

Hello from the RBHS Office of Disability Services!

Would you like additional information or a presentation in your course? Let us know: odsrbhs@ca.rutgers.edu

We invite your feedback <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2RH3NWV>

The RBHS Office of Disability Services (RBHSODS) provides the necessary tools, resources and support for disabled students to become responsible decision-makers and self-advocates in charge of their own future. We are also here to support faculty and staff.

October is ADHD Awareness Month

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder affecting both children and adults around the globe. Which of the people in the picture below has ADHD?

We cannot tell because ADHD is a non-apparent or "invisible" disability. We do not know someone has an invisible disability unless the individual tells us.



ADHD: Myths and Facts

MYTH: ADHD doesn't exist.

FACT: There are more than 100,000 articles in science journals on ADHD and references to it in medical textbooks going back to 1775.

MYTH: People with ADHD just can't concentrate.

FACT: Individuals with ADHD can concentrate when they are interested in or intrigued by what they are doing.

MYTH: ADHD is over diagnosed.

FACT: The rates with which ADHD is diagnosed vary so much primarily due to diagnostic criteria and measurement methods used.

MYTH: Only boys have ADHD.

FACT: Boys are diagnosed two to three times as often as girls, but about 4.2% of girls have received a diagnosis of ADHD at some point in their life (and that's not none!).

MYTH: ADHD meds are addictive.

FACT: The therapeutic use of stimulant medications for ADHD prevents addiction.

MYTH: ADHD is caused by bad parenting.

FACT: Parents do not cause ADHD. The disorder comes from the accumulation of many environmental and genetic risk factors. Brain-imaging studies show that differences in brain structure and wiring cause problems with attention, impulse control and motivation.

MYTH: ADHD is just an excuse for laziness.

FACT: ADHD is really a problem with the chemical dynamics of the brain and it's not under voluntary control.

MYTH: All children grow out of ADHD.

FACT: Significant symptoms and impairments persist in 50-86% of people with ADHD.

ADHD: Myths and Facts

<https://www.adhdawarenessmonth.org/myths-and-facts-about-adhd/>

Myth: Everyone has a little ADHD

Fact: Everyone does not have a physical difference in their brain.

When people say things like, "Everyone has a little bit of ADHD these days!" they mean everyone exhibits some behaviors like the symptoms of ADHD.

They don't mean everyone has a physical difference in their brains. It's more like, "Everyone is a little distractible, forgetful or impulsive these days!"

They probably don't make these comments to be mean. They're trying to "normalize" challenges. But declaring "everyone" has a "little bit" of ADHD is inaccurate. It is also **hurtful and dismissive of the real struggles people with ADHD go through every day.**

The symptoms of ADHD exist within a continuum of typical human behavior. Most people lose their keys from time to time. They tune out in meetings. They're late to class. And they have trouble delaying gratification. But these behaviors are not the same as ADHD. They are human behaviors or experiences that occur for many reasons. With ADHD, the reason is neurological in origin. It is not a choice, a fluke, or a bad day.

ADHD is a brain-based, often chronic, lifelong syndrome.

It gets in the way of the smooth operation of self-regulatory functions of the brain. Ongoing neurological studies find many differences in the ADHD brain. The structure, volume, chemical activity and communication pathways in the brains of people with ADHD are different than those without.

[\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#) **Scientists have linked several genes to the condition.** [\[3\]](#)

People with ADHD show behaviors resulting from this inner dysregulation. These behaviors include forgetfulness, distractibility, impulsivity and an inability to focus. For people with ADHD, these behaviors are disruptive. And they happen more often, with greater intensity, severity, and chronicity than for people without ADHD.

Further, when people with ADHD try to change, they often can't course-correct the way others can. People with ADHD have more negative consequences from their challenges than the average. They earn less and incur more debt. They struggle with academic and workplace performance. They even face greater risk of physical injury. [\[4\]](#) **It is true everyone can be forgetful and distracted sometimes; and it's also true that the vast majority of people – around 90-95% – do NOT have ADHD** [\[5\]](#).

REFERENCES

- 1 Friedman, L.A., and Rapoport, J.L. Brain development in ADHD. Current Opinion in Neurobiology, Volume 30, 2015, Pages 106-111. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.conb.2014.11.007>.
- 2 Tang C, Wei Y, Zhao J, Nie J: Different Developmental Pattern of Brain Activities in ADHD: A Study of Resting-State fMRI. Dev Neurosci 2018;40:246-257. doi: 10.1159/000490289 3 <https://www.bbrfoundation.org/content/first-robust-genetic-markers-adhd-are-reported>
- 4 Matza, L. S., Paramore, C., & Prasad, M. (2005). A review of the economic burden of ADHD. Cost effectiveness and resource allocation : C/E, 3, 5. doi:10.1186/1478-7547-3-5
- 5 <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/data.html>

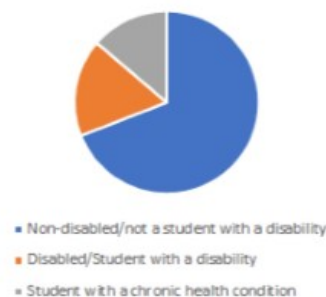


Potential Student Organization focused on Disability

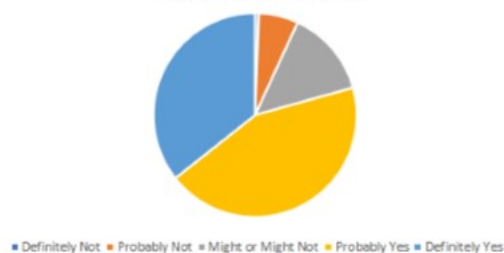
Earlier in the Fall 2021 semester, the Office of Disability Services sent a survey to all RBHS students to gauge interest in a student organization focused on disability. The focus of this organization is open, but may be learning more about disabilities, advocating for disability rights in the community, an honors society for disabled students, or something entirely different, depending on the interest of the student population at RBHS schools.

