

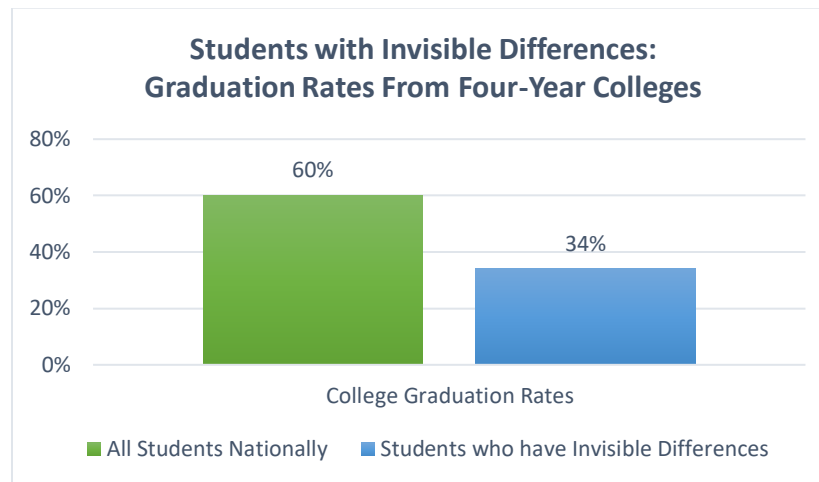


INVISIBLE DIFFERENCES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Studies show that nearly 25 percent of all children today are diagnosed with non-cognitive disorders that interfere with learning and working.

To better serve this important student population, **Companies That Care's Invisible Differences** program has been crafted to support intellectually-typical, diverse learners with neurobehavioral disorders, learning disabilities and mental health disorders so that they can complete their college education and succeed in the workplace. The U.S. Department of Education tracks college graduation rates for students who have *Invisible Differences* and these students are significantly less likely to graduate from college than their non-disabled peers. The *Invisible Differences* program closes that gap.



Sources: U.S. Dept of Education; National Center for Special Education Research

The highly impactful *Invisible Differences Program* delivers year-round programming at schools and in the community for high school and college students, and their parents/caregivers to promote and support student success. Services focus on the knowledge, abilities and motivation students need to navigate and persist in college, earn a degree and enter a chosen career and include:

- *Transition Services*, a four-year program focused on students who are college-bound which fulfills legally required services high schools must provide to diverse learners;
- *PEERS*[®], a 16- week, evidence-based, ecologically valid, social skills program developed at UCLA for teens and young adults who have difficulty making or keeping friends;
- *Navigating College Workshops*, a series of ten 90-minute workshops for high school students and their parents/guardians to set them up for success in college as a student with special needs (sample topics include: Choosing and Applying to College, Disclosure, Documentation and Disability Services, Legal Rights, and Self-Advocacy);
- *Career Awareness Internship*, a six-week, 120-hour summer program introducing students to a variety of careers, developing professional skills, and working in a chosen field (such as: Logistics, Finance, Marketing, Sales, Technology, Human Resources, etc.); and

- *Building a Disabilities-Inclusive College Climate*, a capacity-building seminar for faculty, staff and administrators to build a stigma-free environment where students who have invisible differences receive the accommodations and support they need to thrive and graduate.

This Executive Summary covers:

- *Invisible Differences* Program Design
- Responsibilities
- Pricing

INVISIBLE DIFFERENCES PROGRAM

TRANSITION SERVICES

Legally required, goal-directed services for diverse learners (college-bound Freshmen through Seniors) to ensure students are knowledgeable about their life choices post-high school, are prepared to live independently, and can successfully transition from high school to college. Services are provided in a variety of forms, including both instructional and experiential, and customized to each individual student.

Transition topics include:

- Assessment of student's needs, preferences, and interests
- Goal-setting
- Independent and adult living skills
- Legal rights and laws protecting students and adults with disabilities
- Skills for adapting to college and advocating for what you need to succeed
- Disclosure of disability
- Social skills
- Building a support team
- Best match and fit colleges consistent with grades, scores, student's interests and services needed
- Career interests and opportunities

Parents/guardians are included as part of the program.

Students who participate in Transition Services receive continuing support through college graduation from the *Invisible Differences* program.

