

# Communities Benefit from Including Students with Special Needs

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# Utah Students with Disabilities

- 667,789 K-12 public school students
- 95,909 students with disabilities (students with IEPs)
  - 14% of total students
  - About 3-4 students with disabilities per classroom
- Utah's total K-12 enrollment has slightly declined recently
- The number of students requiring special education services is rising and has increased by 11% since the 2013-14 school year.

(2024-2025 School Year)

# IEPs and 504

IEP – Individualized Education Program

- Specialized instruction
- 13 categories

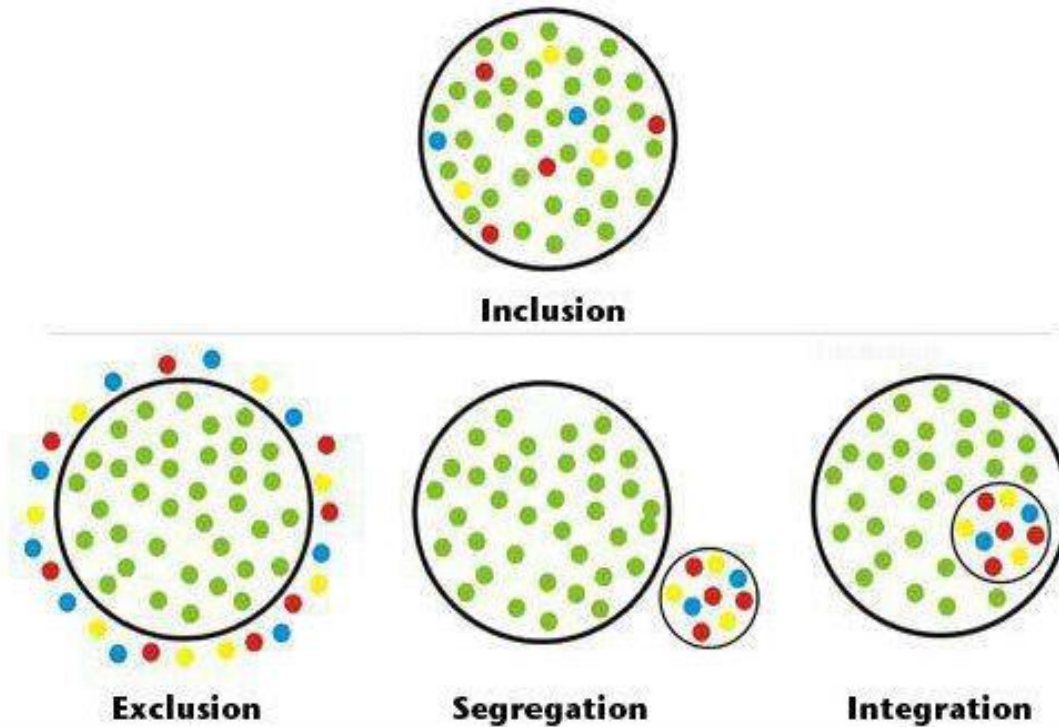
504 Plan

- Accommodations

# Special Needs Committee

- The **Utah PTA Special Needs Committee** is comprised of parents of children with disabilities as well as representatives of agencies and organizations that serve people with special needs.
- The **goal** of the committee is to help students with special needs to be more connected, included and supported in the school and in the community and to encourage high expectations for students with disabilities.
- If you are interested in serving on this committee, please email Karen Conder at [specialneeds@utahpta.org](mailto:specialneeds@utahpta.org)

# Inclusion = the act of including



**Including** = having (someone or something)  
as part of a group or total

# Community Inclusion Strengthens Communities

Inclusion not only benefits individuals with disabilities—it strengthens communities as well.

When communities create opportunities for everyone to participate, people learn from each other and develop greater understanding and respect.

Children who grow up learning, playing, and participating together are more likely to build communities that value diversity and inclusion throughout their lives.

