

Finding Your People: Building Community and Leadership in Disability Services

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Terri Rodriguez MA, Amherst College

NE AHEAD Bingo

Shout BINGO! Win a Prize!
QR Code Leads to Accessible Bingo Doc.



tinyurl.com/NE-AHEAD-BINGO

Has over 1,000 students registered with disability services	Wears many hats	Uses too many excel spreadsheets	Previously worked in K-12 education	New to Disability Resources
Fulfilled a same-day accommodation request	Has a group chat with their office	Has covered front desk, intake, and testing all in one day	Has worked in the field 10+ years	First-time AHEAD attendee
Has heard 'I didn't know this office existed'	Is part of an AHEAD affiliate	FREE SPACE	Works at a community college	Has tracked down a professor for their exam
One-person office (or used to be)	Wears many hats	New to Disability Resources	Previously worked in K-12 education	Works at a community college
Is part of an AHEAD affiliate	Has a group chat with their office	Has heard 'I didn't know this office existed'	Has covered front desk, intake, and testing all in one day	First-time AHEAD attendee

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We ask you to join us in creating a culture that reflects...

Access and Inclusion

and

Civility and Respect

...this week and in all aspects of our organization.

Jess White



Tufts University

Gabrielle Clark



College of the Holy
Cross

Molly McKeon



Rhode Island
College

Taylor Rohena



Quinsigamond
Community College

Val Herbst



Rhode Island
College

We build community for students every day...

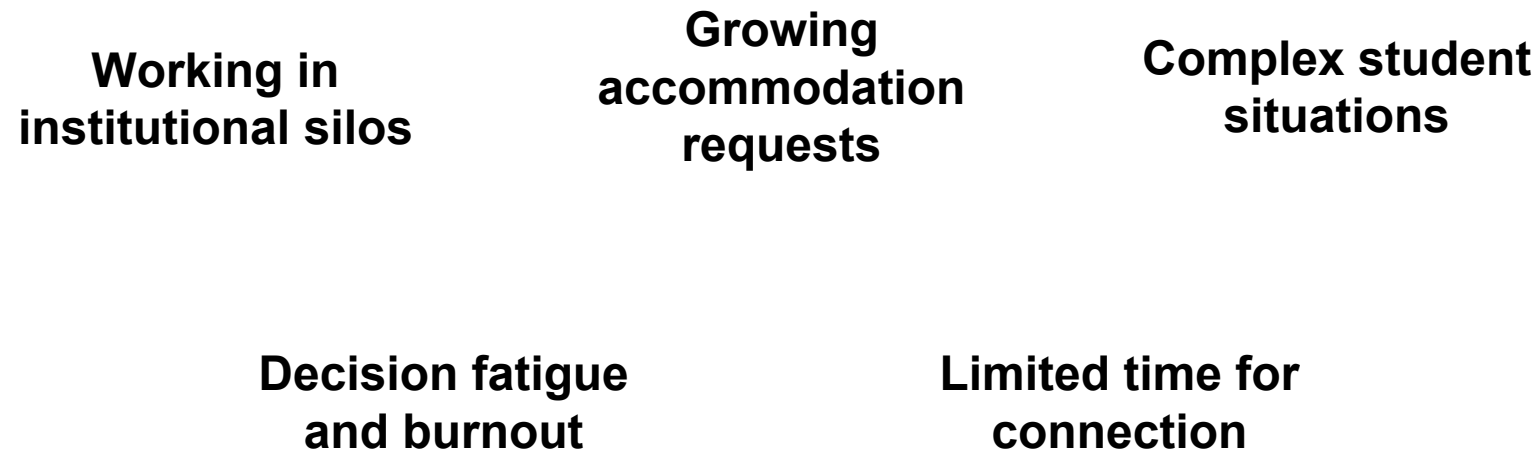
*...but how often do we intentionally build
community for ourselves?*

Poll: Scan QR or Use Link to Participate

tinyurl.com/finding-your-people



Disability Services Can Feel Isolating



Why Community?

Share strategies and resources

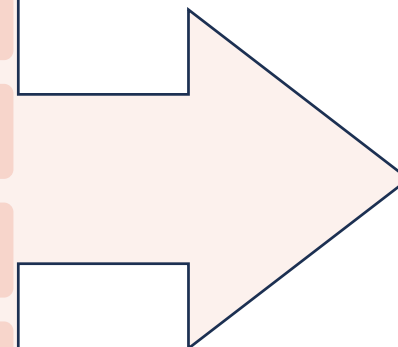
Problem-solve difficult cases

Build confidence in decision making

Stay current with emerging issues

Reduce professional isolation

Develop future leaders



**Connection
strengthens
our work!**

How we found our people



New England AHEAD

- Overview- mission
- Meeting frequency
- Offerings- Fall/Spring
- Affiliation and benefits



Board structure

- President
- President-Elect
- Secretary
- Membership Chair
- Assistive Technology Chair
- Community Colleges Chair

Scan QR Code or Use Link
for NE AHEAD Website



tinyurl.com/NE-AHEAD-Web

Who are the NE AHEAD Members?

