



Basic Disability Screenings for Adult Education Program Use

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Basic Accessibility Checklist

Basic Disability Screening Tool

Common Accommodations List

Preferred Accommodations Plan

Resources





About the SABES Program Support PD Center

The SABES Program Support PD Center (PSPDC) is a project of the US Division at World Education, Inc. in Boston, MA. Our team works in responsive and inclusive ways to develop and deliver PD that transforms practice, fosters continuous improvement, and creates opportunities for innovation. The PSPDC provides training in eight content areas, aiming for coherence and complementary strengths across these priorities: Career Pathways, Advising, and ADA Resources and Training, (led by Curriculum and PD Specialist Dani Scherer: dani_scherer@worlded.org) Program Management and Educational Leadership, Digital Literacy, Professional Licensure Support, LACES, and Connecting Adults with Adult Education Programs, (led by Director Luanne Teller: luanne_teller@worlded.org).

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Introduction

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) / Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS) Vision provides adult educators with the charge to create inclusive program environments:

We envision a future where every adult in Massachusetts has the knowledge, skills, and support they need to lead the life they aspire to live.

Programs should base their decision-making regarding disability-inclusion on the Massachusetts Policies for Effective Adult Education and according to the ACLS Indicator of Program Quality 2 (Equitable Access), which sets the following standard for all programs:

Standard 2.3: The program has documented strategies to provide reasonable accommodations for staff and students with self-disclosed disabilities and/or makes referrals within and outside the agency.

This *Basic Disability Screenings for Adult Education Program Use* is a resource to help adult educators increase the inclusion and effective support of persons with disabilities in their programs. Increased inclusion of persons with disabilities can be accomplished by designing disability-conscious environments and activities at all levels of program delivery by: creating disability-inclusive organizational culture, infusing Universal Design for Learning in the instruction, and providing access to accommodations for all learners. The *Basic Disability Screenings for Adult Education Program Use* resource focuses on increasing access to accommodated teaching and learning.

Research on the best practices for accommodated teaching, learning, and testing in adult education is scarce and its findings inconclusive at best. Nonetheless, this research is a broad source of information on strategies used by adult educators who accommodate learners with disabilities. The *Basic Disability Screenings for Adult Education Program Use* resource is informed by the teaching and learning accommodations and strategies mentioned in research on disabilities, particularly learning disabilities, in adult education (Gregg, 2012; Hock 2012).

In addition to research from the field of education, *Basic Disability Screenings for Adult Education Program Use* draws on literature from disability studies, a field that encompasses voices from disability scholars and activists alike. From this literature we can conclude that disability experience is both shared by all disabled people, and also unique to each person with a disability. Programs can address the commonality of the experience by creating an atmosphere of respect and acceptance of disability diversity, as well as through adherence to disability and rehabilitation laws.

The *Basic Disability Screenings for Adult Education Program Use* provides help for assessing current preparedness to welcome disabled adult students into adult education programs; the Basic Accessibility Checklist for ADA Coordinators and Administrators is the instrument that helps you begin to evaluate your program's ADA compliance and disability-conscious program administration.



On the level of an individual's experience, program staff can increase inclusion of persons with disabilities in adult education through collaborating with each student with disabilities to develop accommodated teaching and learning plans. The Basic Disability Screening is designed to help program staff begin the conversation with students about their disability-related accommodation needs and to guide the process of development of a Preferred Accommodations Plan for each student who discloses disabilities. The process may be carried out by instructors, advisors, or ADA coordinators in collaboration with the student. It consists of three steps to be completed in tandem with the student, as explained on the following page.

Suggested Steps for Using These Tools

1.

Use the Basic Disability Screening to start the conversation about disabilities and barriers and facilitators of learning. If the screening indicates the likelihood of moderate or high severity of difficulty, refer the student for further testing. This resource provides a list of possible providers to whom you may refer the student.

2.

Use the list of Common Accommodations to identify possible accommodations for the learner. Feel free to add items to this list based on your experience and knowledge of accommodating strategies for teaching and learning.

3.

Use the Preferred Accommodations Plan to summarize preferred accommodations for teaching and learning. The student may choose to share this plan with relevant program staff.

