



Penn State  
University Park  
WorkLink Program

## Student & Family Handbook

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The Penn State UP *WorkLink Student and Families Handbook* outlines our mission, program, and course of study, and provides important information for students and parents related to university rules, requirements, and schedules.

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For more information go to: <http://www.worklink.psu.edu/>

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Penn State  
University Park  
WorkLink Program

Dear Students and Family Members,

Welcome to Penn State UP WorkLink Program! Your inclusive post- secondary education journey is about to begin.

We look forward to students in the WorkLink Program having a successful college experience. From attending classes to meeting new friends, this will be a formative experience. The journey through a post-secondary college education program will be a time of growth and change for each student. We know that any type of change can be overwhelming, and even a bit intimidating.

Students, we are all invested in supporting your success.

Parents and families, you have invested in your student's educational success, both in and outside of the classroom. You play a vital role in this new experience. We ask you to join us as partners as we aim to maximize opportunities for our students to be successful.

Best Wishes to All for a Successful Year at Penn State UP,

Rosemary Schwoerer, WorkLink Coordinator

Drs. Wendy Coduti & Allison Fleming, Co-directors

# Introduction

- The WorkLink program is a fully integrated, on-campus, non-residential 2-year certificate program, in WorkLink Strategies and Employability, at Penn State University (University Park). The WorkLink program provides the opportunity for individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) to participate in postsecondary experiences and education alongside their peers.



- The WorkLink program's goal is to support WorkLink students in developing work and independent living skills. Students take WorkLink seminars and audit additional Penn State courses. The emphasis for the first year will be orienting to Penn state, promoting personal health and wellness, independent living skills, financial literacy and engaging in person-centered planning to define their career goals and select electives from the general Penn State classes that will contribute to their preparation for employment. The second year is dedicated to engaging in employment opportunities including job shadowing, refining work interests, learning about social skills in the workplace, and pursuing internships on campus or in the community.
- WorkLink is a true partnership within the university and with external partners.
- The program works to identify 'vocational themes,' preferences, and interests, and provides support for job-shadow and internship experiences.
- We continue to develop and refine the program, and are in the process of seeking approval to become a Comprehensive Transition Program (CTP). We participate in activities with the D.R.E.A.M. Partnership, Camp Hill, PA.

# Mission Statement

*The mission of our program is support WorkLink students in developing work and independent living skills and create an inclusive learning opportunity where students can participate in postsecondary experiences and education alongside their peers.*

## Program Themes and Principles

**Inclusion**

**Sense of Belonging**

**Focus on Ability not Disability**

**Self-Determination**

**My Voice Matters!**

**Providing Supports**

**Fading Support**

**Identifying Strengths and Interests**

**Importance of Work and Career**

**Independence**

**Person-First Language**

**Professionalism**

**Learning and Growth**

**Self-Advocacy**

**Embracing Diversity**

**Exploring Careers**

# Admission Criteria

- The program targets individuals ages 18-25 who have Intellectual Disabilities or other developmental disabilities. A typical applicant to the WorkLink Program is an individual who would not otherwise meet college entrance criteria.
- General admission criteria, application, and program information are located on Penn State WorkLink webpage: <https://worklink.psu.edu/>  
Application information is available on the website. Applications will be accepted online or via mail beginning in early spring for the next academic year. See the WorkLink Website for specific dates for the current admissions cycle.
- Completed applications may be submitted online or on paper.
- Admission criteria include documentation of disability and submission of a completed application that includes the following:
  1. An Individualized Education Program (IEP) from the students' secondary school.
  2. Recent evaluation/reevaluation report that documents the individual's disability.
  3. Copy of the student's high school diploma or certificate of completion
  4. A letter of recommendation from an individual who knows the applicant and can attest to strengths and interest in competitive employment. (See provided form in the application packet).
  5. Applicants should have opened a file with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and those with an intellectual disability should have notified their county supports services coordinator of their interest in applying for this program.
  6. Those who submit a complete application and meet admission criteria will be invited for an interview. Interviews are typically held in February or March.

# Program Overview

The program follows Penn State's official academic calendar of 15 weeks of classes per semester plus finals week.