*** See Appendix A for a breakdown of services provided each year in high school.

COLLEGE COUNSELING FOR STUDENTS WITH INVISIBLE DIFFERENCES

Deciding which college to attend is a major decision for any student, but even more critical for diverse learners. Although colleges are legally required to provide services for disabled students, the range of services offered by different schools is quite large. Some schools choose to exceed the legal requirements while others do the minimum. In addition, some schools may be more experienced with certain types of disabilities than others. The support and environment provided by the college are critical for the student's success and therefore, what makes each college unique and selecting schools for the best fit are very important considerations.

College Counseling services include:

- Recommendations for best fit colleges
- Confidential research of specific services and individual colleges
- College applications
- School selection
- Disclosure of disability

PARENT INCLUSION NETWORK

Although college students are legally adults, parents continue to be a critical factor in their diverse learner's college persistence and graduation. Therefore, they too need to understand the legal rights that protect their child and best practices that help students succeed. Parent meetings are held each year and parents also participate in the individualized college counseling.

NAVIGATING COLLEGE WORKSHOPS

A series of 90-minute, on-site, interactive workshops prepare high school students with invisible differences, and their parents, to overcome known barriers to college persistence that are unique to diverse learners and to successfully transition and adapt to a post-secondary education environment.

The ten workshops cover the following topics:

1. Introduction to College Life for Diverse Learners: What's so Different from High School?
2. Legal Rights
3. Disclosure, Documentation and Disability Services
4. Choosing and Applying to College
5. Accommodations
6. Self-Advocacy
7. Self-Advocacy Intensive (students only)
8. College Life
9. Resources, Roommates and Tips for Success
10. Finding and Keeping a Job

PEERS® SOCIAL SKILLS INTERVENTION

PEERS® (Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills) is a 16-week social skills workshop, originally developed @ UCLA's Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior for teenagers and young adults with special needs who:

- Have difficulty making and/or keeping friends
- Function best when they have a set of concrete rules to follow
- Misinterpret or miss social cues
- Are afraid of social interactions

PEERS® is the only evidence-based social skills program in the US and Center for Companies That Care is one of very few providers of PEERS® in Chicago. PEERS is available in two formats: school-based during the day where teachers and staff serve as coaches or school-based in the evening when parents/guardians serve as coaches.

The program's proven effectiveness is attributed to several factors:

- Social skills are broken down into concrete rules and steps that are practiced repeatedly throughout the 16 weeks and in a variety of settings.
- Parents or teachers have a formalized coaching role for the students and reinforce the lessons.
- The rules and steps are ecologically valid for teens and young adults. The strategies taught are actually used by teens and young adults in the real world. These strategies may or may not be the strategies adults think teenagers should use.
- The intervention can be modified according to the individual needs of each teenager

FAST TRACK THROUGH COLLEGE: A COLLEGE SIMULATION

The College Simulation is a fast-paced, interactive, competitive workshop that prepares high school Seniors for the social, financial and academic realities of college. In half a day, students experience many of the situations and challenges they will encounter during college. Following the simulation, students participate in an equally important and comprehensive debrief led by college students and recent graduates.

MARCH TO COLLEGE

March to College is an annual All-Ages College Fair and 5K run/walk dedicated to increasing college graduation rates among at-risk youth and diverse learners. Students are prepped to visit the colleges at the fair and ask questions about academics, college life and support for disabilities. All students receive a College-Bound t-shirt.

SUMMER STRETCH & STEM INSTITUTE

Summer Stretch & STEM Institute is a series of concurrent programs running in July & August for at-risk high school & college students. Designed to minimize summer learning loss and prepare youth for college and career success, this program offers certificates in STEM topics, exposure to a multitude of career choices, and professional skill- and confidence-building opportunities.

Programs include:

- Career Awareness Internship
- Service Excellence
- Sales Certificate
- Computer Modeling
- Microsoft Office
- College On-Boarding Colloquium

Overall, the program helps students stand out when they apply to college or for high-demand, well-paying jobs both during and after college.

Career Awareness Internship

Through the *Career Awareness Internship*, students obtain both simulated and actual workplace experience as they acquire key skills and explore potential career paths.

A six-week, 120-hour internship during the summer for underserved high school students to develop professional skills and gain exposure to a variety of different industries and careers within those industries. Students visit approximately 10 companies from diverse industries and engage in a job

shadowing day. On site, at Center for Companies That Care, students learn professional skills and experience working in one of the many functions required to run the program: Logistics and Finance, Human Resources, Marketing and Sales, and Training. Each day interns participate in large group meetings, team meetings, and independent work projects.