Atmosphere of Acceptance

To create the atmosphere of acceptance and to adhere to the purpose of this process – to increase access to accommodations in teaching and learning –introduce the three-step process referenced above by explaining its purpose (e.g. “to make learning easier”) and the objective (e.g., “to design a Preferred Accommodation Plan to help the program and students understand how teaching and learning could be made easier for each student”). Keep in mind that although you may be required to complete this process in order to give a chance to each student to share the information about a diagnosed disability, students are not required to share this information with you. In fact, program staff cannot ask students outright if they have a disability.



This process and this tool were, thus, created to identify accommodation needs for all students, including those with and without diagnosed medical conditions or prior IEPs. To communicate that you are not asking about private medical or educational records and history, you may wish to emphasize to each student that this process aims at identifying the learning accommodations for every learner.

This resource recognizes that adult learners have diverse cultural identities that are reflected in the differences they understand and use of the words “disability” and “accommodation.” Some students may associate these terms with negative connotations, some may regard them as parts of their lives, while some may view them as important to their sense of pride and the recognition of their belonging to the global community of disabled people. To honor cultural preferences of students and to acknowledge disability as form of human diversity, program staff should emphasize their commitment to inclusion of students into their program regardless of the levels of performance difficulties they may report through this three-step process.

The *Basic Disability Screenings for Adult Education Program Use* resource also offers brief information on testing accommodations and a list of selected external resources for expanding your knowledge on disability experience in adult education.



Basic Accessibility Checklist for ADA Coordinators and Administrators

Student: _____

Date: _____

Assessor: _____

	YES/NO
1. Program has a designated staff member who will respond to accessibility inquiries.	
2. Program documents the designated staff member's commitment to confidentiality regarding accessibility inquiries and disability-related information about a student.	
3. A designated staff member is knowledgeable about appropriate and available instructional and testing accommodations.	
4. Program disseminates contact information for the designated staff member widely and regularly.	
5. Program has a defined ADA grievance protocol.	
6. Program requires all staff to complete a disability-related training.	
7. Program allows alternative admissions tests and/or test administration procedures.	
8. Program includes a statement regarding availability of accommodations on all written program information.	
9. Program provides assistance for obtaining evaluation and/or accommodations from out-of-program resources (e.g., Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission).	
10. Program regularly disseminates information about common classroom accommodations to all staff.	
11. Program provides materials in alternative media (Braille, large print, audiotapes) upon request.	
12. Program includes a statement regarding availability of alternative formats for learning materials upon request.	
13. Program allows students to borrow available copies of materials for an extended period of time needed to create alternative formats, if they are not provided by the program.	

14. Program allows use of adaptive technology when requested.

15. Program provides adaptive technology.

16. Program welcomes students' use of their own adaptive technology.

17. Program provides assistance for obtaining adaptive technology.

18. Program creates a welcoming environment for students with disabilities (e.g., displays art that represents disabled people).

19. Program encourages instructors or creates incentives for instructors to design lessons that include examples from disability history and the work of scientists with disabilities.

20. Program promotes the view that disability is a form of human diversity.

21. Program gives adequate attention to ableism to the same extent it addresses racist and gender oppression.

22. Program creates accessible events (e.g., graduation celebrations). Read the [Accessible Meeting & Event Checklist](#).

23. Program's website is accessible. Read the [Checklist for Creating Accessible Websites](#).

24. Program's physical space is accessible. Read the checklists for accessible physical spaces: [ADA Checklist for Existing Facilities](#) and [ADA Readily Achievable Barrier Removal Checklist for Existing Facilities](#).

25. Program adheres to recommendations for creating accessible documentation. Read the resources for creating accessible documents: [Microsoft](#) and [Google](#).

