairs: **Dr. Allison Lombardi**, Conference Program Planning chair; **Dr. Dawn Rowe**, Membership chair; **Dr. James Sinclair**, Human Rights chair, **Dr. Lyman Dukes**, Policy and Advocacy chair; **Dr. Kendra Williams-Diehm & Dr. Malarie Deardorff**, Publications co-chairs; and **Dr. Elisabeth Kutscher**, Research chair.

One of the biggest success stories of the past year was the launch of our new interactive website. Check it out at www.dcdt.org. Don't miss our Events tab and our Resources tab for all the latest information. We encourage every DCDT member to participate in the monthly committee meetings that are now all listed on the website for your convenience. If you have any difficulty finding a DCDT resource or connecting, please contact Associate Executive Director Stacie Dojonovic (sdojonovic@ku.edu), who is always eager to hear from our DCDT members.

As a DCDT member, we find the fall to be our favorite time of year because of our annual DCDT conference. We are putting the final touches on the DCDT 2021 conference in Myrtle Beach this October! We will offer both an in-person and virtual options to presenters and attendees to meet the needs of every member. All 250 sessions will be recorded and made available to all conference registrants for viewing six months after the conference on the DCDT 2021 conference website.

More than any other year, I look forward to opportunities where we can all come together, network, learn, and grow. We also look forward to continuing our online offerings to connect members from across the country and world with each other now and in the future. Be on the lookout for more monthly town hall meetings, committee meetings, and professional development opportunities.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the successful restructuring of the DCDT board that went into effect on January 1, 2021.

We focused on transparency and representation by moving to a more democratic structure, with elected positions for each of our major committees on the DCDT Board—Research, Publications, Human Rights and Diversity, Policy and Advocacy. We also created and filled two elected at-large positions: one representing practitioners and the other representing early career professionals. Congratulations to our new board members:

Research: Dr. Elisabeth Kutscher Publications: Drs. Malarie Deardorff and Kendra Williams-Diehm

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Human Rights and Diversity: Dr. James Sinclair

Policy and Advocacy: Dr. Lyman Dukes

Practitioner: Janet Barakat

Early Career: Matthew Flanagan

The DCDT Executive Board also underwent some changes. Congratulations to our new treasurer, **Dr. Jennifer Bumble**, our new secretary, **Dr. Al Daviso**, and our new vice president, **Dr. Dawn Rowe**.

Last, I wanted to personally thank our immediate past president, **Dr. Karrie Shogren**, for all her hard work, dedica-

tion, and patience as we navigated such significant organizational changes during a global pandemic. Thank you, Karrie, for keeping the ship afloat. I also wish the best of luck to **Dr. Allison Lombardi** as she transitions to president. We are in good hands.

I want to personally thank each of you for the work that you are doing to advance outcomes for students with disabilities through DCDT and your own personal and professional work. Please say hello if you join us in Myrtle Beach!

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HELLO FROM THE DCDT PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE



Malarie Deardorff, PhD



Kendra Williams-Diehm, PhD

Hello and welcome to the fall 2021 newsletter!

NEWsletter

We are very excited to introduce the fall 2021 *DCDT Network Newsletter*. You may notice that this newsletter is much different than issues in the past. In January 2021, Drs. Malarie Deardorff and Kendra Williams-Diehm were elected to co-chair the DCDT Publications Committee. We collectively decided to revamp the newsletter to provide more useful information for practitioners in the field. Each newsletter going forward, will provide two to three "Transition Quick Tips." This is an excellent opportunity for practitioners to submit innovative classroom practices and for graduate students and higher education professionals to showcase

research-based practices and projects to educators across the nation to help students with disabilities successfully transition to adult life.

How Do I Publish My "Transition Quick Tips" in the DCDT Network Newsletter?