## **On Campus:**

- Students will audit one or more Penn State academic courses with the option of having in-class support from a peer mentor. Peer mentors are also available to provide support for academic activities, including studying and completion of projects.
- Students follow a two-year program of study leading to a Penn State WorkLink Strategies and Employability Certificate
- Students participate in courses that are offered on campus to all students.
- Students will have the option to participate in social activities and student clubs that are offered on campus.
- Peer mentor support will be provided to students to support their academic success.



- This inclusive post-secondary education program benefits the Penn State University Park community by enhancing diversity and creating opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to interact with individuals with intellectual disabilities.
- This inclusive post-secondary education benefits the greater community by expanding the vision and possibilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities.
- This inclusive post-secondary education program benefits employers by making connections to potential employees who will have experience and an understanding of the employer's needs and values.

**Off Campus:**

- Throughout the program, student strengths and work preferences are identified as their vocational themes which are the areas in which they are most likely to be successful. Their vocational themes guide their identification for career goals and internship experiences.
- In the second year, students will be individually placed in internship opportunities, both on and off campus, to engage in career exploration and gain work experience.

# Differences Between High School and College

Understanding differences between the K-12 school experience and college is key to a smooth transition. The primary differences that impact students are legal protections, advocacy, individual programs, and supports.

## Legal Protections

### **K-12 System – through age 21**

- The K-12 public school system is governed by the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) that created an entitlement for individuals with specific disabilities (in public schools), through age 21, to a *Free Appropriate Program of Education* (FAPE).
- Public schools are required to offer services and programs that meet the individual needs of students with disabilities including appropriate accommodations and modifications to the general education program.
- Public schools are responsible for initiating the IEP meeting, providing the services and programs outlined in the IEP, and monitoring student progress.
- Under IDEA, parents maintain the right to make educational decisions for students through age 21 and have access to all student educational records. Although FERPA applies to students in K-12, it does not negate IDEA protections, parent access to information, and parental decision-making authority.
- Secondary Transition planning is mandated, beginning at age 14 (in PA). That includes IEP goals in the areas of post-secondary education, employment, and independent living.
- When a public school places a student with a disability, under age 21 in a post-secondary education program, IDEA protections apply.

### **College**

- IDEA protections no longer apply, once a student with disabilities graduates or reaches age 21.
- The *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) and *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act* still apply. These are “non-discrimination” statutes based on a civil rights model, not entitlement programs and cover a wider range of disability categories than those covered under IDEA.
- Colleges must provide access to educational programs and reasonable accommodations to any individual with a disability to provide the opportunity to participate.
- Colleges are not required to modify courses, guarantee successful learning, or offer special programs for individuals with disabilities.
- Colleges provide access to accommodations through their offices of disability services. However, students must seek out those services and communicate with faculty regarding any accommodations.
- FERPA transfers privacy rights to the student when he or she enrolls in a post-secondary education program, including college. That means that parents do not have the right to review their child’s college records, grades or other information without the student’s written permission.

# Differences Between High School and College

## Advocacy

### Advocacy in High School

- Schools initiate annual IEP meetings and invite the parents and students to participate.
- Student input on the IEP is requested beginning at least at age 14; however, parents remain the decision makers through age 21.
- In high school parents are typically involved in advocating for appropriate services and supports for their children and may contact their student's teachers on a regular basis.

### Advocacy in College

- In College, students are expected to advocate for themselves and are expected to initiate contact with faculty and their advisers if they have questions regarding their coursework, schedule, and program of study.
- College faculty do not typically communicate directly with parents. Faculty are responsible for understanding and following FERPA, and typically do not have contact with parents regarding coursework and assignments.
- Parents and families can support student autonomy by encouraging responsibility and problem solving and relinquishing unnecessary control.
- While parent support is actively sought, direct parent involvement is not always sought.

### Impact on Students in the WorkLink Program

The difference between high school and college highlights the importance of developing student autonomy and self-advocacy skills. Students should actively participate in their IEP meetings while in high school and receive support to speak for themselves and advocate for their own needs. In order to encourage self-advocacy skills, the role of parent becomes one of supporter and coach.