Basic Disability Screening Instructions

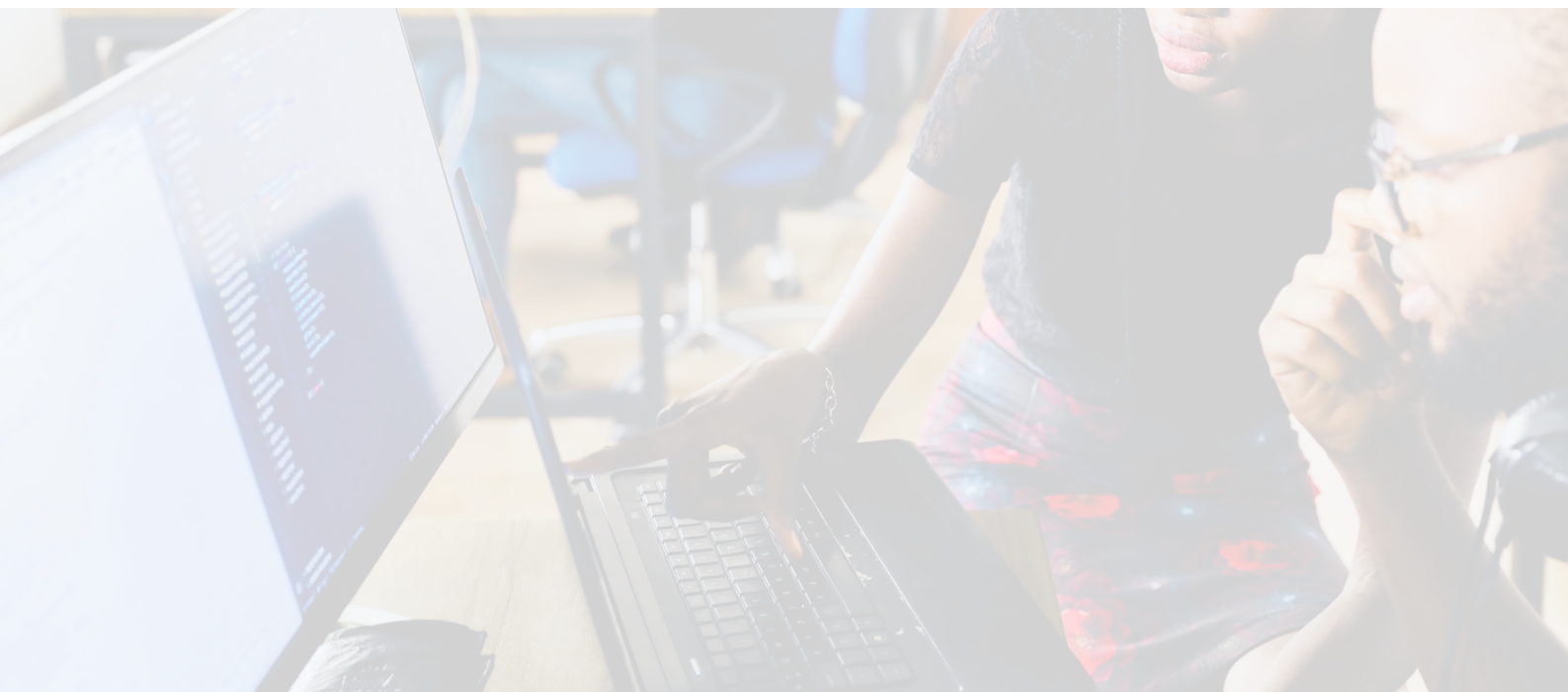
Basic Disability Screening protocol is based on the recommendations issued by the World Health Organization (WHO), Version 2.1a of the Clinician Form for International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (“ICF Checklist”). The ICF Checklist reflects the multidimensional character of health and disability. Notwithstanding critiques of this approach, the checklist remains the preferred tool for identification of disability across the world and is influential in the field of rehabilitation in the United States. This modified screening tool is based on the section of the ICF checklist which measures difficulties in performance of tasks in a person’s lived environment. Access the full text of [WHO’s ICF Checklist](#) instrument.

For the purpose of *Basic Disability Screenings for Adult Education Providers*, the ICF Checklist has been modified to meet two goals:



1) To help the practitioner start the conversation about students’ experience with disability in order to encourage the provider and the student to devise a Preferred Accommodations plan

2) To help the student identify possible areas they may wish to discuss with a medical or rehabilitation provider



To complete the Basic Disability Screening



1. Ask each student in your program to give numerical value to the level of difficulty (Performance Qualifier or PQ) with which they are performing the named task or activity. After asking each question, check for the student's comprehension prior to recording the answer. You may perform this check by asking the student to answer in full sentences or to rephrase the question prior to giving the answer.



2. If using an interpreter for this task, provide the screening instrument to the interpreter well ahead of time so that they may adequately prepare for the screening session. After recording the level of difficulty of each task or activity, probe the student to give you detailed examples of difficult tasks or aspects of tasks.