(Utah Parent Center)

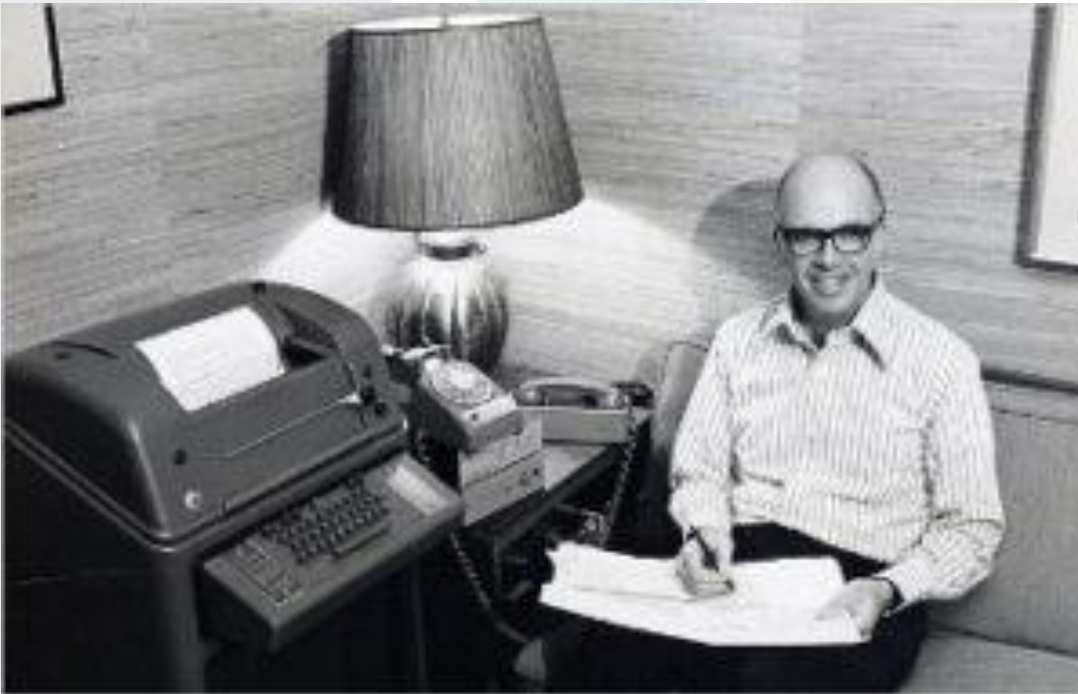


- Inclusion is recognizing that we are 'one' even though we are not the 'same.'
- Inclusion introduces life lessons that are not in any textbook, it fosters interdependence as each person makes valuable contributions.
- Community inclusion involves the recognition that **each person is unique and has different talents and gifts to share**

# Contributions by people with disabilities

# James Marsters

Deaf



Invented the first  
text telephones (TTY)  
which paved the way  
for today's texting

# Christian Boer

## Dyslexia



- Created the Dyslexie font to help people with dyslexia



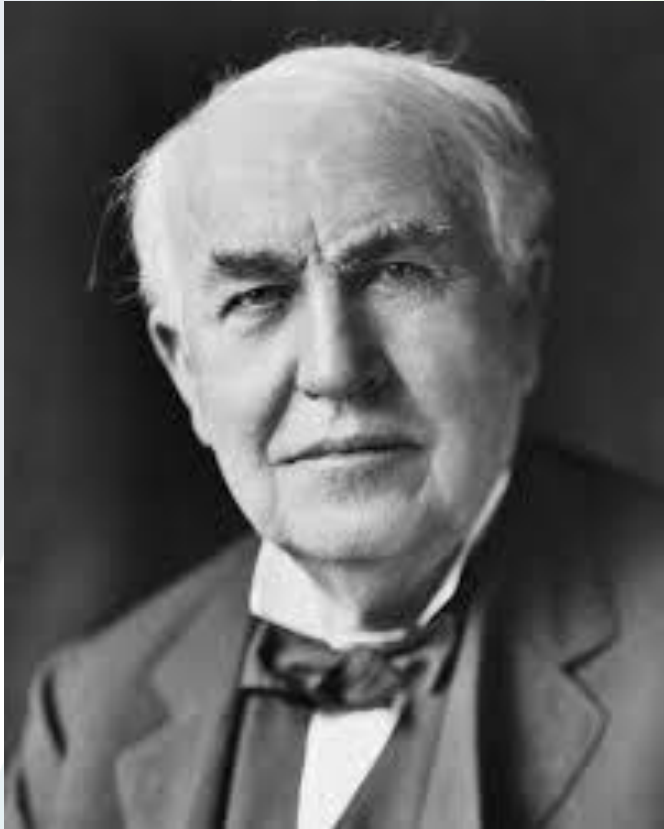
[HOME](#) [TYPEFACE](#) [PRODUCTS](#) [FAQ](#) [DYSLEXIA](#) [CONTACT](#) [SHOP](#)

