

Inclusion NOW!

Speaking Points (to use with PowerPoint)

Introduction

- (slide 1) My name is (say name). I want to begin by thanking you all for allowing me to speak to you about inclusion.

Transition

- Before we explore the life of many people with developmental disabilities, it is important that I give you some history on the movement and the environment it has endured.

A Civil Rights Movement

- (slide 2) The civil rights movement of the 1960s was about equal rights for African-Americans during a time many struggled with issues of segregation. In 1957, following the ruling for desegregation of public schools in *Brown v. the Board of Education*, the Little Rock Nine faced much hostility when they attempted to enter Little Rock Central High in Arkansas.
- (slide 3) However, with strong leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks willing to speak up and fight for their rights and the rights of all other African-American citizens, inclusion of African-Americans came to be expected.
- (slide 4) The struggle to end segregation has been waged for more than 40 years. While gains have been made to secure and protect the civil rights of people of some races and creeds, there is still a segment of our population for whom inclusion is often a foreign concept – people with disabilities.

The Disability Rights Movement began in the 1970s and continues today, though many are not aware of the struggles people with disabilities still face. Much like the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s for African-Americans, advocates for people with disabilities are asking for equal rights and more accurately, equal opportunities and access.

- (slide 5) Gains have been made through this movement and by vocal activists, including: the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act in 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act also in 1975 and the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990. However, segregation of people with developmental disabilities still exists.

History

- (slide 6) The history of people with developmental disabilities being segregated dates back to the Middle Ages when people were treated like animals, often thrown in what was called an “idiot cage” or left to die after being abandoned.

During the Protestant Reformation, from the early 1500s to the mid-1600s, people with disabilities were viewed and treated as less than human. Martin Luther believed that people with disabilities were not capable of any form of intelligence and labeled them as being evil and “filled with Satan.”

- (slide 7) In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, institutions were constructed to “help” people with disabilities, but lack of funding soon turned these training schools into lockdown asylums where the patients soon became inmates.

Transition

- As you can see, segregation in some form or another has always been a familiar element in the lives of people with disabilities.

Inclusion

- (slide 8) The time to end segregation is NOW. In order to do this, society must begin to see people with disabilities as their equals. They must believe that all people deserve to be valued as contributing community members. Now is the time to tell them...NOW is the time for inclusion.
- (slide 9) So what is inclusion and what does it mean? Inclusion means all individuals live, learn, work, play and participate together in all of life’s experiences. It means providing supports that meet individual needs and that everyone is accepted and regarded as valued members of society.

Transition

- (slide 10) Inclusion offers a way to dispel the myths about disabilities. The key spheres in the inclusion movement are Education, Business, and Community.

Inclusion in Education

- (slide 11) In terms of education, inclusive classrooms are far from the norm.

Students with disabilities are often denied access to mainstream education, and instead are segregated into special education classrooms

or ESE programs in which they are only with other students just like them – with disabilities. In these settings, students with disabilities lack access to fair curriculum. Consequently, many students with disabilities are discouraged and/or unable to pursue higher education after high school. Untrained and uninformed teachers support the continuation of this unwanted trend. The average teacher is not certified to teach a child with a disability, nor is he or she comfortable with the child or aware of how to treat the child in a classroom of other students without disabilities.

- (slide 12) Implementing inclusion in the classroom can maximize a child's access to education, and, in turn, will result in high expectations for all students – those with and without disabilities. Modifications must be made to regular curriculum so that students with disabilities receive effective educational services in age-appropriate classrooms. State reading initiatives, for examples, should be modified so that students with disabilities have equal opportunities for success. These opportunities would then in turn lead to opportunities to pursue higher education and in turn better job opportunities will become more accessible. Inclusion helps students become more understanding and valuing of diversity through exposing them to a more open-minded environment emphasizing equality and respect. But, in order to effectively implement inclusion in the classroom, all teachers must be qualified to teach all students – both with disabilities and without.

Inclusion in Business

- (slide 13) In the world of business, people with disabilities are often not provided the same job opportunities as others without a disability. They frequently are employed in lower-end jobs involving the three F's: food, flowers and filth. And, if they are given better jobs which provide a health benefits package, they face the risk that their necessary health benefits coverage from Medicaid will be cut. Even more of a challenge, people with disabilities in many cases must rely on insufficient transportation to get them to their jobs. Untrained and uninformed employers do not recognize the contributions people with disabilities are able to bring to their staff.
- (slide 14) There are many misconceptions about the capabilities and ambitions of people with disabilities. People with disabilities are often some of the most dedicated employees with a commitment to excellence. They are greatly motivated and productive, with 97% having above-average safety records, 90% being above average in job performance, and 86% having above-average attendance. Businesses that value and employ individuals with disabilities are actually providing themselves with great resources. Reliable health benefits must be secured and ensured for people with disabilities. Transportation should be accessible and reliable so that they can get to their jobs and get there on time. Employers

must understand the contributions employees with disabilities can bring to their staff and the many benefits it can bring to them – including potential tax incentives, a more diverse workplace, team-building experiences for staff and a stable workforce.

Transition

- While inclusion in education and in business is very important, perhaps the most natural place inclusion should occur is in local communities.

Inclusion in the Community

- (slide 15) Segregation of people with developmental disabilities is enabled in our communities in many ways. People with disabilities are discouraged from living on their own by a lack of accessible and affordable housing. Many times they can not secure the proper transportation from their home or apartment to get to their jobs or their doctor's appointments. Medicaid waiver programs which provide a variety of services are in need of expansion and equality. Citizens and leaders are unfamiliar and uninformed about the truth behind many people with disabilities' capabilities of actively engaging and contributing to their communities.
- (slide 16) NOW is the time for inclusion in our communities. Opportunities for rental or home ownership must be available to people with disabilities, including incentives to become a homeowner. Transportation options must be efficient and reliable. Support services, including personal care assistants, should be expanded and more equitable so that people with disabilities can be confident they can live independently. Everyone benefits from an inclusive community. It is crucial that a community's citizens are cognizant and sensitive to the population of people with disabilities. Inclusive communities equal stronger communities.

Inclusion NOW!

- (slide 17) The advocacy for the rights of people with disabilities IS a Civil Rights Movement. This movement dates back to the 1970s, but the segregation of people with disabilities has always been present. It's time that we all accept the rights of people with disabilities to experience life as equal and active members of society. Now is the time to break down the barriers that still continue today to segregate people with disabilities.

Getting Involved

- (slide 18) To learn more about how to get involved in this movement for equal rights, visit the National Inclusion Network's web site at www.inclusion.org, or visit the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council's web site at www.fddc.org.

Take Action...NOW!

- (slide 19) The time to take action is NOW. Start the dialog about people with disabilities and let everyone know that it's not okay to continue the segregation of people with disabilities. Contact your local legislator and tell them why they should support the equal rights of people with developmental disabilities. Tell them that it's never right to segregate anyone. Most importantly, become an advocate and spread the word that NOW is the time for inclusion.

Conclusion

- Thank you for having me here to speak with you about inclusion. Please let me know if you have any questions.