3. Next, inquire about the environmental factors (e.g., format of learning materials, transportation, etc.) that make the task easier (facilitator) or harder (barrier). The Performance Qualifier (PQ) indicates the extent of participation restriction in the named activity by describing the person's actual performance of a task or action in his/her/their current environment.



Note:

Because the current environment brings in the societal context, performance can also be understood as “involvement in a life situation” or “lived experience” of people in the actual context in which they live. The PQ measures the difficulty the respondent experiences in doing things, assuming that they want to do them. For all items marked at and above moderate difficulty, refer the student to a health or rehabilitation professional. Use the table on the following page to assess the difficulty.

Performance Qualifier: Performance Extent of Participation Restriction

Performance Qualifier: Performance Extent of Participation Restriction

PQ	Description	Meaning
0	No difficulty	Person has no problem.
1	Mild difficulty	Problem is present less than 25% of the time, with an intensity a person can tolerate and which happens rarely over the last 30 days.
2	Moderate difficulty	Problem is present less than 50% of the time, with an intensity, which is interfering with the person's day to day life and which happens occasionally over the last 30 days.
3	Severe difficulty	Problem is present more than 50% of the time, with an intensity that is partially disrupting the person's day to day life and which happens frequently over the last 30 days.
4	Complete difficulty	Problem is present more than 95% of the time, with an intensity which is totally disrupting the person's day-to-day life and happens every day over the last 30 days.
8	Not specified	There is insufficient information to specify the severity of the difficulty.
9	Not applicable	It is inappropriate to apply a particular code



Here is what your Basic Disability Screening grid may look like:

Short List of Performance Domains	PQ	Example	Environmental Barrier or Facilitator
LEARNING AND APPLYING KNOWLEDGE			
Watching/Seeing	1	<i>None given</i>	
Listening	2	<i>Hears better when looking at the person who is speaking</i>	<i>Helps when seated in the front of the classroom</i>
Learning to read	2	<i>Words smudge together</i>	<i>Bright light makes it worse</i>
Learning to write	3	<i>Punctuation does not make sense; does not like to write</i>	<i>Did not like English teacher in school; outlining before writing helps</i>
Learning to calculate (arithmetic)	2	<i>Does not understand division</i>	<i>Calculator helps</i>
Solving problems	2	<i>Can balance money in the bank, difficulty solving word problems in math, does not understand what words mean</i>	<i>It is always harder when the problems are long, words that mean different things</i>

It is important to keep in mind that the ICF Checklist and the PQ scale have been created to standardize diverse human experiences in order to manage public health needs of communities across the globe. Any process of standardization is laden with cultural habits of people who create the standards and who guide their implementation. In addition, standards and measures are often based on the perspectives derived from knowledge banks created by professionals who live and work in culturally and economically dominant regions of the world. In other words, as standardization procedures, both the ICF Checklist and the PQ scale are somewhat culturally biased.



As adult education practitioners who are engaged in the required process of inclusion of students with disabilities in your programs, you are in a position to help your students interpret the ICF standards as they intersect with the students' own cultural understanding of the terms like "difficulty" and "performance." With this in mind, prior to assigning PQ values make sure that the student has understood how PQ scaling works. For example, to illustrate the relationship between the scale and the performance in this standardization instrument, you may ask the student to rate the difficulty in lifting four objects in your office (a pencil, a desk, a small bookshelf, and a filing cabinet filled with paper). As recorders of student answers, you act as cultural broker between your students' personal and cultural experiences and the standardized PQ measures. Use the last two columns of the Basic Disability Screening Form ("Example" and "Environmental Barrier and Facilitator") to show how the PQ value you are assigning to each task reflects the student's lived experience.

Basic Disability Screening

Student: _____

Date: _____

Assessor: _____

Short List of Performance Domains <i>Current Medical Diagnoses (only if the student wish to disclose):</i>	PQ	Example	Environmental Barrier or Facilitator
1. LEARNING AND APPLYING KNOWLEDGE			
Watching/Seeing			
Listening/Hearing			
Learning to read			
Learning to write			
Learning to calculate (arithmetic)			
Solving problems			
2. GENERAL TASKS AND DEMANDS			
Undertaking a single task			
Undertaking multiple tasks			
3. COMMUNICATION			
Communicating with -- receiving -- spoken messages			
Communicating with -- receiving -- non-verbal messages			
Speaking			
Producing non-verbal messages			
Holding a conversation			
4. MOBILITY			
Lifting and carrying objects			
Fine hand use (picking up, grasping)			
Walking			
Moving around using equipment (wheelchair, skates, etc.)			
Using transportation (car, bus, train, plane, etc.)			
Driving (riding bicycle and motorbike, driving car, etc.)			
Other			

