

Disability Services Newsletter



WELCOME TO THE 2020/2021 ACADEMIC YEAR WE'RE BACK!

After almost a year of primarily Zoom meetings and a sharp focus on social distancing, Disability Services was excited to welcome everyone back to campus for the Fall 2021 semester. Because our team has changed so much over the last year, we wanted to offer students, staff, and faculty the opportunity to meet our new staff members (Chelsea Watts and Maggie Cawley), to see our offices (B215, B207, and B204), and to ask questions and learn more about how Disability Services works and whom we serve.

To that end, we hosted a Disability Services Open House on September 9 from 12:00-2:00. For this event we invited attendees into our offices for snacks, games, DS swag, and conversation. While attendance was light, we had the opportunity to answer student questions, meet some great new faculty members, and reconnect with our fantastic colleagues from across divisions. It was a productive and enjoyable afternoon, and we look forward to making it a regular event.

DS STAFF DEVELOPMENT PUTTING MENTAL HEALTH FIRST

The covid-19 pandemic and the associated isolation, stress, anxiety, and loss has taken a significant toll on the mental health and well-being of people around the world. Studies show people are struggling with a host of issues, including disrupted sleeping and eating patterns, a rise in suicidal ideation, and increases in alcohol and other drug use (Panchal, N., et al., 2021). Even here at RACC, issues of anxiety and depression top the list of causes students provide when they are seeking accommodations.

To address this increased need, DS staff was invited to participate in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training. Classes were held virtually and were administered by the talented staff at Berks Counseling Center. MHFA is a national campaign in which participants are trained to spot and respond to individuals in both crisis and non-crisis situations. While MHFA trainees are not trained to treat individuals with mental health concerns, those who participate in the program are given the tools necessary to respond calmly and confidently in myriad situations, and to connect people with the proper resources so they can get the help they need (National Council for Mental Wellbeing, 2021). If you or someone you know is struggling, support is available.

Service Access Management & Crisis Intervention: 1-877-236-4600
or 610-236-0530

RU Ok Berks: Text ruOK to 484-816-7865

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

National Council for Mental Wellbeing. (2021). *Mental health first aid*. <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/>

Panchal, N., Kamal, R., Cox, C. (2021). The implications of covid-19 for mental health and substance use. Kaiser Family Foundation. <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/the-implications-of-covid-19-for-mental-health-and-substance-use/>

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DS INFO SESSIONS

SEIZURES AND EPILEPSY—WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

As preparation for our Fall 2021 DS Info Session, Kym and Maggie attended the Epilepsy Foundation of Eastern Pennsylvania's (EFEPA) School Training for Teachers and School Personnel. During this training, we were presented with an in-depth look at seizures and epilepsy, the individualized nature of the causes and effects seizures, and common treatments, as well as first aid training for responding to individuals experiencing seizures. We also learned about new advancements in medicine's understanding of seizures, and language/classification changes that go hand and hand with this evolving understanding. EFEPA's program was informative and valuable, and they were generous enough to share their materials with us so that we could use it as the basis

for our own session.

On October 26th and 27th the DS team hosted our own best-practices-informed presentation on seizure awareness and first aid via Zoom. As always, these sessions are open to all staff and faculty, and are meant to help shed light on the needs and experiences of our mutual students. We were pleased to have attentive and inquisitive attendees at each of our four presentations, each of whom had great questions and personal experiences to share with the group. Thanks to everyone who attended!

Anyone interested in viewing our "Epilepsy and Seizure Training" PowerPoint can find it at <https://www.racc.edu/sites/default/files/StudentServices/Disability-Services/Epilepsy-Seizure-Training-10-25-2021.pdf>

***"The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team."
—Phil Jackson***

Welcome
To
The
Team!



DISABILITY SERVICES HAS A NEW EMPLOYEE:

CHELSEA WATTS
DISABILITY SERVICES COORDINATOR/
ACADEMIC SUPPORT SPECIALIST

Chelsea started her career at RACC in 2018 as an adjunct faculty member for Foundational Studies and as a tutor with the EAP team. She received her bachelor's degree in Professional Writing from Penn State University in 2018, and in 2020 earned her master's degree in Higher Education Administration with a concentration in Teaching and Learning from the University of Louisville. In July 2021, she joined the DS team as our Disability Services Coordinator/Academic Support Specialist.

A woman of many talents, in her free time Chelsea enjoys spending time with her dogs, taking care of her farm, and creating soap masterpieces. We are thrilled to be working with her!

She can be found in Berks Hall room 207.



TRANSITION EVENTS

To help local high school seniors prepare for the process of transitioning to college, the DS team has been hosting in-person and virtual transition events on Fridays. We've partnered with Enrollment Services Coordinator Deborah Detwiler and Student Ambassadors to give students with disabilities all the information they need to make an informed choice about coming to RACC. We're pleased to say that we've received rave reviews in particular about how knowledgeable and professional our Student Ambassadors have been on their tours.

Thanks to everyone who helped out to make these events a success!

TEST DROP-OFF PROCEDURES FOR FACULTY

Test Drop-Off Procedures

We're heading into finals, so a quick refresher on dropping off tests for students with disabilities is in order!

In-Person Tests

- Look at your student's memo to determine when you should provide the test to Disability Services*
*For most students, we need the test **the same day/time that you are giving your test**; however, for students whose accommodations include having their tests read to them, **you must submit your test TWO DAYS BEFORE the day your student will take the test** so that we have time to scan and upload your test and make sure that it is working correctly.
- Provide the test to Disability Services—you can email tests to disabilityservices@racc.edu, or drop your test off in B216/B215/B207.
- Let DS staff know how long students in your class have to complete the test and whether

there are special instructions—eg., whether they're allowed to have notes or use their book.

Online Tests

- Look at your student's memo to determine how much extra time you should add to their test time
- Add the extra time
- If you are only opening the test for a certain window of time, make sure that you allow your student's test to remain open for their extended time—adding extra time to a test DOES NOT prevent the test from closing if you have it set to close at a specific time.

In the event that your student has multiple classes back to back, or if your class is in the evening/on a Saturday, your student will need to arrange to take their test when we have office hours. We will communicate with you to ensure that your student has access to their accommodations.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out!

KEEP IN TOUCH!

If you are a faculty or staff member with questions, concerns, or an interest in learning more about Disability Services, we want to hear from you! Our role here at the college is not just to support students, but also to support faculty and staff as you work with students with all kinds of abilities. Feel free to reach out to us individually, or for general questions/comments/concerns, send us an email at disabilityservices@racc.edu.

We look forward to hearing from you!

For more information, visit the Faculty bullet on our web page!:

<https://www.racc.edu/services/facultystaff-information>

