

# INVISIBLE DISABILITIES IN THE CLASSROOM

Providing Targeted Instruction



Center for Accessible Resources

# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Who does CAR serve?
2. What is a disability? An “invisible disability?”
3. What types of hidden disabilities exist?  
Examples? Symptoms?
4. What functions may be limited?

# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

5. How common are invisible disabilities?
6. What are some impacts on students?
7. How can we erase stigma & discrimination?
8. How can you refine your service or instruction?
9. Where will you turn for more assistance?

# WHO DOES CAR SERVE?



CAR serves all qualified students with disabilities including medical and psychological conditions, mobility and neurological impairments, hearing and vision loss, and learning disabilities

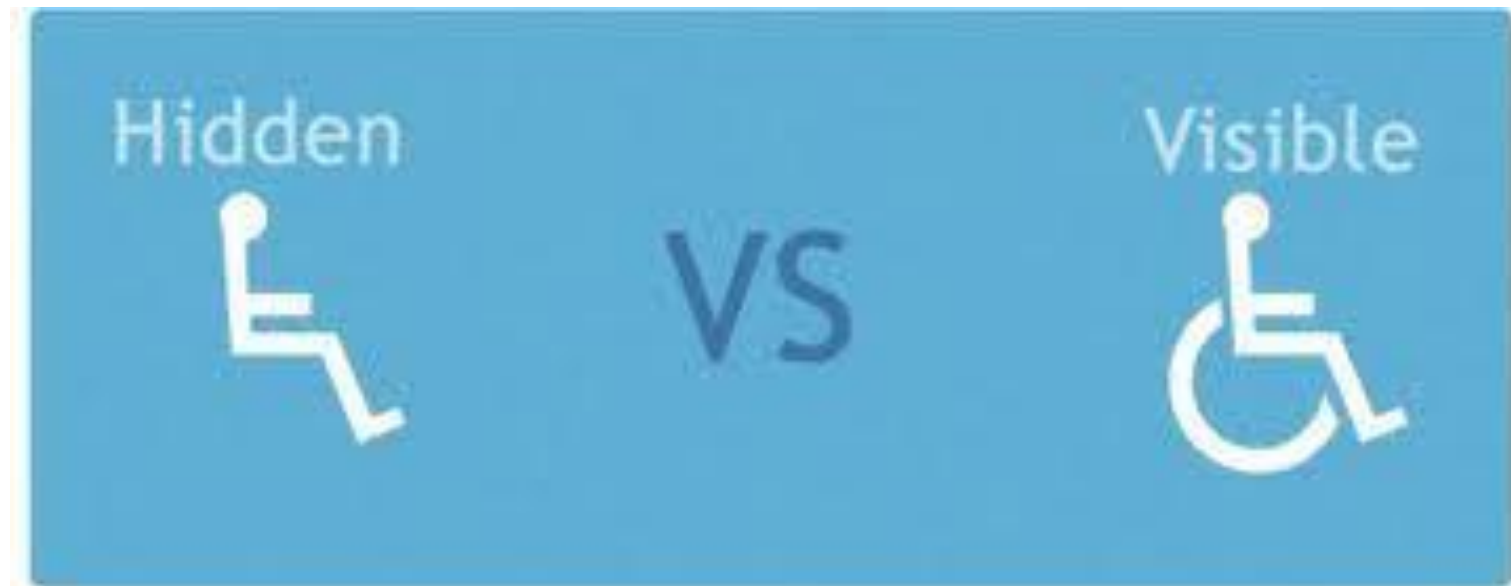
# QUALIFIED STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Must be determined to:

1. Have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; or
2. Have a record of such an impairment; or
3. Be regarded as having such an impairment.

# WHAT IS A HIDDEN OR INVISIBLE DISABILITY?

Hidden disabilities are physical or mental impairments that are not readily apparent to others.



# WHAT TYPES OF HIDDEN DISABILITIES EXIST?

- Physical
- Mobility related
- Psychiatric
- Social
- Neurological
- Autoimmune disease



# WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF HIDDEN DISABILITIES?

- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Seizure disorder
- Brain injury
- Asperger syndrome
- Tourette syndrome
- Chronic pain
- Learning disability
- Psychiatric condition
- Mobility issue
- Repetitive stress injury
- Sleep disorder



# QUESTION

- Do you think any of the conditions listed should NOT be considered a disability? Why?
- Can you think of any that could be added to these lists?