The process is simple. The format should be approximately 6–10 pages double spaced, including cover page, references, and any tables, figures, and images. In addition, a digital photo of all authors is needed. No abstracts are needed. Submissions must be emailed to the Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment (zarrowcenter@ou.edu) by November 15th (Spring Edition) and May 15th (Fall Edition). Submissions are peer reviewed through the Publications Committee. Please direct all questions to either Dr. Kendra Williams-Diehm (klwd@ou.edu) or Dr. Malarie Deardorff (malarie.deardorff@ou.edu).

NEWest Issue

The current issue includes three articles with the following topics: (1) Building Relationships with Families Through Home Visits for Culturally Responsive Transition Planning, (2) Where Does Faith "Fit" Within Transition Planning?, and (3) Secondary and Postsecondary Education: What's the Difference?

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES THROUGH HOME VISITS FOR CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TRANSITION PLANNING



Celeste Michaud University of Arkansas



Brooki Beasley Oklahoma University

Educators and parents are part of a team that collaborates and develops an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and transition plan for students with qualifying disabilities. However, demographic disparities exist among the growing number of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students and their families as compared to the demographics of educators. The National Center for Education Statistics (de Brey et al., 2019) has reported that 14% of students ages 3-21 served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act during the 2015-2016 school year were white. In a 2016 report, the United States Department of Education reported that 82% of all educators were white. Lack of shared experiences, understanding of cultural intricacies, and limited reflection on one's own culture and experiences result in a disconnect in valuable relationships and in effective communication, which are critical to developing appropriate student-centered transition plans. Understanding cultural differences and seeking to use culturally relevant, responsive, and sustainable practices to enable relationship building is effective in promoting trust and respect, breaking down misconceptions, and empowering parents so they may advocate for their child and equalize the imbalance of perceived power on an IEP team (Hsiao et al., 2018).

Home visits offer educators an opportunity to bridge communication needs and empower parents as a part of the educational team with their own expertise informed by experiences and culture (Hsiao et al., 2018). Learning about what parents believe and have experienced with the educational system will facilitate educators' assessments on how to best enrich relationships with families and support parents as participatory change agents in transition planning (Hsiao et al., 2018).

Opportunities for Learning

Home visits create opportunities for educators and CLD families to learn from each other and build relationships for the benefit of the student with disabilities. After a home visit, transition professionals and educators may find that a person-family centered transition plan is more appropriate as some CLD families have a family and community centered perspective rather than an individualistic view of youth transitioning into adulthood (Achola & Greene, 2016). Practitioners can visit with families anywhere they are comfortable, including neutral community centers and other venues. However, visits at home, if the family is amenable, can provide a clearer picture of the family dynamic and important elements of their culture. Before making a home visit, educators should take the time to plan for the visit. Preplanning for a home visit can offset anxiety and uncertainty on how to carry it out. Some best practices on preparing for, conducting, and following up on home visits by the website Learning for Justice are on a checklist in Table 1 (2017).

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Table 1. Before, During, and After a Home Visit

Before	During	After
 Participate in home visit training Research on student family culture Schedule visit and send reminder Consider several locations for visit Explain the purpose of visit Bring translator if needed (students should not serve as translator) Pair with another educator or staff 	 Plan a 20–30 minute visit Get to know family Take notice of relationships Discover hopes for their child Avoid taking notes Avoid sharing paperwork till the end Ask family what they need from you Make a plan to connect again 	 Follow up, thanking for meeting Invite to upcoming events Reflect on visit Document visit Follow up with resources

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Meeting the Families

One important thing educators need to do to facilitate good relationships with CLD families is to develop a good understanding of their own potential biases. This can be done with a self-evaluation of potential biases and discriminatory behavior prior to a home visit. Recognition of biases and how they could impact relationships between schools and families should provide for a good foundation for the home visit (McKnight et al., 2017). Educators can prepare by attending home visit training, exploring community resources used by groups their students identify with, and researching the culture of students' families they will be visiting (Learning for Justice, 2017).

