



BIT Teams, Title IX, and Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders

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Identity First Language rather than Person First Language

Person-first language distances the person from the disability, ostensibly to separate the person from the negative connotations and stigma with which we have all been socialized. As professionals, many of us have been taught that person-first language is preferable, and some disabled individuals choose to identify as a person first, based on their personal orientation to disability. Example: I am a woman with a disability. I am separate from the stereotypes and stigma you associate with disability.


Identity-first language challenges negative connotations by claiming disability directly. Identity-first language references the variety that exists in how our bodies and brains work with a myriad of conditions that exist, and the role of inaccessible or oppressive systems, structures, or environments in making someone disabled. Example: I am disabled, queer, and Black. I have an impairment, and I am disabled by societal barriers.

These language choices underscore the differences between impairment and disability. “Impairment” is the term used by disability studies scholars to refer to a physiological difference in one’s body or brain. Disability is a lived experience with far-reaching political, social, and economic implications.

- [AHEAD Statement on Language - AHEAD - Association on Higher Education And Disability](#)
- [Disability Language Style Guide | National Center on Disability and Journalism \(ncdj.org\)](#)



Neurodiversity




The range of differences in individual brain function and behavioral traits regarded as part of normal variation in the human population (often used in the context of autism spectrum disorders).



Autism Spectrum Disorder

A neuro-developmental disorder ranging from mild to severe that is characterized by core features of social/communication deficits, repetitive/restrictive behaviors, and a lack of emotional reciprocity.



Social Awareness

- The ability to pick up on social etiquette, social norms, and taboos.
- The ability to form and maintain relationships

Disinhibition

Motor Disinhibition:
compulsively engaging in
actions that involve
movements or speech.

Emotional Disinhibition:
feeling compulsive, intense
emotions that are
disproportionate to, or
unrelated to, antecedents.

Cognitive Disinhibition:
being unable to filter or stop
intrusive, irrelevant,
inappropriate, nonsensical,
or overwhelming thoughts in
order to focus attention.

Others may mistakenly
interpret messages from
people experiencing or
expressing disinhibition.

Laws to Know

	IDEA	ADA
Type of Law	Education, entitlement	Civil rights statute, eligibility
Responsibility	Parent and School	Student
Ensures	Success	Equal access
Services	Evaluation, remediation, special accommodation	Reasonable accommodations
Focus	Diagnostic label	Level of functional impairment
Disability	One of 13 categories	Impairment in major life activity

Do Rules Change for Students with Disabilities?

Disability does not excuse conduct violations

Laws and regulations do not change but student understanding can be faulty

- Unusual behaviors
 - Stalking
 - Perseveration
 - Communication
- Different understanding of unwritten rules (the hidden curriculum)

Differing approaches of BIT teams

1. Works collaboratively with partners across campus to support students through whatever challenges they may be facing. We help students connect with the resources appropriate to their individual needs and consult with staff and faculty who are concerned about a student.
2. A student of concern is any student who is displaying behaviors or dealing with circumstances that may get in the way of his/her ability to be successful in the University environment. ... It might also include a student who is in need of other types of support, not linked to behavior or academics.
3. The purpose of this team is to provide a means for early intervention of at-risk students through collaboration with campus departments, faculty and staff. Students exhibiting behaviors that are of concern in relation to their personal, physical and emotional well-being should be referred to this team of professionals

Disruptive Behavior

What constitutes disruption?

Disruption, as applied to the academic setting, means behaviors that interfere with the right of other students to learn or of the instructors to teach.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Persistently speaking without being recognized
- Personal insults
- Interrupting
- Distracting the class
- Refusal to comply with directions
- In extreme cases, physical threats, harassing behavior

Prepare College and Student

Is there something about autism that draws students to attention?

- How to prepare generalists to be autism allies
- Are there interventions before it gets to conduct?
- How to make a fair assessment of what needs to happen to the student

Behavior Teams as Allies

Understand autism

Recognize behaviors that may present in context of autism

Settings

Triggers

Recruit resources

Prepare student for the process

Set Clear Behavioral Expectations

Be explicit about standards and expectations

Student & family need to understand rules and consequences

Different from high school

Standards are not subject to accommodation

Explicit Training

Focus on clear expectations with suggested rules:

- Asking someone on a date = maximum limit 3 times.
 - A person is not your girlfriend or boyfriend without their agreement
 - Always understand what is meant when someone says “hook-up”.
 - Following someone around campus because you like them is stalking
 - Before having sex with someone you both need to agree to it
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Training for Campus Public Safety

- General Autism overview
- Conduct codes
- Stalking
- Personal safety
- Emergency procedures (fire drills, etc.)

Training Conduct Boards

- How to assess context & triggers to understand the behaviors
- Accommodate the Process
- Use a trained advocate/"interpreter" (OCR Complaint No. 11062025 (2007))
- Post notification on requesting accommodations on hearing letters
- Everything in writing
- Clear and direct communication
- Consider teachable moments in sanctions

Clear Communication Examples

- “I am scheduling another appointment for us to meet...”
- Know and use the student conduct code “disrupting my class means.....”
- Create rules sheet: “you may ask 3 questions each class”
- Create social reminders, timelines
- BE SPECIFIC, concrete: “ if you _____ then _____”
- Don’t be afraid to impose: “You must shower every day”

Remember

Important to be clear and direct but also flexible

- Write things down to reinforce
- Reduce distractions in office and yourself

When the student won't talk

- Could be slow latency to respond
- Could be confusion, or distraction
- Getting outside of the office is often helpful
- Consider involving a parent

The Case of Iris Allen

Allen was an autistic trans first-year student of color at Hampshire College in MA, studying Music Theory in Fall 2017

Allen was removed from campus for “a threat [that] was made to members of our campus community,” according to the college.

News reports indicate that the student threatened to, "shoot up the campus with a Glock."

Allen was found responsible in a student conduct process for, “violations related to civil behavior and disruption, failure to comply and threatening and intimidating behavior. The nature of the violations was not specified. He was not found responsible for bullying.

Iris Allen (continued)

Additionally, the finding said, ""As you know, you were presented most recently with a behavior contract in which you specifically agreed that you would refrain from any further inappropriate conduct, including threatening behavior and/or using words, actions or implied threats that may generate reasonable fear in another person,"

Allen was then suspended through the spring semester for, "for outbursts and panic attacks that were related to his autism," according to supporters. Allen was also suspended from two other area colleges since they share a police department.

Allen is also homeless. Following the suspension, Allen reported he was left by local police at a McDonald's and then lived in a hotel.

Allen appealed the decision, but the appeal was denied. A third appeal was also denied.

The college says, "We have not been able to publicly correct or address the accuracy gaps in the narrative due to privacy laws related to a student's academic record,"

It is unclear if Allen ever returned to Hampshire College

Questions to consider re: Iris Allen case

Does your school have a Behavioral intervention team?

Does your Disability office have representation on that team?

Do you have a clear separation between behavioral intervention and student conduct?

When doing threat assessment, how much weight should be given to current mental status (i.e. a meltdown)?

How would you react if this happened at your school?

Reframing the issue

- Rather than simply questioning if the student is prepared for college
- Let's consider if the college is prepared for the student

In Summary

Autistic students may be over-represented in behavior team case loads

- Train generalists to assess problematic behavior in the context of autism
- Bring in outside experts
- Breaches of behavior are not excused
- Train student
- Train campus
- Be an ally



Thank You

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