WorkLink utilizes a variety of strategies to assist students in making the leap to self-advocacy. Students, rather than parents, are encouraged to arrange appointments with *Student Disability Resources* staff to identify their needs for accommodations. The Program Coordinator and peer mentors will coach the student regarding the process for informing faculty about accommodations. Sample forms/letters are provided for students to use to introduce themselves to a faculty member and explain their learning needs. Seminars that focus on self-determination are offered. Students are coached to inform faculty of planned or otherwise required absence from class, and to request adaptations and modifications to course assignments.

# Differences Between High School and College

## Individual Plans and Supports

### Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and Supports in High School

- In high school the IEP Team, including parent and student, develops the IEP and the school must follow this legal document in the provision of educational services. Supplementary aids and services are provided to enable students to participate in general education classes. Schools provides one-to-one support and related services including physical and occupational therapy, health services, and transportation, as needed.
- Adaptations and modifications of curriculum, instruction, and materials are required by IDEA and state regulation.
- The school, with student and family input, is responsible for arranging and providing accommodations and modifications, and monitoring progress.

### Supports in the College / Post-Secondary Education Setting

- Unless a student has been enrolled in the college program by the public school, and is under age 21, the college has no role in implementing an IEP.
- Students make an appointment with *Student Disability Resources* staff to develop a plan for accommodations based on documentation of the disability. It is the student's responsibility to provide documentation and seek out these services.
- Accommodations are outlined in a letter from the *Student Disability Resources* staff. The student is then responsible for providing the letter to each faculty member and discussing the requested accommodation with the faculty member.
- Students who audit an academic course may negotiate course modifications with the faculty member. When a course is taken for academic credit, accommodations may be provided, however, modifications that would change the basic course competencies, curriculum or assessment are not provided.
- Students who need one-to-one support or nursing services are responsible for providing that service or support on campus.

### Impact on Students in the WorkLink Program

Students in the WorkLink Program typically audit two academic courses each semester. Students enroll to audit the courses, and do not take the course(s) for credit. Since the student is auditing the course(s) and not taking the course(s) for credit, modifications to meet the needs of the student may be provided. The student, with the support of the Program Coordinator should negotiate those modifications

By registering for at least one academic course, WorkLink students become PSU students. They receive an ID card and access to PSU facilities, services, including CANVAS, Penn State's course management system, and *LionPATH*, the student registration and information system.

The WorkLink Program works with *Student Disability Resources* staff and faculty to identify course modifications and create an individualized set of expectations for each student for their course.

WorkLink students are expected to make appointments with the *Student Disability Resources* staff as part of the initial enrollment process to arrange for any accommodations needed and follow up, if necessary if additional appointments are needed. Peer mentors and program staff will provide support to the students to acquire the necessary accommodations.

During the individual student interview and planning meetings, students and families should identify any individual support needs. Note that specific, one-to-one support, for example a one-to-one assistant, nursing or other health services, and companion services, is not part of the program offered by Penn State University Park and is the responsibility of the student and family. Depending on the support need, WorkLink may arrange for the support under a specific agreement with the student and family along with an identified method to pay for the services. These issues are handled on an individual basis and may require coordination with the student's Support Coordinator from the County Office of Intellectual Disability Services or Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. We encourage students to invite their OVR counselors and/or Community Support Coordinators to the PCP meetings so that needs can be identified and coordinated on an ongoing basis.

# Program Requirements

## Semester One

### **WorkLink Students will:**

- Participate in initial orientation and planning events. Students participate in orientation, course registration, and activation of their Penn State Identification Card.
- Meet peer mentor(s) and staff and begin to establish relationships and expectations.
- Participate in initial individual person-centered planning using Penn State's *Lion Tracks* planning tool, this includes goal setting and vocational and career exploration.
- Enroll in, and audit, up to two academic courses that matches the student's individual personal and vocational interests. Each student selects his or her own courses based on interest and availability.
- Participate in the WorkLink Seminar curriculum (**RHS 97**)
- Define and discuss the principles of self-determination in relation to themselves.
- Participate in at least one official freshman seminar activity and one other campus enrichment event.
- Meet with their adviser to review Basic Program Requirements.
- Participate in mid-semester planning meeting to assess progress.