5. SELF CARE			
Washing oneself (bathing, drying, washing hands, etc.)			
Caring for body parts (brushing teeth, shaving, grooming, etc.)			
Toileting			
Dressing			
Eating			
Drinking			
Sleeping			
Other			
6. DOMESTIC LIFE			
Acquisition of goods and services (shopping, etc.)			
Preparation of meals (cooking etc.)			
Doing housework (cleaning house, washing dishes laundry, ironing,			
Assisting others			
Other			
7. INTERPERSONAL INTERACTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS			
Basic interpersonal interactions			
Complex interpersonal interactions			
Relating with strangers			
Formal relationships			
Informal social relationships			
Family relationships			
Intimate relationships			
Other			
8. MAJOR LIFE AREAS			
Informal education			
School education			
Higher education			
Remunerative employment			
Basic economic transactions			
Economic self-sufficiency			
Other			
9. COMMUNITY, SOCIAL AND CIVIC LIFE			
Community life			
Recreation and leisure			
Religion and spirituality			
Political life and citizenship			
Other			

Common Accommodations for Adult Learners

Student: _____

Date: _____

Assessor: _____

	USED SUCCESSFULLY IN THE PAST	WILLING TO TRY	NOT INTERESTED
ENVIRONMENT What surroundings help you learn?			
Quiet space (e.g. ear mufflers, white noise, and/or other equipment used to external sounds)			
Noise (e.g., listening to music while learning)			
Extra time on task			
Other			
READING: What helps you read easier?			
Reading out loud on own			
Reading together with someone			
Being read to by someone			
Text-to-speech software			
Use of colored overlays			
Use of colored paper for handouts/printer materials			
Visual guides (e.g., graphic organizers, story maps)			
Note taking while reading (e.g., to generate questions, identify story structure)			

	USED SUCCESSFULLY IN THE PAST	WILLING TO TRY	NOT INTERESTED
Highlighting, underlining, text marking			
Other			
Telling the story out loud before writing it			
Use of word prediction			
Use of text to speech and dictation software/features			
Use of spell checkers			
Revising and editing multiple times			
Other			
COMPREHENDING AND MEMORIZING Does it help you to visualize what you are learning? Does it help you hear the content repeatedly? Does it help you to repeat in your own words what you heard? Does it help you write about what you are learning?			
Instructor shows me how something is done			
Instructor tells me how I could understand a story or a problem			
Recording lectures to listen multiple times			
Viewing recorded videos by the teacher			
Use of short glossaries for common terms (math, science, literature)			
Use of closed captioning in videos			
Use of visual guides: graphic organizers and story maps			
Other			

	USED SUCCESSFULLY IN THE PAST	WILLING TO TRY	NOT INTERESTED
Seeing or drawing pictures of what I am learning			
Knowing what I am expected to learn from an activity			
Working in pairs; hearing how peers understand the content			
Knowing the cultural context of the characters/story/word problem			
Asking questions			
Pausing/rephrasing each sentence after hearing it or reading it			
Pausing and retelling/rewriting each paragraph			
Making lists on my own			
Making my own glossaries			
Other			
MATHEMATICS When does math make sense?			
Use of visual organizers (e.g., causal maps, graph, diagrams)			
Use of manipulatives (e.g., blocks, cubes, sticky notes, index cards)			
Use of math/logic/simulation software (e.g., strategy games, Gizmos)			
Other			

Preferred Accommodations Plan

Student: _____

Date: _____

Assessor: _____

Preferred Accommodation	Environmental Facilitator	Start Date
<i>Example: Sit in front of the classroom</i>	<i>Desk close to the whiteboard</i>	<i>XX/XX/XX</i>

To be effective, the Preferred Accommodations Plan should be updated periodically. The review date may vary on the nature of the preferred accommodation. For example, if you are going to be using an accommodation that the student has successfully used in the past, the review date may be later than the review date for a new accommodation. In either case, the review date should be set in collaboration with the student and should be before standardized post-testing.

