X-Ray Vision: Creating an Inspiring Workplace for Library Staff with Hidden Disabilities

Johnnieque (Johnnie) B. Love
Nedelina Tchangalova
Lisa M. Boyd
Objectives

1. Define what hidden disabilities are
2. Explore myths surrounding issues of hidden disabilities
3. Share research completed on hidden disabilities in academic research libraries
4. Recommend/Discuss best practices for creating a disability friendly organizational culture and climate
Questions to be answered

- What challenges library employees with hidden disabilities are facing daily in the workplace?
- How can we create an inviting place to work for people with hidden disabilities?
- What policies, procedures and resources are available in our selected institutional members of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and National Library of Medicine (NIH)?
What is a Disability?

“Disability is a limitation in performing socially defined roles and tasks expected of an individual within a sociocultural and physical environment.”

The “person” and the “environment”

Disabling Process

Enabling Process

What is a **Hidden Disability**?

1. Impairment in functioning
2. Decrease in quality of life
3. Restricted lifestyle
4. Focus on pain
5. Feeling defensive
6. Stigma
7. Chronicity
8. Feeling misunderstood

Examples

Chemical sensitivity • Arthritis • Migraines • Colitis • Asthma • Lupus • Chronic fatigue syndrome • Chronic pain • Diabetes • Multiple sclerosis • Cancer • Repetitive stress injuries • ADD/ADHD • Depression • Fibromyalgia • Epilepsy • Hypertension • Emotional disabilities • HIV/AIDS • Brain injury • Learning disability
What Libraries have done?

- Improved physical facilities
- Policies for serving patrons with visible disabilities
Demographics

National level

U.S. Census 2002
- Without disability
- With disabilities
  (51.2 million people)

Library professional level

ALA Office for Research and Statistics 2006
- Without work disability
  (4,516 credentialed librarians)
Local level, Washington DC area (three institutions)

**ARL institutions**
- Without disabilities: 67%
- With disabilities: 33%

**Age distribution** of 117 respondents

- 20-30: 10 respondents
- 31-40: 20 respondents
- 41-50: 15 respondents
- 51-60: 45 respondents
- 61+: 27 respondents
History of U.S. Legislation

- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Telecommunications Act
- Fair Housing Act
- Air Carrier Access Act
- Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act
- National Voter Registration Act
- Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- Rehabilitation Act
- Section 508
- Architectural Barriers Act
A hidden disability may not be considered by some to be a “true” disability.

“Sometimes I wish I looked disabled. Then people could see how much I’m hurting inside.”

Joan who has Chronic Fatigue Syndrome
Myths and Realities

- **Myth 1**: The cost
- **Myth 2**: The wrong assumption
- **Myth 3**: The employee from the older workforce
- **Myth 4**: The stress
- **Myth 5**: The Depression

At the workplace

As a medical condition
Our Research

- Pilot our survey instrument to collect data on hidden disabilities.
- Our goal is to share the data so that others can develop strategies that will support library staff with hidden disabilities.
- Understand the difficult issue of self-disclosure.
- Understand interaction of co-workers and customers.
- Identify supporting policies, procedures and resources.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With disabilities</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With hidden disabilities compared to physical (8.3%) and both (45.8%)</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disclosed their disabilities</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asked for reasonable accommodations</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had extended absences due to disability</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have received supervisor’s understanding and support</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced discrimination/alienation from co–workers compared to supervisors (18.2%) and library users (9.5%)</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had excellent work relationships with supervisors compared to co–workers (27.3%) and library users (35.0%)</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not know which office provided disability accommodations</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were not aware of library policy statement on disabilities compared to those who were aware (12.2%) and those who had some degree of knowledge (39.0%)</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not know if job descriptions were inclusive to persons with disabilities</td>
<td>54.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our Research: Findings

1. Supervisors don’t know policies and procedures
2. Staff don’t know if Libraries have a policy
3. Relationship of supervisor and staff determine disclosure
4. Environment not welcoming
5. Personal beliefs about one’s disability
6. Concern about accommodations
7. Lack of education on hidden disabilities
Self-disclosure: What determines it???