## **Semester Two**

### **WorkLink Students will:**

- Continue work on goal setting.
- Identify behaviors required to attain goals.
- Audit up to two academic courses that match the student's individual personal and vocational interests. Each student selects his or her own courses based on course availability.
- Participate in the WorkLink Seminar curriculum (**RHS 97**)
- List personal attributes and vocational interests.
- Identify work environments compatible with personal attributes and vocational interests.
- Continue individualized career exploration by participating in job shadowing experiences on or off campus.
- Continue to focus on self-determination and personal decision-making.
- Participate in at least one official freshman seminar activity and one other campus enrichment event.
- Prepare a presentation on his or her career interests. Participate in an end of the semester activity during finals week to make the presentation.

## **Semester Three**

### **WorkLink Students will:**

- Continue work on goal setting.
- Identify behaviors required to attain goals.
- Audit up to two academic courses that match the student's individual personal and vocational interests. Each student selects his or her own courses based on course availability.
- Participate in the WorkLink Seminar curriculum (**RHS 197**)
- Continue to identify personal attributes and refine vocational interests.
- Continue to identify work environments compatible with personal attributes and vocational interests.

- Continue to focus on self-determination and personal decision-making.
- Practice job skills in individualized career exploration, including practicum experiences on or off campus.
- Participate in at least one Penn State seminar activity and one other campus enrichment event.

## **Semester Four**

### **WorkLink Students will:**

- Assess progress toward goals.
- Audit up to two academic courses that match the student's individual personal and vocational interests. Each student selects his or her own courses based on course availability.
- Participate in the WorkLink Internship curriculum (**RHS 295**)
- Practice job skills (variable hours per week) in a capstone internship experience that matches the student's vocational interests.
- Prepare a capstone project related to the student's career goals.
- Students who complete the WorkLink Program will receive a Penn State WorkLink Strategies and Employability Certificate.
- Participate in an end of the semester activity during finals week and prepare and make a presentation on a topic related to career or personal interests.

We anticipate that the program will be provided as scheduled, with live face to face instruction. However, we must follow Penn State guidelines for distancing, face coverings, and other mitigation policies and are subject to University plans for instruction. This document describes current program requirements in a four-semester sequence. Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) is expected each semester. Some students may need more than four semesters to complete the program; students may continue beyond four semesters provided the student makes SAP. Criteria for SAP will be shared during the interview and orientation meetings.

Program requirements are also outlined in the *Lion Tracks* Person Centered Planning document. *Lion Tracks* will be used to update the student's completion of the program of study during a meeting each semester with the student's adviser.

Faculty will take attendance at each class using *CANVAS*, Penn State's Course Management System.



# Educational Support Services

## Peer Mentor and Academic Support

Full-time Penn State undergraduate students or graduate students are peer mentors who provide academic supports to students who enroll in the program. Peer mentors training in their role prior to the beginning of the semester and throughout the school year.

We provide peer mentors to help students have a successful experience. If you have any questions or concerns regarding a peer mentor, please talk with either the Support Services Coordinator or the Program Coordinator. If you do not feel comfortable talking to them face-to-face, you can email them or text them with your concern(s).

## Job Support

The program includes job support with the help of a program staff member to assist in identifying employment skills and preferences. The staff member with the assistance of peer mentors accompanies students to job sites, provides supports, and will fade supports as students become confident and proficient in their work. The program staff member helps to identify the students' vocational themes and offers assistance in identifying jobs that match the students' skills and interests.

## Student Orientation

Orientation for students and their families is a process that begins with open houses and tours and continues after students are offered admission to the program. Registration and specific program planning takes place prior to the beginning of the semester. Students and families are notified well in advance of the date. The orientation addresses coursework expectations, planned career exploration, volunteer opportunities, peer mentor support, and support services available to students on campus. In addition, students are invited to general student orientation activities that occur at various dates throughout the semester.

## *Lion Tracks* Person-Centered Planning

Penn State's *Lion Tracks* person-centered planning process recognizes and supports the student's individual personal plans, hopes, and dreams for life and work. The process begins with the student's interview and orientation and continues throughout the program. *Lion Tracks* is based on program standards and information from Think College, a national organization dedicated to developing, expanding, and improving inclusive higher education

options for people with intellectual disability.

