



A Project of The Women and Girls Foundation 

The Women and Girls Foundation launched the Training Regional Advocates to Influence Leadership (TRAIL) program in 2020, in collaboration with Dr. Josie Badger. The goal of the program is to develop a statewide legislative advocacy training program for people with disabilities. TRAIL supports advocates with disabilities in learning strategies to make systemic change.

Recommendations represent the ideas of TRAIL members and do not represent those of the Women and Girls Foundation or any partners. For additional information please contact Dr Josie Badger at Josie@JBadgerConsultingInc.org

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Post-Secondary Education for Pennsylvanians with Disabilities

According to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#), in 2015-2016, 19% of undergraduate college students reported having a disability. While only [34% of those students completed a 4-year degree program](#). The reality is that for many people with disabilities, post-secondary education and training is not always emphasized by IEP teams who are supporting students in planning for life after high school.

Barriers to Post-Secondary Education for People with Disabilities:

- Many education professionals do not know what post-secondary options are available in their communities.
- Locating disability related information on a college/trade school website can be challenging.
- Students have not been taught the needed advocacy skills to get the supports they need in a post-secondary environment.
- Not all inclusive higher education programs offer credentials that are respected by perspective employers.
- College Professors are not required to have a background in education.
- The IEP does not always match up with reasonable accommodations in college, forcing students to have inadequate supports.
- Financial support for college can be hard to come by, even if they are receiving services from The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Hope for the Future

- There is boom in Inclusive Higher Education Programs. According to the Think College, there are [18 Inclusive Higher Education Programs in Pennsylvania](#).
- Specialized certificate programs are offering students access to high skill training leading to high skill jobs.



Post-Secondary Education for Pennsylvanians with Disabilities

Policy Recommendations

Support additional educational degrees or remediation for individuals whose disabilities had progressed and are no longer able to work in the field they were trained for

- The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is charged with supporting individuals with the most significant disabilities in obtaining employment. This often includes paying for post high school degrees or training programs. However, there continues to be a lack of support for individuals who were initially supported by OVR but are no longer able to work in their field due to disability progression.
- OVR should be encouraged to do periodic outreach to previous consumers to determine whether these individuals are still working within the area that they had received training in and supporting them if additional training is necessary.

Increase education about student loan programs, payment programs, loan forgiveness programs, etc.

- Although there are a lot of financial support programs for students with disabilities, it can be very difficult to locate this information which often prevents students from pursuing higher education.
- Funding and loan forgiveness opportunities should be shared widely among high schools, colleges, vocational programs, and centers for independent living.

Incentivize expansion of disability services on campus

- Colleges and universities receiving any federal funds are required to provide basic accommodations necessary for students with disabilities to receive the same benefits of programming as other students. However, there are few if any incentives in providing high quality or inventive services.
- Colleges should work with professors to offer work study programs for students to provide care for students with disabilities
- Professors should be encouraged to utilize universal design in their classrooms, ultimately minimizing the need for additional accommodations for students with disabilities.
- Mandate disability awareness and access training for all state college professors and staff

Paid Family and Medical Leave

- Early adult years are often a time when disabilities appear or progress. During this time, youth are often in greater need for family caregivers. This support is necessary for not only dealing with the condition and treatment but also to stay on track during transition. Families need to have the ability to care for each other during their time of need, allowing everyone to work through immediate concerns and progress into a successful adulthood.
- Many disability supports and services end when a youth with a disability turns 18, 21, and 26. With these care transitions there are often untimely gaps in services. Family caregivers are crucial to fill these gaps, supporting youth in higher education and beyond.