251 Members | Representation from all **6 states** in New England

Types of Schools

- Community College
- Private Institutions
- Public / State Universities
- Vocational & Technical Schools

Roles & Positions

- Director / Associate / Assistant Director
- Dean
- Coordinator (Assistive Tech / Testing)
- Learning Specialist
- Accommodation Specialist
- Graduate Assistant

Institutional Representation

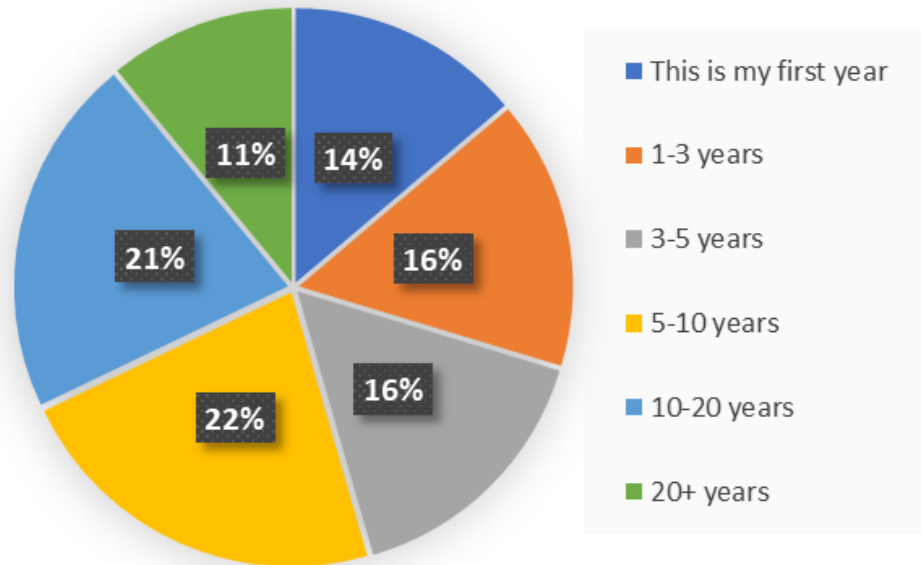
- Harvard University MA
- Brandeis University MA
- Tufts University MA
- University of Southern Maine
- University of New England ME
- Southern New Hampshire University
- Champlain College VT
- CT State Community College



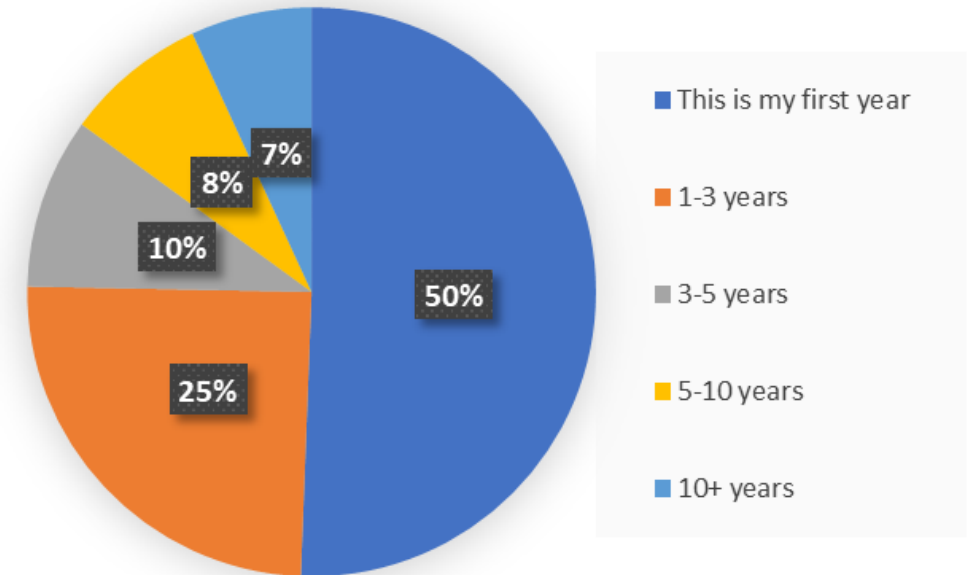
- Sacred Heart University CT
- Yale University CT
- Community College of Rhode Island
- Bridgewater State University MA
- Massachusetts Maritime Academy
- Providence College RI
- Dartmouth College NH
- Holyoke Community College MA

Member Experience

How long have you worked in Disability?



How Long have you been part of NE AHEAD?