College On-boarding Colloquium

This key component of the *Invisible Differences* program brings students and their parents, adult family members and/or guardians together during the summer prior to Freshman year in college to jointly learn how to acquire and enhance important college skills such as time management, financial literacy, managing students' social lives, class registration and how to complete everyday administrative paperwork.

RESPONSIBILITIES

In general, Center for Companies That Care will provide teachers/coaches, curriculum and materials and schools or community-based organizations will provide space, computers and a liaison for the program.

Center for Companies That Care will provide:

- Facilitators and/or coaches;
- In-person or online seminar materials and handouts;
- Food and beverage service for participants;
- Outreach and recruitment materials for students and parents/guardians;
- Transportation within the program, if necessary; and
- Consent forms releasing IEP or 504 Plan summaries

Schools and CBOs will provide:

- Opportunities to meet with students (and parent/guardians) who have IEPs and 504 Plans to explain the program;
- Selection of students;
- Dedicated time and space for Invisible Differences meetings in the school schedule, including evenings for parents;
- Access to computers with high-speed internet access;
- Access to e-gradebook, Naviance;
- Copies of IEP/504 Plan Summary with consent;
- Staff liaison (assigned, but not always present);
- Excused absences for college bus trip; and
- Support for completing requisite state forms to ensure eligibility

PRICING

Under the terms of Center for Companies That Care's agreement with the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) at the Illinois Department of Human Services, services for students (with an IEP or 504 Plan) participating in the *Invisible Differences* program are paid for in full by the State of Illinois. **There is no cost to the schools.**

The pricing structure for *Invisible Differences* is available upon request. Customized program elements are tailored to meet the distinctive needs for each school and its students.

CONTACT US

For additional information regarding *Invisible Differences* or the other fine programs offered by **Companies That Care**, please contact:

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APPENDIX A: INVISIBLE DIFFERENCES TRANSITION SERVICES – BY YEAR

Students participating in Transition Services receive support from *Invisible Differences* throughout college. Transition goals will be accomplished by undertaking the following activities throughout the four years of high school:

<p style="text-align: center;">FRESHMAN YEAR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local college visit ▪ Group Parent Meeting (2X) ▪ Student meetings (monthly) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assessments ○ Post-secondary planning and goal setting ○ Life Skills ▪ College Fair and March to College ▪ PEERS Workshop (students and parent/teacher) ▪ Navigating College Workshops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Navigating College: Overview ○ Navigating College: Self-Advocacy 	<p style="text-align: center;">SOPHOMORE YEAR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local college visit ▪ Group Parent Meeting (2X) ▪ Student meetings (monthly) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Post-secondary planning and goal setting ○ Assessments ○ Life Skills ○ Self-Advocacy ▪ Career Fair and Professional Skills ▪ College Fair and March to College ▪ Navigating College Workshops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Navigating College: Overview ○ Navigating College: Legal Rights ○ Navigating College: Self-Advocacy Intensive
<p style="text-align: center;">JUNIOR YEAR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Group Parent Meeting (2X) ▪ Student meetings (semi-monthly) ▪ College Bus Trip (with parents) ▪ College Simulation ▪ Job Shadowing Day ▪ Career Fair and Professional Skills ▪ Community Service ▪ College Fair and March to College ▪ Navigating College Workshops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Navigating College: Overview ○ Navigating College: Disclosure, Documentation, Disability Services ○ Navigating College: Choosing and Applying to College ○ Navigating College: Accommodations ○ Navigating College: College Life ▪ Individualized College Counseling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ College recommendations consistent with grades, scores, student’s interests and services needed ○ Confidentially research specific services and individual colleges without identifying student 	<p style="text-align: center;">SENIOR YEAR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent Meetings with student (2X) ▪ Student meetings (semi-monthly) ▪ Preparation of Transition section of IEP and Summary of Performance ▪ College Simulation for College-Bound High School Seniors ▪ Job Shadowing Day and Professional Skills ▪ Navigating College Workshops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Navigating College: Overview ○ Navigating College: Accommodations ○ Navigating College: Self-Advocacy -- Intensive ○ Navigating College: Resources, Roommates and Tips for Success ○ Navigating College: Finding and Keeping a Job ▪ Individualized College Counseling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assistance with application essay about disability ○ Selecting a “best fit” college from among acceptances ○ Procedures for disclosing a disability at college ○ Individualized preparation for disclosing a disability