**THIS IS  
DYSLEXIE  
FONT**



# Thomas Edison

Hard of Hearing, Deaf



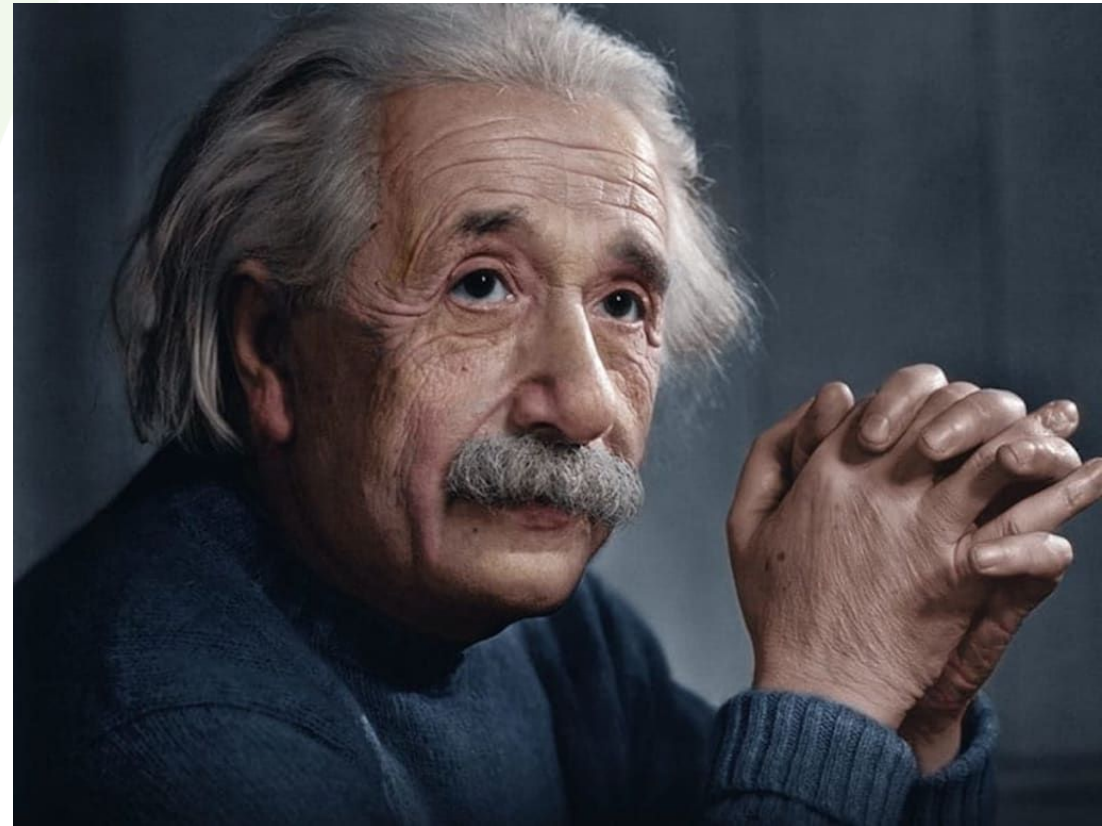
- Incandescent light bulb
- Phonograph
- Electric pen
- Electric power distribution
- Carbon transmitter
- Alkaline storage battery
- Motion picture camera & Kinetoscope

# Albert

# Einstein

## Syndrome

- General theory of relativity
- Special relativity
- Mass-Energy Equivalence
- Light particle theory
- Brownian Motion
- Photoelectric effect



# Jane

## Goodall

(face blindness)

- Chimpanzee behavior insights
- Ethical research methods
- Conservation advocacy
- UN Messenger of Peace
- Roots & Shoots program





# Charlie Lier

Blind

- Packing tape
- Medical adhesives
- Diaper tape
- Window film
- More than 80 patents

# Franklin D. Roosevelt

Polio

Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, was asked why her husband did so much for his country and for the world, **despite** his disability.

She responded, “*No, no, no! He did those things **because** of his disability.*”



# Resources



## Utah Parent Center

Bringing Hope, Opening Doors, Elevating Inclusion

The Utah Parent Center offers **free:**

- Parent-to-parent support through individual consultations
- Trainings, workshops, conferences
- Information and resources
- Materials, handbooks and newsletters
- Online resources, videos and webinars

***Serving families in Utah since 1983***

Utah Parent Center  
5296 S Commerce Drive Suite 302  
Murray, UT 84107

**801-272-1051 or 1-800-468-1160**  
**Spanish: 801-272-1067**

Email: [info@utahparentcenter.org](mailto:info@utahparentcenter.org)  
Web: [utahparentcenter.org](http://utahparentcenter.org)