[https://thinkcollege.net/sites/default/files/files/resources/Outcomes\\_Foundation\\_Skills\\_College%2BCareer\\_0.pdf](https://thinkcollege.net/sites/default/files/files/resources/Outcomes_Foundation_Skills_College%2BCareer_0.pdf).

## **Mid-Semester Progress Review**

WorkLink has adopted a progress reporting process for the program that includes an individual mid-semester planning meeting. The Program Coordinator will arrange this meeting. Students, and when necessary, parents of students who have provided written permission will be invited to the meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss individual progress on goals, the academic course and customer relations course, and the student's vocational themes. This meeting provides the opportunity to discuss options for the next semester's academic course selection, and preferences for the practicum experience.

## **Information and Resources**

Penn State has designed this guide for students and parents that outlines important information you will need throughout the school year. The ***WorkLink Student and Families Guide*** is provided during your orientation and registration meeting. This handbook provides information that is specific to WorkLink requirements, coursework, and auditing an academic course.

# Satisfactory Academic Progress

Students are expected to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) in order to continue in the program. To make SAP, students must meet program requirements including coursework, participate in campus activities and seminars, and career exploration activities. SAP will be documented through Penn State's CANVAS Course Management System and *Lion Path* each semester. Mid-semester progress meetings with program faculty and the student's adviser will occur each semester to review progress.

## **Attendance**

Students are expected to attend all classes and participate in program experiences, including internship. Consistent attendance offers the most effective opportunity for students to realize academic enrichment and self-determination and be successful in their career goals. Faculty will take attendance at each class. Attendance is one of the factors that is considered when determining Satisfactory Academic Progress.

While some absences are unavoidable, frequent absences, whether excused or unexcused, affect the ability of a student to succeed in the WorkLink Program. If a student's attendance record becomes an issue, we will request a meeting with the student and parent/caregiver. Students who continue to have excessive absences jeopardize their eligibility to continue in the program.

Appointments scheduled on campus, for example, with the *Student Disability Resources* staff or other university faculty or staff, should be scheduled at times that do not conflict with scheduled classes and internship experiences. Off campus and personal appointments should be scheduled at times that do not conflict with scheduled classes, activities, and practicum experiences.

If the student is ill, the student is responsible for contacting the academic course instructor, the Program Coordinator, the Support Services Coordinator, their peer mentor, and their practicum supervisor (as applicable to the situation).



# Penn State University Park WorkLink Program

## Student Information

The ***Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)*** is a federal law enacted in 1974 that protects the privacy of student's education records. All educational institutions that receive federal funding must comply with FERPA. All students enrolled in the WorkLink Program at Penn State University Park are covered by FERPA. This law gives students the right to say who can and cannot access information such as grades, tuition bill, class schedule and more.

During the registration process, WorkLink students receive information on FERPA along with a form that enables the student to grant written permission to the parents / caregivers to access student information, including student records, invitations to meetings, and to contact program staff.

With the delegated access function in LionPATH, students can grant parents/family members the ability to view this information. For instructions on how to grant delegated access, go to **[lionpathsupport.psu.edu/help/undergraduateparent](https://lionpathsupport.psu.edu/help/undergraduateparent)**

Read more about FERPA at **[registrar.psu.edu/confidentiality/FERPA\\_faq.cfm](https://registrar.psu.edu/confidentiality/FERPA_faq.cfm)**

## Code of Conduct

The Penn State University Code of Conduct outlines 17 behaviors that students need to avoid as they are inconsistent with the essential values of Penn State. The Office of Student Conduct is responsible for interpreting and enforcing the Code of Conduct, ultimately determining whether or not a student has violated that code. The Code of Conduct fosters a culture that is self-disciplined, where civility is embraced, and the norms and foundational beliefs validate the essential values of Penn State. The Code of Conduct will be reviewed with students in their WorkLink seminar. To learn more about the Code of Conduct go to <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/support-safety-conduct/student-conduct/code-conduct>

Take the Know the Code quiz at **<https://edge.psu.edu/id/ktc/>**

# Penn State WorkLink Student Expectations

- 1. I agree to participate in the new student orientation meetings in August and individual progress reporting and planning meetings.**

Mid-semester progress meetings provide a forum to review input from your program coordinator, instructor, job coach, and peer mentor. Options for the next semester's coursework and practicum interests/opportunities will be discussed.