Membership Feedback

“NEAHEAD has been instrumental in getting that ‘2nd opinion’.”

“NE AHEAD made a significant impact on my professional development this year.”

“NE AHEAD has been supportive as both an informational platform but also as a way to connect with others to engage in problem-solving. Having perspectives from various college and university professionals is a great way to collaborate as well as validate the work I do.”

“AHEAD helped me with understanding the field better when I started two years ago coming from Vocational Rehab.”

“Even though I have not met most of the professionals in person, there is still a connection with knowing they are facing the same challenges and brainstorming similar solutions.”

Example Meeting Agenda

- **Announcements**
- **Job Openings**
- **Upcoming Events**
- **Resources**
- **Case Review / Problem Solving**
 - **Breakout Rooms (Residential, Community College, etc.)**



What Engagement can look like

- Monthly virtual support meetings
- Q&A sessions for new professionals
- Breakout groups by institution type
- Member-driven mini conferences
- Book giveaways
- Collaborative problem-solving sessions
- Mentorship conversations

THE NEW ENGLAND
ASSOCIATION ON HIGHER
EDUCATION AND DISABILITY
presents

The logo features a blue outline map of the six New England states (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island). Overlaid on the map is the text 'NEW ENGLAND AHEAD' in a green, slanted, sans-serif font.

Finding your network

Opportunities for Engagement

- AHEAD and affiliate chapters
- State or regional networking groups
- Virtual meetups
- Conferences and webinars
- Committee work
- Informal peer mentoring

Easy First Steps

- Attend one meeting
- Introduce yourself in chat
- Volunteer for a small task
- Follow up with one new contact

Networking Activity

- 1) Housing Accommodations-Val
- 2) Community College -Taylor
- 3) Tough Cases-Gabrielle

Leadership Pathways

Ways to Get Involved

- Join a committee
- Help with programming
- Present at conferences
- Mentor newer professionals
- Support communications/social media
- Run for a board position

Inclusive Leadership Matters

Strategies That Help

- Shared responsibilities
- Clear role expectations
- Representation across institution types
- Intentional mentorship
- Flexible ways to contribute
- Listening to member feedback

Action Planning

Your Next Step

Complete This Sentence:

“In the next 30 days, I will...”

Examples

- Attend a local meeting
- Reach out to a new colleague
- Volunteer for a committee
- Present at a conference
- Join a professional listserv
- Explore board involvement
- Invite people into your network

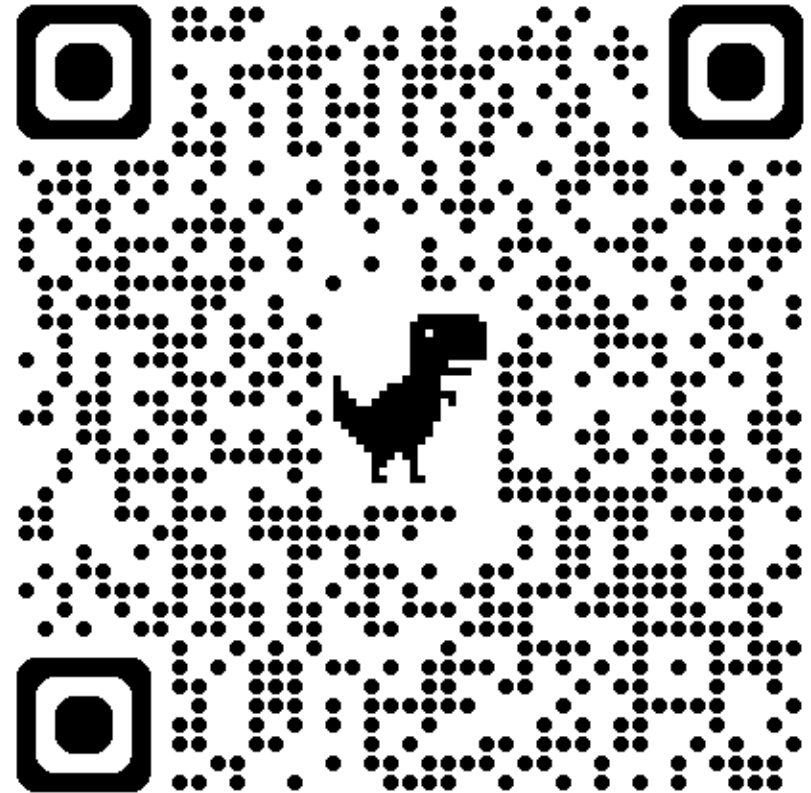
Bring your voice to the table

- Community strengthens practice
- Collaboration reduces isolation
- Leadership starts small
- Your experience matters
- The field needs your voice

Session Evaluation

Thank you for attending!

Your feedback helps shape
future programming.



tiny.cc/8zu1101