# Postsecondary Transition Planning Resources for Students with Disabilities

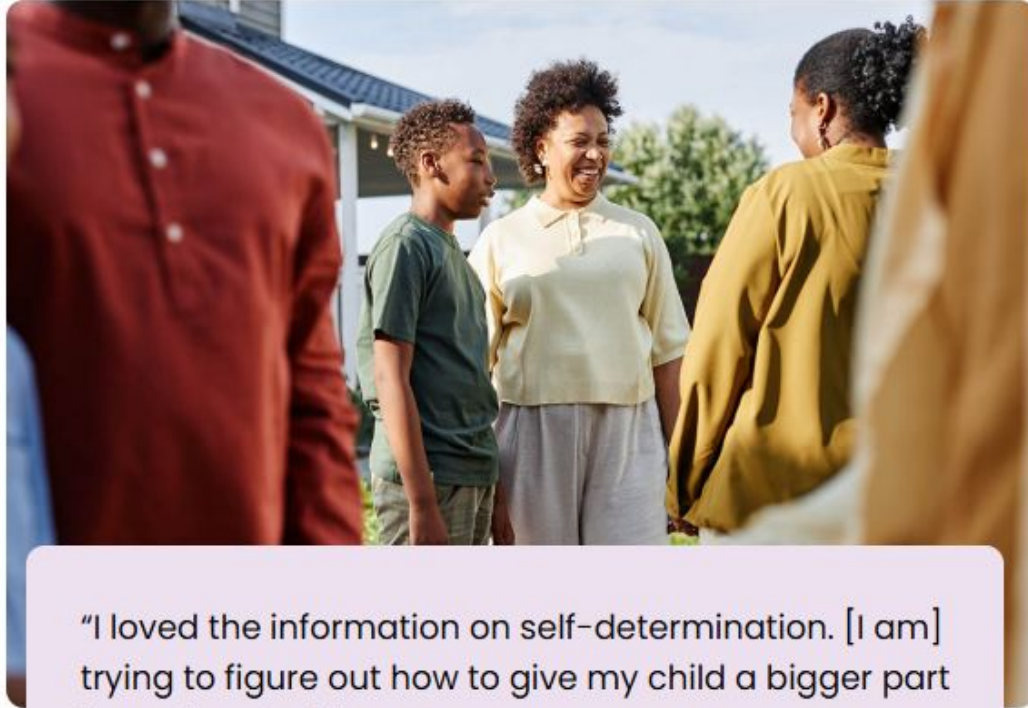
# Utah's Transition Elevated website

[Utahtransitionelevated.org](http://Utahtransitionelevated.org)



## Postsecondary Transition for Students with Disabilities

Improving post-school outcomes for students with disabilities



“I loved the information on self-determination. [I am] trying to figure out how to give my child a bigger part in making decisions.”

## 2. Foster Self-Determination and Self-Advocacy

Children learn about their own value and potential through parent support and expectations. These positive self-attitudes are foundational for the development of self-determination and self-advocacy which are predictors of success in postsecondary education and training, employment and independent living. Educator and family relationships are critical in supporting, engaging and empowering families. (NTACT:C).

[Resources](#)

[Visual Flowchart](#)



# Self-Determination and Self-Advocacy

Resources for Practitioners supporting Students with Disabilities

## About



## Contact Us

[Postsecondary Transition for Students with Disabilities](#)

## Disclaimer

Some of the resources in this Padlet are from other states and may have items and components not applicable to Utah. Please keep this in mind as you examine the materials.

## Strategies and Activities



### Cultivating Mindsets for Success Padlet



• postsecondary transition for

Rooted for Success: Cultivating Mindsets for College and Career Readiness

### Self-Determination\_Self-Advocacy Strategies

- Collaboration with teachers
- Student Self-Monitoring
- Functional Communication
- Postsecondary Transition Assessments
- Discussions with Students
- Direct Instruction

## Assessments



### I'm Determined One-Pager



imdetermined.org

One-Pager - I'm Determined

#### One-Pager

Downloadable, fillable PDF file of the One-Pager - a tool to help others get to know the important things about the student. See also an example of [how the One-Pager is used](#).