Another important thing for educators to do prior to a home visit is to communicate the purpose of the meeting; this can reduce confusion and stress for families. For example, it may be important to immigrant families that educators emphasize that the visit does not include any government agencies and is not related to immigration status (Learning for Justice, 2017). Meetings should be held in settings with the comfort level of the families in mind and the purpose clearly stated. Educators are encouraged to observe family dynamics, interests, and needs and to refrain from note-taking during a visit.

Simply making a home visit does not automatically result in better relationships between educators and families. After the visit educators should reflect on the visit and document what occurred during the meeting. Educators should then follow up with families, offering resources, inviting them to an event, or scheduling the next visit. School personnel must always encourage an open line of communication and provide the best mode of contact.

Potential Results of Home Visits

McKnight and colleagues (2017) conducted a study to understand any shift in mindset between schools and families of color before and after two home visits in a single school year. One of the most important findings was that there was a shift in the perception of power that enabled families to begin to feel they were equal partners in their child's education. Families reported seeing educators as more human and less intimidating than before, and they also reported feeling more

comfortable in communicating with educators. Educators discovered that their initial assumptions on student behavior and living situations were not accurate after reflecting on their visits. Many educators reported an expanded definition of a caring or involved parent. Educators also developed a greater sense of empathy, began incorporating student interests, and adjusted expectations on the capabilities of students and families (McKnight et al., 2017).

Conclusion

Because of demographic disparities between students and teachers and implicit biases that influence beliefs (and thus behaviors), home visits can improve intentional efforts to build relationships between schools and families. Family visits have the potential to reduce barriers to relationships by exposing misconceptions and generating a greater need for self-reflection. Positive relationships between schools and families encourage collaborations for quality culturally responsive transition planning.

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WHERE DOES FAITH "FIT" WITHIN TRANSITION PLANNING?



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Some individuals with an intellectual and/or developmental disability (IDD) and their families often turn to faith and religious congregations to make meaning of their experiences. Congregations give a platform for families to experience a sense of belonging, develop their religious and social identities outside of the "disability" label, and find inclusion among a community they may call their own. However, there is a disconnect between the faith-based structures and supports families prefer and the inclusion of those supports within transition planning. In this article, we will explore the intersection of faith and disability and learn strategies to bridge connections to faith-based supports within the transition planning framework.

Faith and Disability

In a national study with 12,706 adults with IDD, Carter et al. (2015) found 48.3% of participants attended religious services, with 34.6% having attended three or more times per week. Out of the 48.3% of adults that attended religious services, 61.2% indicated their race as Black, 48.1% identified as Hispanic, and 45.2% identified as White.[†]

Similarly, Turner et al. (2004) conducted interviews with individuals with IDD in the United Kingdom and reported most participants expressed strong religious identities, including participation in religious prayer, social events/festivals, religious duties (rites and rituals), and frequent attendance at congregations. Shikarpurya and Singh (2021) also found that among Muslim families of young adults with IDD, faith was the vehicle by which parents understood their child's disability. The authors also highlighted the various ways young adults with IDD were involved within their mosque communities and found a sense of belonging in such spaces.

Data from a national survey by the Human Services Research Institute (HSRI) and The National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS) show that when asked about their attendance in faith services, out of 24,712 young adults with IDD over the age of 18 across 36 states, 32% indicated they attend services one to four times a week. Additionally, 8% of those surveyed stated they attended services five or more times in a month. When further examining the demographics of survey respondents who attended faith/religious services between one to five times a month, (a) 52% identified as Pacific Islander, (b) 51% identified as Black or African American, (c) 45% identified as Asian, (d) 41% identified as Hispanic or Latinx (d) 38% identified as White, and (e) 33% identified as Native American (HSRI & NASDDDS, 2021).† As noted by other researchers, more minoritized young adults with IDD and their families have noted the integral role of faith in their lives, especially as they transition to adulthood.

So, what do these statistics tell us?

- 1. Young adults with IDD and their families see faith as an important component of their sense of belonging and identity.
- More young adults with IDD and their families from minoritized backgrounds have indicated belonging to faith-based communities and its integral role in their lives.
- 3. If faith forms an essential part of a young adult's life, is it represented in their transition plan? Is it evident in their transition outcomes?