During the review meeting, you may choose to re-engage in the process of re-designing student's Preferred Accommodations Plan (all three steps) or you may choose to review only the accommodations marked for the review. You may choose to ask the student to bring examples of their work or informal assessments to share with you so that together you can assess if the accommodation has improved their performance.



Resources for Formal Assessments, Accommodation Testing, and Further Study

Programs should base their decision-making regarding disability-inclusion, on the Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS) guidelines on the Massachusetts ADA Standards (<https://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/ada/standards.html>).

1

The following entities may fund and conduct assessments:

[Workman's comp \(MA Department of Industrial Accidents\)](#)
[Veterans' Administration](#)
[Mass Rehab Commission](#)
[Mass Developmental Disabilities Council](#)

Medicare/Medicaid: any qualified approved venue. The student can access this funding by speaking to their medical provider. Student may choose to share the results of the Basic Disability Screening with their medical provider in order to obtain a referral for a medical/psychological evaluation covered by Medicare/Medicaid.

2

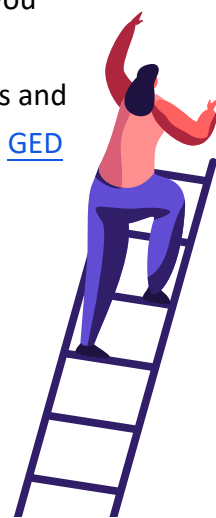
The following providers advertise expertise in learning assessments of adult students:

[Learning Disorders Clinic, Mass General](#)
[Massachusetts Dyslexia Center](#)
[Howard Learning Assessment Services](#)
[Learning Solutions](#)
[Cambridge Center for Neuropsychology and Learning](#)

3

The following resources provide information on High School Equivalency (HSE) testing accommodations:

Note that the GED Testing Center provides specific guidelines for evaluations. If you are referring to a student for evaluation in order to apply for testing accommodations, they should bring the guidelines to the provider. The guidelines and the accommodation request for GED testing can be found at GED Testing Center. [GED Testing Accommodation Request](#).



To request accommodations for HiSET, go to the: [HiSET Accommodation Request](#)

Testing accommodations typically include: extended time, private room, additional break time, reader/recorded audio, large print/screen magnification, scribe/keyboarding aid, and embedded e-test accommodations. Other accommodations are possible and would be based on the evaluation and advocacy.



Selected sources for further study of disability in adult education:

Further accommodations to consider adding to the screening or discussing with your students:

LINCS Publication on learning disabilities in adult education: Learning to Achieve: [A Professional's Guide to Educating Adults with Learning Disabilities](#)

LINCS self-paced training on learning disabilities in adult education: [LINCS Learning Portal](#)

Job Accommodation Network website where you can search for accommodations based on disabilities: [JAN Publications & Articles Regarding Learning Disability](#)

LDonline is a website that contains many strategies for accommodated teaching and learning: [All About Learning Disabilities and ADHD](#)



ADA compliance resources:

New England ADA resources center where you can ask specific questions about the ADA compliance: [New England ADA Center](#)

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: ACLS ADA Standards: [Massachusetts ADA Standards](#)



Research Articles for Further Reading

1. Gregg, N. Increasing access to learning for the adult basic education learner with learning disabilities: evidence-based accommodation research. *J Learn Disabil.* 2012 Jan-Feb;45(1):47-63. doi: 10.1177/0022219411426855. Epub 2011 Nov 7. PMID: 22064949.
2. Hock, M.F. Effective literacy instruction for adults with specific learning disabilities: implications for adult educators. *J Learn Disabil.* 2012 Jan-Feb;45(1):64-78. doi: 10.1177/0022219411426859. Epub 2011 Nov 7. PMID: 22064951.
3. Mavis, C. (2006). Adult education and disability studies, an interdisciplinary relationship: research implications for adult education. *Adult Education Quarterly* 56.308-322. Doi: 10.1177/0741713606289661.
4. Reynolds, S. L., Johnson J. D., and Salzman A.J. (2012) Screening for learning disabilities in adult basic education students. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 25(2), 179 -195; <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ994285.pdf>.
5. Taymans, J.M. Legal and definitional issues affecting the identification and education of adults with specific learning disabilities in adult education programs. *J Learn Disabil.* 2012 Jan-Feb;45(1):5-16. doi: 10.1177/0022219411426857. Epub 2011 Dec 1. PMID: 22134963.