## Self-Determination

## Student-Directed IEPs



### Why Is This Cake On Fire? Inviting Students Into the IEP Process



PDF

WhyCakeOnFire

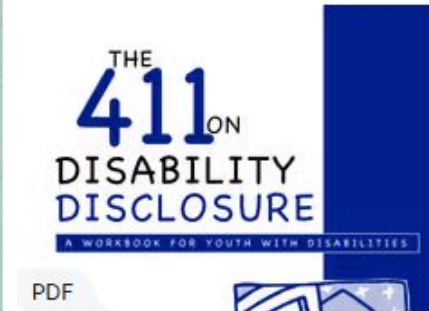
### Transition Elevated- Utah Student Transition Planning App



## Disability Awareness



### 411 on Disability Disclosure



PDF

411\_Disability\_Disclosure\_complete

#### 411 on Disability Disclosure

This workbook is designed for youth and adults working with them to learn about disability disclosure and help them make informed decisions about whether or not to disclose their disability and understand by considering how that decision may impact their education, employment, and social lives. Based on the premise that disclosure is a very



**Utah  
Parent  
Center**

Special needs,  
extraordinary potential

[www.utahparentcenter.org](http://www.utahparentcenter.org)

The mission of the Utah Parent Center (UPC or Center) is to help parents help their children, youth and young adults with disabilities and special healthcare needs to live included, productive lives as members of the community.



# Transition Planning

## (Birth through Adulthood)



### Early Intervention to Preschool

Understanding the process of transitioning from Early Intervention services to Special Education Preschool services.

Early Intervention to Preschool



### Preschool to Elementary

Special Education Preschool is for eligible children ages 3-5 and is provided by each local school district.

Preschool to Elementary



### Elementary to Jr. High

Information sheets for a healthy and successful transition from elementary to middle/jr. high school.

Elementary to Jr. High



Spring 2026

# TU Tuesdays

FREE online workshops for youth with disabilities and their parents/guardians.

Every 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday  
7:00pm - 8:30pm

## April: Live the Life You Want

This class will empower self-advocates with disabilities to take charge of their lives by using their voices, making choices, and participating fully in their communities.



Community Living

## May: Guardianship & Alternatives

Using self-advocacy and self-determination to help young adults with disabilities and their parents make informed choices about guardianship and support at age 18.



Safety & Security



Scan for information on Transition to adulthood at [utahparentcenter.org/transition-university](http://utahparentcenter.org/transition-university)

Register:  
[bit.ly/TUTuesday2526](http://bit.ly/TUTuesday2526)



# CHOICES

A comprehensive guide for families

PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 2022



Learn to navigate Supported Decision-Making, alternatives to guardianship, SSI / SSDI, Medicaid, ABLE Accounts, financial & estate planning, Person-Centered Planning, and health care

## SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

Designed for youth 14 & up to help  
you find your path and live your best life!

### Guide & Workbook



Updated August 2022



## Guiding the Journey, Empowering Success

Vocational Rehabilitation's youth services empower a successful journey from high school to adulthood. These services are tailored for youth with disabilities, aged 14-24. Working together, our proven approach involves school, family and the vocational rehabilitation team. Your future, your success – let's move forward together.



### Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

These services are available to youth with disabilities, ages 14-21. Students do not need to be an eligible client with vocational rehabilitation in order to access Pre-ETS.

[Learn More](#)

# Employment Resources

# Utah Workforce Services Vocational Rehabilitation



[Home](#) [About](#) [Divisions](#) [Partners](#) [Sign in](#)

[Job Seekers](#) [Employers](#) [Assistance](#) [Economic Data](#) [Search](#)

## YOUR ABILITIES COME FIRST

Helping Utahns with disabilities obtain meaningful employment and increase independence.

[Read More](#)



# Utah Parent Center Employment website

## How can I find employment training programs or resources to help me find employment?

What is Competitive Integrated Employment? In simple terms: real work for real pay.

[Voc Rehab Job Coach](#)

[Pre-Employment Services \(Pre-ETS\)](#)

[Pre-Employment Services \(Pre-ETS\) Handout](#)

[Customized Employment](#)

[DSPD or the Division of Services for People with Disabilities.](#)

[DSPD Supported Employment](#)

# Utah Center for Assistive Technology (UCAT)

The Utah Center for Assistive Technology (UCAT) is a statewide resource offering information and technical services to help people with disabilities acquire and use assistive technology devices. UCAT offers free evaluations to anyone within the state of Utah.

## Free Consultation / Referral Form

If you are seeking a free consultation with UCAT, please fill out a referral form and email it to [ucats@utah.gov](mailto:ucats@utah.gov).

[Download Referral Form](#)

## Who We Serve

Our services are available to people with disabilities, parents and other family caregivers, rehabilitation counselors, independent living specialists, special educators, occupational therapists, physical therapists, allied medical professionals, and other who are concerned with and advocate for people with disabilities.