Bridging Faith and Transition Planning

What are the roles religious spaces play for individuals with IDD and their families?

Religious or faith-based spaces can serve many roles for young adults and their families. Most faith-based institutions have weekend respite classes meant for religious education, socialization, and to gain academic/functional skills. Religious spaces also provide many services or volunteer opportunities, and many young adults enroll in summer camps or mentorship programs for socialization and recreation (Christensen, 2018).

How do the roles in religious spaces build on the transition strengths of young adults with IDD?

When individuals interact with their peers in weekend classes, attend faith-based summer camps, or commit to a volunteer role within their religious space, they are building on their communication skills, social skills, and self-determination

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skills. Additionally, young adults form strong friendships in these environments, particularly because many individuals tend to attend the same religious institution for many years. Young adults also develop their organizational skills, decision-making skills, and recreational/play skills in religious spaces because they have been exposed to opportunities that implicitly foster these skills. Often, young adults may form their career choices based on their involvement in religious or faith-based spaces and know many individuals across various professional fields via membership within the same congregation. Last, faith-based spaces provide to individuals with IDD and their families a community of support, or *advocates*, who know them deeply and who have navigated multiple challenges together.

Where does faith "fit" within transition planning?

Transition Assessments. Informal transition assessments, such as student interviews, can incorporate questions centered on faith-community involvement. This can be done to both gauge level of importance to the student and explore potential opportunities for outreach, involvement, and collaboration with a community to develop transition components of the IEP. This could help inform students' goals for employment, training/internships, independent living, and community connections.

Community Resource Mapping. Including faith-based opportunities when designing a community resource map could result in maximizing opportunities for young adults

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Table 1. A Guide to Collaborating with a Faith-based Stakeholder During Transition Planning

Action Item	Individuals Involved	Purpose
Step 1: Conversation with student and family	Transition educatorFamilyIndividual	 Gather information about family and student needs Evaluate support preferred Assess approach and transition goals
Step 2: Build interagency support	Transition educatorFamilyIndividualTransition team	 Define the support preferred Establish a plan for the student with time-based goals Identify role of the stakeholders and their level of involvement
Step 3: Contact faith leader	 Transition educator Family Individual Individual from faith community 	 Identify student transition goals Discuss current student roles in faith-based services Develop a plan to meet student goals (e.g., leadership skills gained via volunteering as a youth leader every Tuesday) Establish the role of the stakeholder and level of involvement
Step 4: Establish Checkpoints/Share information	Transition educatorFamilyIndividual	 Create markers to check in with stakeholder Delegate roles played by family, individual, and educator to track progress Self-advocacy development during Person-Centered Plan for student
Step 5: Continuity of Collaboration	Transition educatorFamilyTransition teamStakeholdersIndividual	 Long-term sustainability plans Opportunities for careers/training after high school Assessing social skills, friendships, and community support Revisit each term/year for growth

(Where Does Faith "Fit"..., continued from page 6)

with IDD. This could include involving more community stakeholders, identifying potential employment opportunities among the community members, and increasing collaboration among faith-based stakeholders and transition professionals.

Career/Education Goals. Collaboration with faith-based stakeholders identified through community resource mapping or student interviews could result in professional connections for potential internships, career exploration, and employment for individuals with IDD.

Student/Family/Caregiver Goals. When developing a transition plan, professionals must take into consideration the norms, values, and cultural goals of the student and their family. As the data indicated, more minoritized families find a sense of belonging, comfort, and support within their faith-based institutions. Faith-based supports need to be part of the transition conversation to better support not just the individuals but also their collective families. Not tapping into them would be a missed opportunity.

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SECONDARY AND POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?