- Fears of staff/co-workers and their attitudes
- Relationship of worker and supervisor
- Relationship of staff with co-workers
Policies and Procedures

- ADA prohibits discrimination in all employment practices.
- Employment discrimination is prohibited against qualified individuals with disabilities.
- Protects individuals with a record of disability.
- Protects individuals with a substantially limiting impairment.
- Modifying work environment to enable a qualified employee with a “known” disability to perform essential job functions is “reasonable accommodation.”
Best Practices

- University of California
  - Davis, Division of Human Resources
    http://www.hr.ucdavis.edu/Health_Services/Disability_Management/Disability%20Forms
  - Office of the President
    http://www.ucop.edu/ucophome/coordrev/ucpolicies/aos/toc140.html

- Southern University of Connecticut, Office of Diversity and Equity Programs, Policy statement
  http://www.southernct.edu/diversityequity/policyregardingpersonswithdisabilities/

- University of Connecticut, Office of Diversity and Equity, Policy statement
  http://web.uconn.edu/wwwode/POLICYST.html

- Cornell University
  - Policy statement
    www.policy.cornell.edu/PDF_613_Disability_Accommodation.cfm
  - Disability accommodation process
    http://www.policy.cornell.edu/vol6_13.cfm
Examples of Reasonable Accommodations

- Alerting device
  - Flashing fire alarm
  - Vibrating device
- Qualified interpreters and note takers
- Assistive listening devices
  - Hearing aid–compatible digital wireless phones
- Closed captioning
- Low Vision Aids
  - Hand held magnifiers
  - Video Magnifiers
  - Reading machines with voice output
- Ergonomic furniture and devices
- Alternative work schedules
Ergonomic two handed keyboard

Ergonomic chair

Portable Closed Circuit TV

Alternative Pointing Devices and Switches
Creating a Disability Friendly Organizational Culture

Six Essential Elements

1. Develop a philosophy of disability

“The Center on Disabilities is an integral part of the university mission of teaching, scholarship and active learning, furthering the vision of an inclusive society which supports the attainment of academic, professional and personal goals for persons of all abilities. The Center fulfills this mission through programs of student service, education, and research.”

California State University at Northridge
http://www.csun.edu/cod/aboutus.htm
Creating a Disability Friendly Organizational Culture (cont.)

1. Develop a philosophy of disability
2. Ensure strong top management support
3. Write job descriptions that are disability friendly
4. Recruit and hire persons with disabilities
5. Educate staff to the issues of disabilities
6. Use top-down and bottom-up change initiatives. Be open to advocacy
Resources

- National Library of Medicine, NIH
- Medline Plus
  http://medlineplus.gov/
- National Center of Physical Activity and Disability
  http://www.ncpad.org/
- U.S. Department of Labor
  http://www.dol.gov/odep
- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
  http://www.cms.hhs.gov/TWWIIA
- U.S. Department of Justice, A Guide to Disability Rights Laws
  http://www.ada.gov/cguide.htm
- Social Security Online
  http://www.ssa.gov/disability/
- National Women’s Health Information Center
  http://womenshealth.gov/wwwd/
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
  http://www.hud.gov/groups/disabilities.cfm
- Internal Revenue Service
- Transportation Security Administration
  http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/specialneeds/editorial_1374.sht
Need for Strategic Planning
Strategic Planning

- Include retention and recruitment into organizational strategic plan.
- Know the Law.
- Plan reasonable accommodations.
- Budget for reasonable accommodations.
- Include reasonable accommodations in disaster preparedness plan.
- Provide staff training.
Goal 4. A Strong and Diverse Workforce for Biomedical Informatics, Research, Systems Development and Innovative Service Delivery

Recommendation 4.1. Develop an expanded and diverse workforce through enhanced visibility of biomedical informatics and library science for K–12 and college students.

2007 – 2008 Associate Fellows
Create a Disability Friendly Workplace
Thank you

Time for Q & A.
Johnnieque B. (Johnnie) Love  
Coordinator, Personnel Programs  
University of Maryland  
7233 McKeldin Library  
College Park, MD 20742  
(301) 405–9048  
jlove1@umd.edu

Nedelina Tchangalova  
Reference Librarian  
University of Maryland  
Engineering and Physical Sciences Library (EPSL)  
College Park, MD 20742  
(301) 405–9151  
nedelina@umd.edu

Lisa M. Boyd  
Consumer Health Librarian  
National Library of Medicine, NIH  
8600 Rockville Pike  
Bethesda, MD 20894  
(301) 496–4777  
boydl@mail.nlm.nih.gov