# After School/ Recreation Resources



# Adaptive Recreation

Inclusive and adaptive sports, physical activities, socials, programs, and environments for people with physical, developmental, or intellectual disabilities or impairments.



# Adaptive Social Events

Minds and bodies stay active with cooking classes, continuing education, Saturday night dances, and theater events. Events are open to individuals with disabilities.



# Adaptive Camps

Adaptive and wheelchair sports camps are held throughout the year and open to all ability levels.



# Salt Lake \* Tooele \* Summit

## Independent Living Skills classes & fun activities

Cooking

Knitting/Crocheting

Goal Setting

Bowling

Money Management

Gardening

Vocational Skills

Social Skills

Arts and Crafts

Advocacy

Health and Hygiene

Healthy Relationships

Apartment Living

and more



# Summer Program 2026

*Improving the lives of  
young adults with  
disabilities.*



## Program Requirements:

**Ages:** 16 to 22-years-old

**When:** Summer 2026

Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9am-2pm

Dates: June 15th – July 31st

**Eligibility:** Students must be able feed themselves, use the restroom independently, manage a 5-1 ratio and stay with a group (we will be traveling around the community at a 5:1 student/staff ratio).

**Bus Pass:** Students are responsible for their own bus pass as well as spending money.

**Lunch:** Students must provide their own lunch on Monday and Wednesday. Food will be provided on Friday.

## Activities



### Monday

Community Outings:

- Movies
- Bowling
- Ride UTA Buses and Trax



### Wednesday

Independent Living Skills:

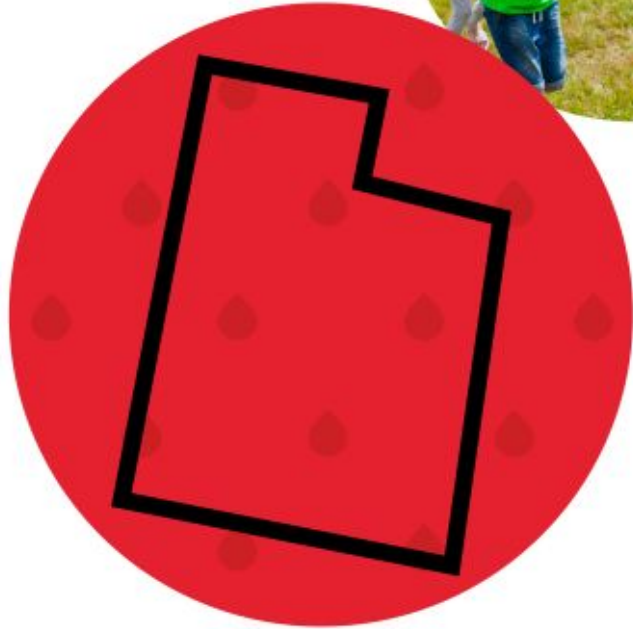
- Budgeting
- UTA Safety
- Hygiene
- Assertiveness
- Social Skills
- Independence



### Friday

Cooking & Nutrition:

- Menu Planning
- Grocery Shopping
- Food Preparation



Updated  
2026

# SUMMER *Resource* GUIDE

## STATEWIDE RESOURCES FOR SUMMER ACTIVITIES

[utahparentcenter.org](http://utahparentcenter.org)



Utah  
Parent  
Center

Bringing Hope  
Opening Doors  
Elevating Inclusion

Contact the Utah  
Parent Center:  
  
801-272-1051

Utah -----2026   
**PTA LEADERSHIP  
CONVENTION**   
together we lead



UNITED ANGELS  
FOUNDATION

# Supporting Parents & Families of Individuals with Special Needs

The United Angels Foundation (UAF) is a non-profit, parent-to-parent support group. The primary mission of the foundation is to support parents and families of individuals with special needs.

# United Angels Community Events

- UAF hosts a free family event for members each quarter  
Classic Skate, Freedom at the Pool, Hee Haw Farms, Winter Holiday Party, etc.





# Ride to New Heights

Annual bi-annual bike camp helps build confidence and independence for individuals with special needs by teaching them to ride a two-wheel bike. This program is also a great service opportunity for volunteers. The vast majority of riders who graduate from the camp will ride away on a two-wheel bike, without assistance.



# Faith-Based Resources



VANDERBILT KENNEDY CENTER

The Vanderbilt Kennedy Center mission is to facilitate discoveries and best practices to improve the lives of persons with developmental disabilities and their families.



