



## ILLINOIS INROADS TO INCLUSION

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### Learning Disabilities: What National and Community Service Organizations Should Know

Although awareness about learning disabilities (LD) has grown over the last decade, many people still have questions regarding these "non-apparent" disabilities. In the spirit of increasing inclusion in service programs, we offer these basics about LD and accommodation ideas service members can use.

Research shows that LD is neurologically based and persists across a person's lifespan. Contrary to previous thinking, LD is not the same as mental retardation. People with LD have a wide range of abilities and deficits. LD is not due to Other disabling conditions or any other physical cause, environmental or cultural factors, or economic disadvantage.

#### Some Types of LD

**Specific Learning Disability:** A disorder in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using language, either spoken or written. It may appear as an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do math. This category includes conditions such as perceptual disabilities, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

**Dyslexia:** Deficits in visual, auditory, or motor processing that interfere with reading. Characters may appear jumbled or reversed. Entire words or strings of letters may be unrecognizable.

**Dysgraphia:** Deficits in writing, which may include lack of organization, clarity, and unity; fragmentation of written concepts; mechanical errors, reversals, transpositions, and omissions of letters or words. Spelling may be poor, handwriting may be illegible, and written ideas may be disorganized and incomprehensible.

**Dyscalculia:** Difficulty with numbers or remembering facts over a long period of time. Some people have spatial problems, such as difficulty aligning numbers into proper columns. Some persons may reverse numbers and have difficulty in mathematical operations.

#### Disclosure

Sometimes people feel uneasy about disclosing hidden disabilities. Service organizations should make it clear that accommodations are available for people with LD. There's no reason to lose a potential service member when their abilities could help a program grow. The Illinois AmeriCorps programs encourage persons with disabilities to apply!

#### Accommodation Strategies

When accommodations are made for a learning disability, they are tailored to meet each individual's needs. For example, a person who has difficulty reading from paper copies may need to use colored Mylar templates for reading and scanning, or they may need written material converted to audio material. Or, if a service member has difficulty concentrating on detail, they may need a private cubicle to work in, to listen to music on a headset, or a white noise machine.

For more information about accommodations or for assistance in evaluating a disability for an accommodation, please contact your Illinois Disability Outreach Coordinator and use the online resources listed at right.

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#### LINKS OF INTEREST:

**Inclusion:**

NSIP (National Service  
Inclusion Project)

[www.serviceandinclusion.org](http://www.serviceandinclusion.org)

**Volunteerism:**

Opportunities in Illinois

[www.serve.illinois.gov](http://www.serve.illinois.gov)

**AmeriCorps**

[www.americorps.org](http://www.americorps.org)

**Self-Disclosure:**

[www.zurinstitute.com/selfdisclosure](http://www.zurinstitute.com/selfdisclosure)

**Learning Disabilities:**

Association on Higher  
Education and Disability  
(AHEAD) - [www.ahead.org](http://www.ahead.org)

Information on the Americans  
with Disabilities Act -

[www.usdoj.gov](http://www.usdoj.gov)

LD Info - [www.ldinfo.com](http://www.ldinfo.com)

LD Online - [www.ldonline.org](http://www.ldonline.org)

Learning Disabilities Assoc. of  
America - [www.ldanatl.org](http://www.ldanatl.org)

