

Fostering INclusion and Environments of Support for Students with Episodic Disabilities (FINESSED)

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CONTEXT

- As the number of post-secondary students seeking accommodations for invisible and/or episodic disabilities increases, we must consider how to raise awareness of these conditions within the post-secondary sector.
- The goal of the FINESSED project is to develop an online course for post-secondary teaching and support staff to a) raise awareness of the challenges faced by students with episodic disabilities, and, b) provide strategies to support and accommodate students living with episodic disabilities.
- The project also intends to raise awareness of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) generally as it applies to students with episodic disabilities.

FINESSED ACTIVITIES

- Work to inform FINESSED: Think Tank (2015); Literature review (2015); National partnerships to conduct student survey, staff survey and faculty key informant interviews (2016); Develop FINESSED Protocol (2017)
- Provincial Environmental Scan on episodic disability in the post-secondary sector (2018)
- Online survey of teaching and support staff on attitudes and issues related to accommodating students with episodic disabilities (2018)
- Discussion paper that reviews work-to-date and identifies potential topics and priority issues to be addressed in online training (2018)
- Convene provincial Summit and post-Summit Webinar to further explore issues relevant to this topic (2018)
- Develop and pilot Online Course (2019)

KEY FINDINGS (2015-2017)

- An increasing number of post-secondary students are experiencing episodic disabilities
- Lack of awareness or training for support and teaching staff about episodic disabilities
- Bias against invisible and episodic disabilities
- Inconsistent definitions of disability
- Inconsistent consideration for episodic disabilities
- Eligibility for accommodations among students with episodic disabilities is problematic
- Students with episodic disabilities often face financial challenges
- Tensions related to academic integrity
- Systemic inflexibility

PROVINCIAL ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN (2018)

- Disability Services are Available:** All universities and the 3 colleges reviewed do have disability services for students.
- Episodic Disability Conceptualization is not Consistent:** Some institutions don't reference it at all, others use it as a prognosis/duration indicator and others use it to differentiate between permanent and temporary disability.
- Medical Disability Applicability:** Many conditions would fall under "Medical Disability" category but it is not always possible to indicate that some permanent and chronic health conditions can manifest episodically.
- Requirement for Diagnosis Disclosure:** Across the board, all institutions require medical documentation of disability in order to access accommodations. There are some exceptions for mental health conditions, based on a Ontario Human Rights Court (OHRC) complaint out of York University.

ONLINE SURVEY (2018)

Respondents (N=60)

- Instructor/Professor/Teacher 48%
- Administrator/Program Staff 28%
- Office for Students with Disabilities 10%

Exposure to Episodic Disabilities

- Familiar with Term 82%
- Work(ed) with Student(s) Experiencing Episodic Disability 93%

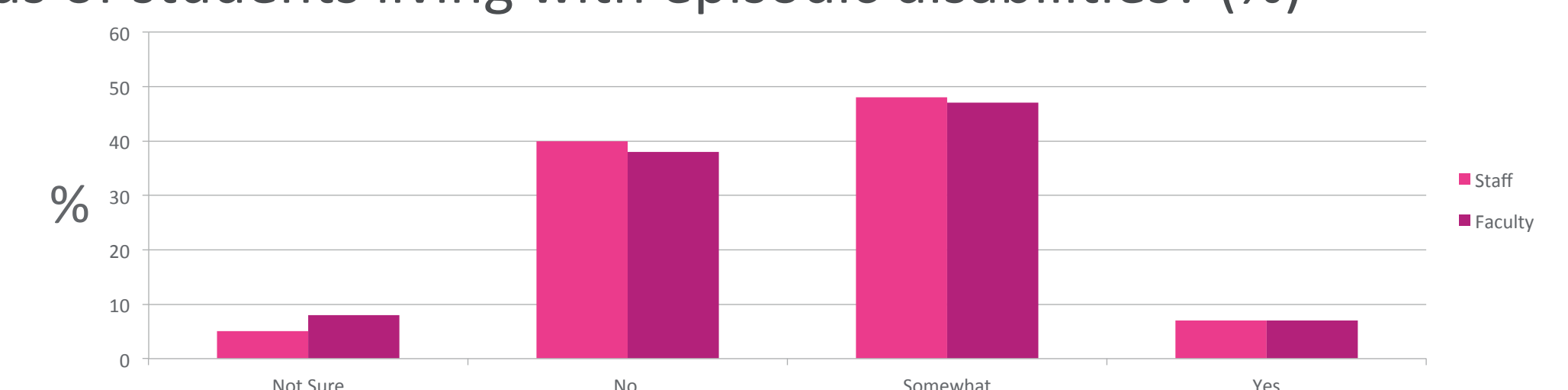
Is there stigma associated with episodic disabilities?

- Yes, I believe so 77%
- Only for some episodic disabilities 10%

To your knowledge, do faculty and/or staff receive any training related to episodic disabilities?

- No 50%
- Not Sure 23%

In your opinion, are faculty/staff knowledgeable about the needs of students living with episodic disabilities? (%)



NEXT STEPS (2018-2019)

- Post-Summit Webinar, November 28, 2018
 - Participants Welcome
- Online Course, January 2019
 - Participants Welcome