## Belonging in Faith Communities

This video illustrates why belonging matters so much and what true belonging looks like in two Nashville-area church congregations.

### Resources

- **Pathways to Belonging**

These resources address how religious congregations can become places of inclusion and belonging for people with disabilities and their families.

- Article: [The changing landscape of disability and ministry in the Church](#)
- Article: [A place of belonging: Including individuals with significant disabilities in faith communities](#)
- Article: [The absence of asterisks: The church and children with disabilities](#)
- Video: [Incomplete without you: The church and people with disabilities](#)

- **Putting Faith to Work**

This practical and powerful approach empowers faith communities to support people with disabilities as they find and maintain employment aligned with their gifts, passions, skills, and sense of calling.

- [Practice Guide \[English\]](#)
- [Practice Guide \[Spanish\]](#)
- [Tip Sheet: How Congregations Can Connect People With Disabilities To Employment](#)
- [Webinar: Putting Faith to Work: Congregations, Employment, and People with Disabilities](#)

- **Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities**

This collection of practical guides and tip sheets are designed to help faith communities become accessible and welcoming communities for people with and without disabilities.

- [Practice Guide: Welcoming People with Developmental Disabilities and Their Families: A Practical Guide for Congregations](#)



Religion and Spirituality Printable Resources



## Welcoming People with Developmental Disabilities and Their Families: **A Practical Guide for Congregations**

By Courtney E. Taylor, Erik W. Carter, Naomi H. Annandale, Thomas L. Boehm, and Aimee K. Logeman



# Utah Parent Center - Disabilities & Faith

Faith communities may be an important part of many individuals' life experience.

## INTERFAITH DISABILITY RESOURCES

- [Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Disabilities Information](#)
- [Methodist Disability Website](#)
- [National Catholic Partnership on Disability](#)
- [National Jewish Council for the Disabled](#)
- [United Church of Christ Disabilities Ministries](#)
- [AAPD Interfaith](#)
- [Centre for Spirituality, Health and Disability](#)

# National Catholic Partnership on Disability



search

Sign up for E-news!

Support NCPD

[Home](#) [Resources](#) [Disability](#) [Events](#) [Affiliates](#) [Catholic Disability Exchange \(CDX\)](#) [Courses](#) [In the News](#) [En Español](#)



**Faithfulness and Trust**  
Ava's Family Story



**Promoting the Meaningful Participation  
of Persons with Disabilities in Church and Society**





THE CHURCH OF  
JESUS CHRIST  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

# Disabilities



Accessible Formats



Teaching Strategies  
for Children with  
Disabilities



Gospel Language  
Symbols



Individuals



Parents and  
Caregivers



Leaders



Resources

# Teaching Strategies for Children with Disabilities

## Part 4: Attention Span

Be sensitive to students' attention spans, and create lessons that are tailored to their needs. Doing so will help them better learn the lesson.



## Part 8: Music and Drama

Employing music and drama in the classroom can be highly effective, especially for students with special needs. When children learn songs and engage in role-playing, their learning becomes active.



# CONNECTING WITH THOSE WITH ANXIETY AT CHURCH



**TRY SIMPLE CALMING exercises**  
 INCORPORATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MINDFULNESS, CALM BREATHING, MUSIC, AND OTHER RELAXATION TECHNIQUES.

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH WHILE BEING RESPECTFUL OF THEIR AGENCY

**REDUCE** POTENTIALLY STRESSFUL DEMANDS, AND TRY TO KEEP THINGS PREDICTABLE AND CERTAIN.

**VALIDATE THE INDIVIDUAL**

**ASK!!!** FOR VOLUNTEERS—DON'T PUT PEOPLE ON THE SPOT

# CONNECTING WITH THOSE WITH ADHD AT CHURCH



**GIVE OPTIONS TO HAVE A PHYSICAL OUTLET**

(SUCH AS A WOBBLE CHAIR, FIDGET ITEMS, AND SO ON.)

**A SCHEDULE** CAN HELP THE INDIVIDUAL KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT AND REDUCE SURPRISES.

**COMMUNICATE** WITH PARENTS TO TRY TO MAKE THE BEST EXPERIENCE POSSIBLE.

**MAKE SEATING ARRANGEMENTS THAT WILL MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS**

**ASK THEM** "WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO KNOW ABOUT YOU?"

# How PTA can help

# COMMUNICATE

***Good communication is the bridge between confusion and clarity***

- Figure out the best way to communicate with your students and families – email, text, paper flyers, posters, phone calls, etc.
- Use multiple ways to share your message.
- Check to make sure your message is being received.
- Include contact information on every communication in case they have questions.