- 2. I agree to pursue my interests on campus, such as student organizations and events, in addition to my academic course(s) and WorkLink coursework.**

Students are encouraged to have an authentic college experience and become involved in campus activities. Clubs and organizations are available. Peer mentors can provide support to navigate some of these experiences and provide the support that you need.

- 3. I understand the WorkLink program does not offer intensive one-on-one support. There will be times when I am on my own on campus and will participate independently in WorkLink activities. It is expected that support will be provided as needed and faded over time.**

Student should be as independent as possible on campus while still experiencing success. We will provide as much or as little support from a peer mentor as you need, but will not continue peer mentor support when you are fully capable of being independent on campus. Peer mentors can help you to meet new friends and expand your social network.

- 4. I am responsible for completing my homework and course assignments and may request peer mentor support. I should direct questions or concerns about peer mentor support to WorkLink faculty and staff.**

As a college student you will be provided with the amount of peer mentor support that you need to successfully complete your work. It is important for students to be responsible for their own work and not rely on a peer mentor, parent, or classmate to complete your work. Greater independence and self-reliance is a result of completing your own work.

- 6. Work done for college classes is held to a higher standard than work done in high school.**

Plain and simple, college is more difficult than high school. You will have to work harder, put in more time and effort, and be dedicated to your successfully completing all of your assignments and properly preparing for tests & quizzes. Take full advantage of your time on campus with your peer mentor and limit the amount of work you are taking home.

**7. I am responsible for contacting the WorkLink staff for questions about classes, assignments or if I will be late or absent.**

If you have any questions or need additional support in any area, you should immediately go to the Program Coordinator for assistance.

**8. If you are late or absent you need to contact the following individuals, depending on your absence:**

WorkLink faculty, peer mentor(s), internship supervisor (if applicable), academic professor/instructor. It is your responsibility to have contact information for each of the individuals listed above. If you need assistance with making a contact list, a peer mentor is available to provide you with the help you need.

**9. I am responsible for contacting the professor for my academic class if I will be late or absent from class. I should review the course syllabus and ask my professor any questions that I may have regarding absences and tardiness.**

Your course syllabus will state the professor/instructor's policies on absences. If you are going to be late or absent for any reason, it is your responsibility to notify your professor. Faculty take attendance in each class.

**10. I am responsible for contacting my faculty advisor regarding any questions about internship and contact my supervisor if I will be late or absent from internship.**

Your internship experiences are a major part of our program. It is very important that you be present as much as possible. If something does come up and you must miss a day, you will need to contact your job coach (if applicable) and supervisor as soon as possible prior to your absence.

**11. I am responsible for making appointments with *Student Disability Resources* staff regarding accommodations. If an accommodation is needed, the *Student Disability Resources* will provide an 'accommodations letter' that outlines the accommodations(s) for the course(s); and I am responsible for giving the letter to the professor/instructor. A new accommodations letter is needed each semester.**

We will provide as much help as you need to navigate this process. Peer mentors will also help you with your accommodations in your academic class

**12. I am responsible for my behavior and will follow Penn State University's Student Code of Conduct. This includes all COVID-19 policies such as face coverings, following signage, physical distancing, and testing mandates.**

It is important to be aware of the Penn State Code of Conduct. It will be reviewed with you in class. To learn more on your own about the Code of Conduct go to <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/support-safety-conduct/student-conduct/code-conduct>

Take the Know the Code quiz at <https://edge.psu.edu/id/ktc/>

### **13. My Voice Matters!**

Self-Determination and Self-Advocacy are both a huge part of our program. We will work to help you understand that your voice matters in every single decision you make in your life. Your thoughts, ideas, input, and ultimately your decisions are what will determine the direction you take in this program and your future.

# The Role of Family and Caregivers

As the application and orientation process moves forward, families and caregivers will be provided with information about the program and the expectations for families and caregivers. These expectations will be thoroughly reviewed at the student's registration and planning meeting and the August orientation meetings.