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Students and families experience a shift in educational rights during the transition from secondary education to postsecondary education and the workplace. The laws covering individuals with disabilities change when students exit high school. In this article we will explore the differences in rights

between secondary and postsecondary education, how students become eligible for services in postsecondary education, and what important information students and families (and teachers!) need to know as they transition.

(Secondary and Postsecondary ..., continued from page 7)

The Laws

Education Laws: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 was initially enacted to assist state efforts in meeting the educational needs of students with disabilities through federal funding (Yell, 2019). Moreover, the purpose of this act was to ensure all children with disabilities have access to a free, appropriate public education (FAPE), emphasizing special education and related services designed to meet their individual needs and to help prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living (IDEA, 20 U.S.C. § 1400{d}). Additionally, a least restrictive environment (LRE) placement is mandated, which states students with disabilities must be educated with their peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate for the individual student (Yell, 2019). By the time the student turns 16 years old, they must also receive transition services, which are a "coordinated set of activities ... to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities" and which includes postsecondary education (IDEA, 2004, Sec. 300.43).

Who Is Protected? Students can receive services under the IDEA if they are (1) ages 3 to 21 years old in K–12 education, (2) have one of the 13 disabilities specified in the IDEA, and (3) that disability adversely impacts their ability to access general education. The 13 disability categories specified in the IDEA are autism, deaf-blindness, hearing impairment, deafness, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairments, other health impairment, emotional disturbance, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment (Yell, 2019).

Civil Rights Laws: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 & Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, is a civil rights law, not an education law; however, it prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in programs and activities receiving federal funding (Yell, 2019). Section 504 relates to education as it protects students, parents, and employees with disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), also a civil rights law, mandates the protection of individuals with disabilities from discrimination in both the private and public sectors (Yell, 2019).

Who Is Protected? Section 504 and the ADA mandate protection at all levels of education and employment for indi-

viduals with disabilities and provide the following definition of disability:

Any person who (i) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, (ii) has a record of such impairment, or (iii) is regarded as having such an impairment (ADA, 1990, Sec. 12102).

This definition of what constitutes as having a disability is broad in order to capture all individuals with various types of disabilities, including those that may be temporary (e.g., being on crutches or in a wheelchair due to an injury).

Services Provided & Eligibility for Services

High School

Eligibility for services changes as students move from high school to postsecondary education. In K-12 education, it is the responsibility of schools to actively search for and evaluate potential students with disabilities through a process called "Child Find" (IDEA, 2004, Sec. 300.111). This includes students in public schools and private schools, students who are homeless, and students who are wards of the state (IDEA, 2004, Sec. 300.111). The burden of determining eligibility falls on the school districts as opposed to the students and their families. If a student is suspected of having a disability, the student will go through a referral process and be evaluated at no cost to the student or family. The school will provide an appropriate evaluation through the use of individualized assessments that are not racially or culturally discriminatory and that are administered by a trained professional (Turnbull et al., 2020).

For students in K-12 education who are determined to have a disability under the IDEA, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) will be created by a multidisciplinary team that includes educational personnel and the student's family. The IEP is a legal document that indicates the services and supports the student will receive and measurable goals to ensure meaningful progress is made. Services can be categorized into accommodations and modifications to support their ability to access education. An accommodation changes the way a student accesses the material (e.g., listening to the book instead of reading it independently) while a modification changes the content of the material the student receives (e.g., instead of reading a chapter book on a subject they may read an article). Students may also be eligible for related services, which can include but are not limited to transportation; audiology and speech language services; interpreting services; psychological services; and physical and occupational therapy (Turnbull et

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al., 2020). It is up to the schools to determine eligibility to receive these services, and if schools are not providing them, a complaint can be filed. Schools also monitor whether a student is making progress towards their goals and make adjustments to the IEP as needed. Students will ideally be involved in the IEP planning and updating process, especially if they are older, but that isn't always the case. Transition-age students are required by law to be invited to attend their IEP meeting; however, attendance does not equal participation or active contribution to planning.