# WHAT SYMPTOMS MAY BE EXPERIENCED?

- Debilitating pain
- Fatigue
- Dizziness
- Cognitive dysfunctions
- Learning differences
- Hearing and vision impairments
- Mobility impairments

# WHAT FUNCTIONS MAY BE LIMITED?

- Vision, hearing, listening, speaking
- Thinking, remembering, learning
- Movement, sitting, walking
- Lifting, carrying, grasping

# WHAT FUNCTIONS MAY BE LIMITED? (CONTINUED)



- Mental health
- Physical, mental or social fatigue
- Numbness, feeling temperature, partial paralysis

# HOW COMMON ARE HIDDEN DISABILITIES?



- Up to 80% of all disabilities are invisible
- About 10% of Americans have an invisible disability
- Many hidden disabilities are learning disabilities
- Roughly 1/3 of adults with mental health conditions feel they have been treated unfairly

# HOW COMMON ARE HIDDEN DISABILITIES?

- About 96% of people with chronic medical conditions show no outward signs
- They don't use assistive devices or act disabled
- **Invisible disabilities are the most common type of disability among college students**

# HOW COMMON ARE HIDDEN DISABILITIES AT LANE?



- **More than 70% of CAR students have invisible disabilities**
- Learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorder & psychiatric conditions are common

# QUESTION

- Do you know anyone with an invisible disability?
- How did/does it impact their life?





# WHAT ARE SOME IMPACTS ON STUDENTS?

May hinder ability to:

- Go to school
- Work, commute
- Socialize
- Take care of self/others
- Access services

May lead to:

- Discrimination
- Assumptions
- Stigmatization, judgment or hostility
- Diminished self-esteem

# WHAT ARE SOME IMPACTS ON STUDENTS?

- Stigmatization is the primary difference between visible and invisible disabilities
- The appearance of healthy or able-bodied often leads to scrutiny about disability status

# WHAT ARE SOME IMPACTS ON STUDENTS?

Other people may:

- Have a disbelief that someone who “looks normal” has a disability
- Expect they can function like everyone else
- Make negative judgments
- Harass, calls names or bully

# WHAT ARE SOME IMPACTS ON STUDENTS?

The fear of stigma means that people often prefer not to talk about their disabilities



# IMPACTS: A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

- Students may:
  - Not know or think they have a disability\*
  - Not have been diagnosed
  - Not know what they need
  - Know what they need, but are unable to articulate it
- Students may feel:
  - Misunderstood, ignored or invalidated
  - That something is wrong, but not know what or how to fix it

# QUESTION

- How can you help students w/ these disabilities learn?
- What methods have you used to successfully work with others who have invisible disabilities?



# HOW CAN WE ERASE STIGMA & DISCRIMINATION?

- Focus on what people with disabilities **can do**
- Look beyond labels to positive characteristics
- Be supportive, compassionate
- Make services known

# HOW TO REFINE YOUR SERVICE/INSTRUCTION?

- Ask what they are able to do and what they cannot
- Assume someone in your group has an invisible disability
- Accept as truth the things a person with disabilities says
- Ask if/how you may help
- Do not offer assistance unless they want it





# WHAT ARE SOME TEACHING TECHNIQUES IN THE CLASSROOM?

- Assign a note taker / provide notes
- Create syllabus with clear expectations
- Provide a supportive environment
- See what works for others
- Be familiar w/ the student's Letter of Accommodation
- Be flexible with missed classes & make up work

# TIPS FOR CREATING ACCESSIBLE MATERIALS

- Avoid green or red text
- Use Arial font, <12 point
- Avoid ALL CAPS or *italics*
- Use consistent text
- Caption videos
- Use auditory descriptions during videos
- Include alt text for all images
- Add accessibility statements
- Use headings

# SEE CAR WEBSITE TO CREATE ACCESSIBLE MATERIALS

- Accessibility statements for syllabi
- Information about video captioning
- How to incorporate accessibility into course material
- Guidelines to create material for students with disabilities
- The [Lane CC Accessibility Quick Guide](#)



# RESOURCES

[Invisible Disabilities Association](#) and IDA  
[Support Community](#)

[Americans with Disabilities Act](#) and  
Helpline: (800) 949-4232

Book titled, [\*But You LOOK Good\*](#)

[Invisible No More Campaign](#) support  
group and discussion community



# CONTACT US!



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