## Family and Caregiver Expectations

### **1. Support and encourage students to participate independently in all activities on campus.**

This may be a challenge, as parents may be used to guiding and supporting their children through every aspect of their life up until this point. Every activity and every experience may not always go as planned. Students may not succeed the first time they attempt something on campus. They may decide they don't like a certain activity, or they may even be frustrated or upset with how the entire experience unfolded. This happens to many college students. Authentic experiences can also be opportunities to learn. Providing exposure to these experiences will help your student to continue to grow and gain more independence.

### **2. Parents are invited to attend orientation meetings in August, and when necessary, individual mid-semester progress reporting and planning meetings held each semester.**

This is your time to learn about the program, understand your student's daily schedule, raise concerns, and help to plan for the future. \*Students have the option of providing a waiver to enable WorkLink Program staff to invite parents to meetings and directly communicate with parents.

### **3. The WorkLink program provides peer mentor support for course assignments, as a companion to academic classes, and activities as needed. It is expected that support will be provided as needed, and then will fade over time as appropriate, as the student develops confidence and skills.**

Students are encouraged to identify the support they need. The WorkLink Program does not offer intensive one-on-one support, unless specific arrangements are made for such support. There will be times when the student is on their own on campus. The goal is for students to participate independently in WorkLink activities and campus activities outside of the structured program.

A student may be assigned to the same peer mentor throughout the semester, or more frequently, multiple mentors depending on schedules & availability. If students have any



issues with a peer mentor they should go directly to a member of the WorkLink faculty to report the issue. Parents should not initiate contact with peer mentors unless there is an emergency.

**4. The student is responsible for completing homework and course assignments and may request support from a peer mentor.**

Students will have the opportunity to work with faculty to schedule the amount of peer mentor support they feel that they will need to be successful. We will also encourage the student to take steps towards navigating the program as independently as possible, while still experiencing success.

**5. The student is responsible for contacting WorkLink faculty and staff for questions about classes, assignments, or if he/she will be late or absent from a class or activity.**

Unless there is an emergency or a specific program concern that needs to be addressed, all communication should come from the student.

**6. The student is responsible for contacting his or her professor for academic classes with questions on assignments, or if he or she will be late or absent from class. (Attendance Policy discussed later in manual).**

The course syllabus typically has information on the faculty member's policy on absences. Students should address questions regarding the absence policy to the faculty member. It is not appropriate for a parent to contact a university professor. If the student has an immediate issue that needs to be addressed, the student should bring that to the professor's attention via email or set up a meeting during office hours. If the student needs support from a peer mentor to address this issue, we will be happy to arrange that support. If the issue is still not resolved, the student should meet with WorkLink faculty who will help the student handle the issue.

Parents and caregivers can provide support by making sure that the student knows their professor's name, knows their email address and phone number, and has access to their office hours. Saving this information in multiple places may be very beneficial.

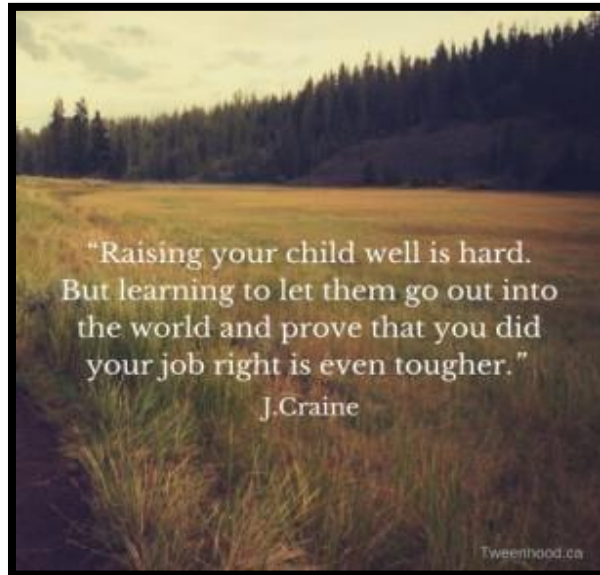
**7. The student is responsible for making appointments with the Office of Student Disability Resources (SDR) regarding accommodations. If accommodations are needed, SDR will provide an "accommodations letter" that outlines the accommodations; the student is responsible for giving the letter to the professor. A new letter is needed every semester.**

If needed, this is also where students will access any necessary assistive technology. Peer mentors are available to provide support in making appointments and learning to use any assistive technology. Scheduling and going to the meeting is a big step toward students gaining their independence and self-determination on campus. We support them in

becoming their own advocate and accessing the assistance they need to be successful.

