Disability-Related Competencies for Student Affairs Generalists

Disability access and inclusion:
Knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to promoting and evaluating the cognitive, physical, and technological accessibility and inclusiveness of programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities.

- Advocate for developing a more inclusive and disability-conscious department/institution.
- Be able to describe the resources that do not presently exist or that are not well coordinated that - if improved - could be useful to students/staff with disabilities.
- Be able to identify and address systemic and departmental barriers to inclusion and access.
- Be informed about available technologies and their transferability to different environments.
- Be sensitive and knowledgeable about service animals and emotional support animals.
- Design programs and events that are inclusive, promote consciousness of barriers to access, and challenge current institutional systems that prevent access.
- Listen to the personal narratives of students with disabilities, and ask students to share their thoughts about campus access and inclusion.
- Know that ensuring access and creating an inclusive campus are responsibilities of all staff, faculty, and students; not just disability services.
- Know and apply Universal Design as related to physical, technological, learning, and social environments.
- Include disability in diversity programming.
- Foster understanding and empathy for marginalized populations, including people experiencing disabilities.
- Be knowledgeable of emerging issues in disability and higher education.
- Develop multicultural competence.
- Provide and engage in professional development on current best practices related to disability.
Disability-related emergencies and crises:
Knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to working with people with disabilities in relation to emergency situations (e.g., building evacuations) and crisis situations (e.g., suicidal behavior).
- Include and listen to the person with a disability in all emergency planning, as they are expert in their own needs.
- Know strategies for addressing/preventing bias, bullying, harassment, rape, and other violence against people with disabilities.
- Develop and implement evacuation plans that include people with disabilities (e.g., students, faculty, staff, and visitors).
- Know campus policies/protocols for responding to disability-related crisis/emergency situations on and off campus, and how to apply intervention strategies/models.

Disability exploration:
Knowledge, skills and dispositions related to assisting students with disabilities if they choose to explore their sense of self and autonomy in the context of disability, disability community, disability culture and/or Deaf culture.
- Know the importance and components of self-advocacy (e.g., self-knowledge, knowledge of rights and responsibilities under the laws, communication skills) for students with disabilities.
- Affirm the individual's right to determine if they want to disclose their disabilities and to decide if they need accommodations for equal access.
- Develop awareness of specific disability group cultures/contexts (e.g., Deaf culture, mental health consumers/survivors), and recognize that students have differing views of these cultures/contexts.
- Develop a basic understanding of the breadth of disability types represented on campus, and know that not all people with the same disability label will experience the same functional limitations.

Disability law and policy:
Knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to understanding and abiding by federal/state/provincial laws and institutional policies pertaining to disability and higher education.
- Know when and how to consult with one’s immediate supervisor and institutional legal counsel regarding matters that may have legal ramifications.
- Know the process associated with requesting and using reasonable accommodations on one's campus; and the policies and procedures for filing grievances and appealing accommodation decisions.
- Be able to provide accommodation for any event, process, or service;
- Know and engage in hiring and supervisory practices that are accessible and inclusive of people with disabilities.
- Know that students with disabilities are expected to meet the same standards (e.g., admission, accountability) as their peers without disabilities;
- Know that disability rights are civil rights.
- Be aware that medical and psychological documentation provided by students is confidential, and that the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) limit what information may be shared with faculty and staff.
Disability resources:
Knowledge, skills and dispositions related to the functions and referral processes of campus and community resources (e.g., advocates, cultural centers, health and counseling services, and student organizations) for people with disabilities and disability allies.

- Collaborate with campus partners to develop programs, services, and practices that address the needs of students with disabilities from diverse backgrounds and cultures.
- Develop skills needed to establish collaborative relationships with professionals on campus and in the community in order to address the needs of students, faculty, and staff with disabilities.
- Know how to appropriately and respectfully make a referral to services; and, when necessary, make direct contact in collaboration with a student.
- Know your colleagues and resources on campus and in the community; what they do; and how they can serve students, faculty, staff, and visitors with disabilities.
- Know that disability services is a resource that should be included in training, education, outreach and planning.
- Know that disability services offices/professionals vary in approaches and philosophies.
- Know the role of faculty and staff in the services structure (e.g., assisting students with supports for functional limitations, not diagnosing).