# ACCOMMODATE

- Focus on what accommodations are needed instead of on what the disability is.
- What is appropriate for one person with a special need may not be appropriate for another. Different children may need different accommodations to fully participate.
- Be flexible – be willing to adapt and adjust programs and activities to accommodate for all children, including those with special needs.

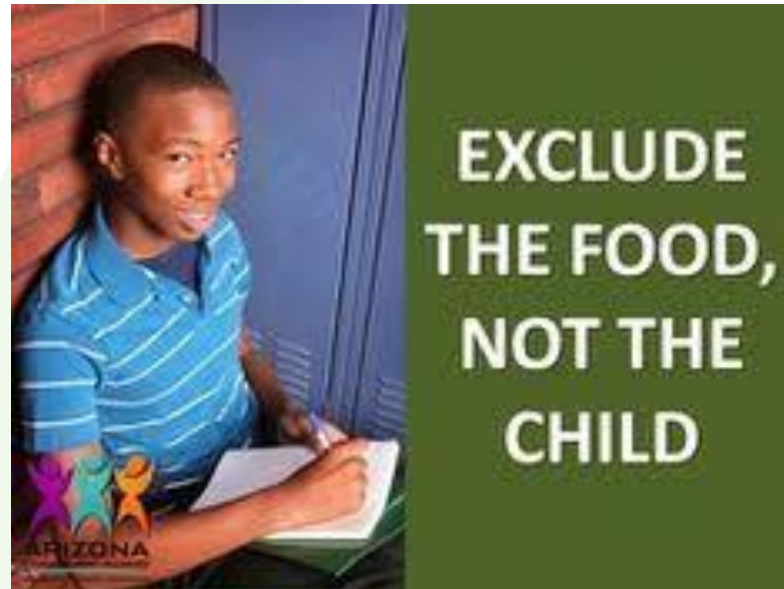
# Possible Accommodations

- A buddy or extra help during field day
- Informed ahead of time about loud noises or surprise elements of an assembly
- Time at a carnival before the rest of the students come
- Let them know what will happen, what they will be expected to do, best place to sit during program, etc

# Food Allergies

an often overlooked disability

**PTA is in a prime position to help make school a safe place for students with food allergies during activities.**



# FOOD ALLERGY SUGGESTIONS

- Communicate with the parents, the teacher and the nurse
- Non-food treats and rewards
- Special food treats - Work with the parents and teachers to get these to the students who need them
- Exclude the allergen, not the child

# Include Everyone

- Many students in special ed classes are not at their neighborhood schools and their parents may not have connections with other parents in the school.
- Sometimes other parents might even be afraid to approach these parents for fear of offending them.
- Being part of PTA could help parents of students in special education connect with other parents and feel more a part of things. Invite them to join PTA.
- Everyone wants to feel welcome and included. It's nice to be invited and informed whether they participate or not.

# Reflections – Accessible Arts Division

- The Accessible Arts Division is an **option** for students who have a disability.
- This allows students to have the opportunity and accommodations they may need to participate fully in the program.
- The Accessible Arts Division offers modified rules and guidelines and allows for some accommodations.
- Proof of disability is not required.
- Students may choose to enter either their grade level Division **or** the Accessible Arts Division.
- Questions? Contact [reflections@utahpta.org](mailto:reflections@utahpta.org)

**“Inclusivity means not just 'we're allowed to be there', but 'we are valued'. I've always said: smart teams will do amazing things, but truly diverse teams will do impossible things.”**

**- Claudia Brind-Woody**

*“There is no greater disability  
in society, than the inability  
to see a person as more.”*

*- Robert M. Hensel*

**Karen Conder**

**Utah PTA Special Needs  
Chair**

**[specialneeds@utahpta.org](mailto:specialneeds@utahpta.org)**

# Connect with us on social media



FACEBOOK

- Utah PTA
- Utah PTA Advocacy
- Utah PTA Super Secondary
- Utah PTA Excellent Elementary
- Utah PTA Treasurers
- Utah PTA Reflections
- Utah School Community Councils
- Utah PTA Teachers
- Utah PTA Battle of the Bands

# Connect with us on social media

INSTAGRAM - @UtahPTA



X - @UtahPTAOneVoice



PINTEREST - Utah PTA



YOUTUBE - Utah PTA One Voice



# UTAH PTA SPONSORS