As of late October, over 180 students filled out the survey. Of those students, over 75% shared that they were interested in joining a student organization focused on Disability at RBHS. Most students surveyed are also specifically interested in an organization whose mission is focused on community education and advocacy related to disability. Twenty-eight percent of respondents also identify as a person with a disability or chronic health condition.

Self Reported Disability Identity
*of the 180 student responses



Interest in Joining Student Org
*of the 180 student responses



Many schools within RBHS have a curriculum that already includes coursework on treating patients with disabilities. However, students can also benefit from learning the experiences of disabled providers, the impacts of ableism on the health care system, and how to better support disabled individuals in both their professional and personal lives.

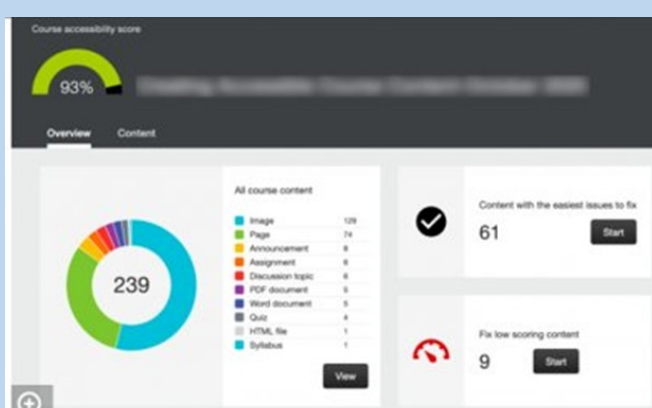
In the coming months, ODS will host student brainstorming sessions to discuss the initiative further. Although ODS is leading the effort to explore the start of this organization, the intention is that whatever organization is formed, it will be a student-led initiative moving forward.

In addition to student interest, several faculty and staff members have also expressed interest in advising the student organization. If you'd like to learn more about being involved, contact Jenna Rose (jenna.rose@rutgers.edu).

RBHS to Launch Accessibility Tool within Canvas: ALLY

Rutgers purchased a university-wide license for an accessibility tool within Canvas, named ALLY. Set to launch in the Spring 2022 semester, ALLY works to assist instructors in understanding and fixing course accessibility problems. ALLY automatically checks course content uploaded to Canvas and provides feedback to instructors about the accessibility of course materials. ALLY provides each file with a score: low, medium, high, and perfect. Accessibility scores are only shared with faculty, not students.

Example of an Ally Report



RBHS to Launch Accessibility tool (cont'd)

Students with various disabilities require accessible course content. Blind or visually impaired students utilize a screen reader that reads text aloud or use a program that enlarges font size. Students with learning disabilities may also utilize screen readers or use tools that highlight text. With ALLY, faculty can begin to prepare or remediate accessible course content long before receiving a Letter of Accommodation for the semester.

"We've been telling people to be proactive about accessibility forever...whether it's from a social justice lens or that you value your content and think everyone should have access to it, or that you just don't want to be stressed later on; whatever your reason is for deciding to be proactive, great...Then there is the piece of learning how to do accessibility...but prior to this (ALLY), we've never had a tool that tells people if your stuff is accessible or not," shares Dena Novack, Senior Instructional Designer and Faculty Development Coordinator for Teaching and Learning with Technology at Rutgers, "it is individualized, personalized guidance on what [faculty] need to do for their course materials."

Additionally, although students with disabilities are encouraged to request accommodations from the Office of Disability Services, not all disabled students go through the process. EDUCAUSE, a nonprofit whose mission focuses on increasing access through technology, released a 2020 Student Technology Report which surveyed 16,162 undergraduate students from 71 U.S. institutions and found that 44% of students with disabilities surveyed did not register with their schools' disability services office. By proactively creating accessible course content, these students are not left out of the equation.

Nondisabled students also benefit from accessible content. "Delivering accessible content improves the learning experience for all students and faculty alike regardless of ability. Not all people learn the same way and providing accessible content, especially alternative formats of accessible content, affords all users materials that suit their needs and preferences," said Charlie Collick, Director of IT Accessibility & Instructional Technology for Rutgers.

For faculty who are just starting the journey of remediating inaccessible course content, Charlie shares content remediation is "a marathon, not a race."

"I always suggest that instructors start with the low-hanging fruit. Do some spring cleaning first. It's easier to get rid of content you no longer need, aren't planning to use, or that need to be updated. It cuts down on the number of items to fix, presents a better user experience, and provides an easy early win as the instructor will see their ALLY accessibility score rise...Finally, I'd tell instructors to take their time. Every issue addressed is a step in the right direction... Work on little pieces of your course and improve it over time..." Collick shared via email.

Wondering about getting started? There will be workshops for faculty to learn more about ALLY hosted by the [Office of Instructional Design](#). In addition, there are also workshops and opportunities for faculty to learn more about the next step: creating accessible materials.

More information about ALLY is available on the [ALLY app page](#).



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