



DRC Spotlight Series



Mary McLaughlin
Disability Resource Coordinator (DRC)
New York (Youth) DEI Project
Tompkins County Workforce NY

A little bit about me...

When I was little I wanted to be a Princess ballerina bride, who sang, did carpentry, and played guitar on the side. And, since I would need to have money, an astronaut too.

My role model in life is my Mom, who got an AS degree as an adult, despite spending years convinced she was not capable. And my Dad, who keeps evolving, trying to help others do the same.

My favorite food is ice cream, gelato, sherbet, popsicles! I'm an equal opportunity frozen dessert consumer. Also, cookie dough, any temp.

A movie or book title that captures the story of my life would be Tuesday.

What this work means to me...

The best thing about being a DRC is that I get to say "Not yet" and "No, but"; not "No," because I'm always learning info, meeting people, and finding tools that will get me to "yes".

The greatest barrier I face as a DRC is when I hear the words "I'm too busy." Even with the web and technology to help, progress stops if staff think they have no time. Undoing that takes energy and effort!

Using an Integrated Resource Team (IRT) approach has enabled partnerships to form at the local level, resource sharing, and participating gives one an inside look at how other partner agencies operate.

One of the innovative ways we expanded programmatic and/or physical access within my AJC was by updating technology and developing colorful signs about available AT.

My frequent go-to resource to support my work as a DRC is Workforcegps.org.

Making an Impact / Systems Change

While we made strides in improving AJC accessibility, youth with disabilities were not frequenting our services. I am most proud of how the DEI helped to increase awareness of the AJC as a resource. When I started as the DRC, I got involved with local committees, such as the Youth Employment Resource Team (YERT), comprised of partners focused on work opportunities and career development for local youth. I quickly started marketing myself as the "go-to" person to help address challenges around youth and disability. I made myself available to give tours for student groups and teachers; members of teams and groups like YERT started reaching out for more information and resources. Being a part of these committees also helped improve partnerships and participation in IRTs. Working with AJC leadership, we then sought to increase WIOA Youth Title I enrollment through a targeted outreach campaign for customers with a disability. This included public transportation, local radio, and social media. Finally, I was in the community every chance I could to share information; I presented at resource fairs designed for different populations and reached out to various affinity groups (schools, homeschool groups, minority organizations, wellness providers, etc.). This allowed us to get information to people who may not have otherwise heard about our workforce services. Now in year three, we have become not only a more well-known community resource, but a more welcoming one for youth with disabilities.