If students are not found eligible for special education services under the IDEA, they may still be eligible for support under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and may qualify for a 504 plan. Like an IEP, 504 plans need to be re-evaluated at least annually, and students will be placed in general education settings even though they require related services (deBettencourt, 2002). The services students receive under Section 504 are similar to those in the IDEA and are individualized to the student. Importantly, Section 504 only provides accommodations and does not provide modifications. Section 504 also does not provide a specialized instructional program outside of the general education curriculum.

Both the IEP and 504 plan support students in developing important skills to aid in their transition process. An important skillset to highlight is self-determination strategies because these are beneficial for students to develop prior to exiting high school. *Self-determination* refers to "a combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior" (Field et al., 1998, p. 115). Self-determination is a predictor of post–high school success for students with disabilities, and these skills can be promoted through the use of curricula and interventions such as the Self-Directed IEP and the Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI; Martin et al., 1996; Shogren et al., 2015; Shogren & Wehmeyer, 2020).

Postsecondary Education

When a student exits high school, they are no longer covered under IDEA but are instead covered under the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Unlike the K–12 settings where it was the school's responsibility to locate students with disabilities, in college, students need to self-disclose. This means that in order to receive support at the postsecondary level, students must register with their school's disability services office and provide proof of a disability, also called *documentation* (Kennan et al., 2019). What is counted as documentation varies depending on the school, with some

colleges requiring a neuropsychological evaluation that typically has been conducted within a few years. Other schools may be following the new guidelines proposed by the Association of Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD), which has the following levels of documentation: primary, secondary, and tertiary in that order of importance (AHEAD, 2012). Primary documentation refers to student self-reports, secondary documentation refers to a disability service professional's observation of a student, and tertiary documentation refers to information collected from a third party such as a medical professional (AHEAD, 2012). Students need to know how to get in contact with their school's disability services office and what type of documentation is required to receive services. In other words, to even begin the process of accessing postsecondary disability services, the burden of responsibility falls solely on the shoulders of the student—a much different experience from K-12 education—and many students and families are unaware of this shift.

Understanding the types of services that may be provided by a college disability services office is also important for students to know. Students can receive academic and non-academic accommodations to support accessibility. The most common academic accommodations include testing accommodations (e.g., extended time), alternative format for materials (e.g., e-text), and assistive technology (e.g., screen readers) (National Center for College Students with Disabilities [NCCS], n.d.). Common nonacademic accommodations include residence hall accommodations (i.e., separate dorm room), emotional support animal, and dietary accommodations (NCCS, n.d.).

What High School Students Need to Know to Be Prepared for Postsecondary Education

- 1. The legal differences between high school and college: High schoolers need to understand that in college they will no longer be covered under the IDEA but instead will be covered under the ADA and Section 504. As a result, it is their responsibility to self-disclose a disability to the school's disability services office in order to receive services.
- 2. Their college's disability services office: If the student has chosen a college, they need to know what their disability services office is called, where it is located, and its contact information. If the student has not chosen a college yet, they will need to know how to find information about potential schools' disability services offices.

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- 3. Their college's documentation requirements: Students need to know what type of documentation the disability services office accepts in order to get services, which should be provided on the disability services office website. This could be a neuropsychological evaluation, self-reports, interviews, etc. Specifically, if the school requires a neuropsychological evaluation within a certain number of years, the student may want to get re-evaluated prior to exiting high school to avoid personal costs.
- 4. Self-determination skills: Most importantly, students need to learn self-determination skills to be successful adults. Proficient self-determination skills can support students in navigating disability services in post-secondary education and many other areas of adult life.

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PROMOTE MEMBERSHIP IN DCDT

One of the best ways to promote membership in DCDT is to encourage a friend or colleague to join. Try these strategies to build our membership:

- Share an issue of the journal and newsletter with a friend (enclose membership information from our website).
- Add DCDT membership information to your hand-out packets for workshops and conference presentations.
- In your presentations, add a slide promoting DCDT.
- Create DCDT stickers that include our website (http://www.dcdt.org).