

# Considering Culture: Working with International Students with Disabilities

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## The Role of Disability Services in International Student Advising

- To provide students with awareness of where to find access information to make informed decisions and plans.
- Working with the international students office and the student to find creative solutions to disability related and funding needs.



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## Success Story: France

“I am back in France and everyone around me finds that I have changed, and especially that I am more autonomous. My year abroad enabled me to be more independent and made me more confident. My parents no longer hesitate to leave me alone in my apartment.”

Sophie Cicekli, who has a physical disability, spent a year as an undergraduate student at Georgetown University in Washington D.C., USA.

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## Campus Collaboration

- Don't wait for a problem to arise. Schedule cross-training opportunities.
- Involve the counseling office, if appropriate.
- Include the voices of your students in international recruitment materials.
- Collaborate to obtain buy-in from administration.

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## Disability culture issues

- Concern about **denial of admission** because of disability
- Incomplete or absent **documentation**
- **Family support** system may be missing in US
- **Hiding of disability**, need to make the disability as invisible as possible
- **Independence** may have different meaning
- **Undiagnosed or unrecognized disabilities** such as learning or mental health
- **Lack of opportunities** for equal education in the country of origin



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## Issues for International Students



- What is the process for a student with a disability to receive services?
- What off-campus resources are available to an international student with a disability?
- Are international students entitled to all the same resources as citizens?

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## English Language Learning



- TOEFL does provide accommodations, but the process can be lengthy and complicated.
- The NCDE is doing more research in this area next year.
- ESL classes can be beneficial for students with disabilities as teachers may already be using multisensory techniques.

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## Insurance and disability



- Have information available for all students that explains the need for health insurance in the United States
- **Pre-existing conditions** are an important consideration in insurance coverage for people with and without disabilities. Pay attention to the time period that defines a pre-existing condition and any exclusion waiting period or general exclusion.
- Look how the policy covers treatment for unforeseen changes, unexpected reoccurrence or aggravation in a condition.
- Though traditional medical insurance coverage will be sufficient for many participants with disabilities, some may request or need alternative options due to limitations on coverage.
- Disability is not always considered to be a pre-existing condition and students should ask for clarification on this from their insurance provider.

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## Case study – two students with visual disabilities

### Brigitte (Ivory Coast)

- Lawyer
- Blind for 3 years
- Strong reliance on phys. asst
- No cane use
- Needs all auditory input
- No Braille
- No adaptive tech experience
- Goals: to become more independent; to increase English language skills

### Svetlana (Russia)

- Educator in disabilities tech.
- Blind since birth
- Minimal asst needed
- Uses cane
- Auditory and tactile input
- Braille proficient – wants to learn contracted Braille
- Adaptive technology proficient – Braille reader, JAWS
- Goals - to become more aware of opportunities for blind people; to increase English lang skills

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## Brigette



- Worked with Mobility Specialist
- Learned to use a cane
- Needed an assistant at all times - in classes and outside of classes
- Reading assignments - ass't read to
- Writing assignments - dictated to ass't who read back for editing
- Teacher stressed oral/aural in class
- Teacher was flexible with assignments, testing, due dates

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## Svetlana



- Worked with Mobility Specialist to learn to get from Pt A to Pt B
- Teacher sent handouts, text materials for Braille "conversion" ahead of use
- Took notes in Braille in classes
- "My tactile memory is better than my auditory memory"
- Used adaptive equipment for assignments (JAWS, Braille reader)
- Did not want to be excluded from any activity

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## Website Resources from NCDE



[www.miusa.org/ncde](http://www.miusa.org/ncde)  
[clearinghouse@miusa.org](mailto:clearinghouse@miusa.org)

- Tipsheets on types of disabilities, accommodation forms, alternative formats, guide dogs, medications, host family, insurance, TOEFL testing and more!
- Success stories, blogs and links
- Database of disability organizations worldwide

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