

SLIDE 1:

A Rising Tide Lifts All Boats: The Maryland Bridges Technical Assistance Center Support And Information

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SLIDE 2:

Presenters

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- In college, was a Bridges Helpdesk stakeholder

SLIDE 3:

Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe service methods used by the Bridges Technical Assistance and the benefits and limitations of each.
- Describe at least three areas in which the Bridges Helpdesk provides information and support.
- Identify at least three types of resources available in the Bridges Resource Library.

SLIDE 4:

It's Not Easy Being Green

Kermit the Frog's iconic song

- About the loneliness of being different and feeling overlooked.
- Individuals of all ages need to be treated like full and valued members of their communities.
- As Kermit tell us, that's not always easy.

School-age students with the sensory impairment of blindness/low-vision

- Even in the world of “special education,” blind/low vision students are a significant minority.
- For every 1,000 U.S. students with IEPs, fewer than four will have an IEP with “visual impairment, including blindness” (VIB) as the primary disability.
- Only 262 of Maryland's 100,413 students with IEPs (0.26%) had VIB as their primary disability.

SLIDE 5:

Common Reasons For Avoiding Blindness/Low Vision Skills

- Fear of “standing out”
- Fear of “being a burden”
- Time away from core content instruction
- Listening is “good enough”
- Relying on “mental math”
- Limiting learning music to “by ear”

SLIDE 6:

Non-Visual Skills And Tools

BENEFITS

- Access
- Sustainability
- Maximization of individual potential

BARRIERS

- Lack of familiarity with options
- Lack of understanding of impact
- Lack of peer/mentor support
- Lack of instructional support

SLIDE 7:

Discrepancy In Achievement

- High school completion/graduation
- Bachelor's degree completion
- Employment
 - Attainment
 - Maintenance

SLIDE 8:

Pre- vs. Post-Secondary

- Purpose of an Individualized Education Program (IEP)
 - Provision of Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)
 - Preparation for post-secondary education, employment, and independent living
- Post-secondary realities
 - "Modifications" not required
 - "Reasonable accommodations" available if requested
- Vocational Rehabilitation support is available

SLIDE 9:

Post-Secondary Barriers

Blind/low vision students face “a host of disablers, including:

1. negative attitudes,
2. absence of inclusive education policy,
3. inaccessible learning environment and learning materials,
4. exclusive pedagogy, and
5. limited orientation and mobility” (Simui, et al, 2018)

SLIDE 10:

Post-Secondary Success

Blind/low vision students need:

- “a balance of skills training and self-efficacy building practices” (Goodwyn, et al, n.d.).
- “Inclusive education policies and practices”
- “Key enablers to academic success” include “a positive attitude, self-advocacy, and innovativeness” (Simui, et al, 2018).

SLIDE 11:

Solutions: Support

- Educators
- Blind/low-vision:
 - Role models
 - Mentors
 - Peer support
- Parental expectations and engagement

SLIDE 12:

Technical Assistance Support

- Intensive, Sustained

- Universal, General
- Targeted, Specialized

SLIDE 13:

Intensive, Sustained TA

What is it?

- Require a stable, ongoing relationship between the TA Center staff and the TA recipient.
- TA services are defined as negotiated series of activities designed to reach a valued outcome.

Bridges Intensive, Sustained Technical Assistance

- Bridges Helpdesk

SLIDE 14:

Universal, General TA

What is it?

- Passive technical assistance (TA) and information provided to independent users through their own initiative.
- Includes information or products, such as newsletters, guidebooks, or research syntheses, downloaded from the TA Center's website by independent users.

Bridges Universal, General Technical Assistance

- Bridges Resource Library
- Bridges Transition Tip Tuesdays/Bridges Blog

SLIDE 15:

Targeted, Specialized TA

What is it?

- Technical assistance (TA) service developed based on needs common to multiple recipients and not extensively individualized.

Maryland Bridges Targeted, Specialized Technical Assistance

- Bridges Educator Community of Practice
- Bridges Maryland Blind/Low-vision Steering Committee
- Administrative Support

SLIDE 16:

Bridges Helpdesk

- Ready access to blindness experts.
 - When in crisis, might have difficulty finding what you need (or even knowing what is available).
 - Give a fish AND teach how to fish.
- Individualized, confidential support.
- Information and relevant resources.
- Thorough research services.

SLIDE 17:

Bridges Helpdesk In Action

TOP TOPICS

- Advocacy
- Accessibility of technology
- Acquiring technology
- Financial information
- Social Security benefits
- Social Security work incentives
- ABLE accounts

MEANS OF CONTACT

- Telephone
- Zoom meetings
- In-person contact
- Follow up with documentation
- Emails
- Flyers
- References to information sources

SLIDE 18:

Examples of Helpdesk Inquiries

PARENTS & STUDENTS

- Social Security & ABLE accounts
- Self-advocacy
- Obtaining accessible technology
- Post-secondary needs

EDUCATORS

- Changes in District I.T. policy
- Technology for home use
- Accessibility of assessments
- Accessible instructional ideas

SLIDE 19:

Bridges Online Resources

Bridges Resource Library (online)

- Thoroughly-researched and updated regularly
- Accessible and searchable
- Secondary Transition In the Field Reading Room

Bridges Transition Tip Tuesday/Bridges Blog

- Shared on social media every week
- Often theme-based

SLIDE 20:

Examples of Bridges Resource Library Entries

- Accessible Technology
- Advocacy
- Education
- Employment
- Financial Information
- Health and Wellness
- Orientation & Mobility
- Transportation
- Recreation and Leisure
- And so much MORE!

SLIDE 21:

Bridges Educator Support

- Bridges Educator Community of Practice
 - Spill The Tea Tuesdays
 - Private Facebook Group
 - GROUPS.IO Listserv
- Bridges Maryland Blind/Low-vision Steering
- Committee Administrative Support

SLIDE 22:

References

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- **Simui, F., Kasonde-Ngandu, S., Cheyeka, A. M., Simwinga, J., & Ndhlovu, D.** (2018). *Enablers and disablers to academic success of students with visual impairment: A 10-year literature disclosure, 2007–2017*. British Journal of Visual Impairment, 36(2), 163–174. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0264619617739932>.
- **United States Census Bureau.** (n.d.).
<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/all?q=college&tid=ACSST1Y2018.S1501&hidePreview=false>.

SLIDE 23:

QUESTIONS?

- [Accessible Web request form \(bit.ly/304EzDs\)](https://bit.ly/304EzDs)
- Bridges Email: Helpdesk@IMAGEmd.org
- Text or Voice mail: (410) 357-1546
 - Leave a detailed message and we will return your call.
- Send us a message through our [Facebook page](#).