**8. The student is responsible for his/her behavior on campus and will be held to Penn State University's Code of Conduct.**

Parents will only be notified if there has been an issue on campus that must result in a suspension from the program or an ongoing issue has not been resolved despite multiple interventions. Daily reports and/or updates on student's activities will not be provided.



# Contact Information

## WorkLink Team

**Rosemary Schwoerer, MA**  
**WorkLink Coordinator**

Email: [rsc291@psu.edu](mailto:rsc291@psu.edu)

Phone: 814.360.3538

## Dr. Wendy Coduti

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Phone: 814.863.2416

## Dr. Allison Fleming

Email: [apf5208@psu.edu](mailto:apf5208@psu.edu)

Phone: 814.863.2285

## Program Website

**WorkLink at Penn State University Park - <https://worklink.psu.edu/>**



### **Final Thoughts**

Life is a giant buffet of choices. You make the decisions about what you want, where you go, and how successful you will be. Many students with disabilities have successfully completed postsecondary experiences and have wonderful careers. You are the key to your own success. You have the support of your parents, teachers, counselors, and other students, but the adventure is yours. If you plan ahead, develop goals, and are willing to explore your interests and communicate what you need, who knows all that you will be able to accomplish. Begin planning. "It's your future now."

(Evers, 2012)

## **Penn State WorkLink Program *Student Information***

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law enacted in 1974 that protects the privacy of student education records. All educational institutions that receive federal funding must comply with FERPA. All students enrolled in the WorkLink Program at Penn State are covered by FERPA. Student education records may be disclosed only with the student's prior written consent. Therefore, to release information to family members, caregivers or agencies, student permission is required.

We recognize the parent's role in supporting students in this program and are, therefore, providing this written notice and request for student permission to release information to parents and caregivers and others, as specified below. Please read the following statements, and if you agree, please place your initials next to each area that pertains to the release of student information/student records.

### **As a student,**

I agree that WorkLink Faculty and staff may contact my family/caregiver with invitations to campus events, other program related events, individual progress reporting, mid-semester progress reporting and planning meetings.

I agree that WorkLink Faculty and staff may share with my family/caregiver progress reports, faculty reports, including semester end reports, attendance reports and transcripts.

I agree that WorkLink Faculty and staff may share with my family/caregiver regarding any issues in which I am involved related to the Penn State Code of Conduct.

I agree that WorkLink Faculty and staff may share my educational records with the Office of Student Disability Resources (SDR) for the purposes of designing accommodations for my participation in courses and activities.

I agree that WorkLink Faculty and staff may discuss my enrollment and progress in the program with my caseworker or supports coordinator when these individuals contact WorkLink Faculty .

I agree that Career WorkLink Faculty and staff may discuss my enrollment and progress in the program with my OVR counselor when these individuals contact WorkLink Faculty .

Note: WorkLink Faculty will maintain student records submitted with the application with appropriate confidentiality. The information will only be accessible to Penn State faculty, staff and partners in the program who work with the student. Any other record release or sharing would require prior written notice with student permission.

*I confirm that I understand the above statements by signing on the line below.*

**Student** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Penn State WorkLink Program Family/Caregiver Expectations

Please read the following statements. If you agree, please initial each commitment.

**As a family member or caregiver,**

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that the student is responsible for all aspects of his/her participation in the WorkLink program and that my role as a parent will likely be different than previous settings (like high school). My role is to support the student to engage independently in all activities.

\_\_ I agree to attend the parent orientation meetings and any other necessary reporting and planning meetings held as needed.

\_\_ I understand the WorkLink Program provides peer mentor support for course assignments, social activities and as a companion to academic classes, as needed. It is expected that support will be provided as needed and be faded over time. Students are encouraged to identify the support that they need; this is an important aspect of the program. WorkLink does not offer intensive one-on-one support, unless specific arrangements are made for such support. There will be times when the student is on his or her own on campus. The goal is for students to participate independently in WorkLink activities and campus activities outside of the structured program.

\_\_ The student is responsible for completing homework and course assignments and may request support from a peer mentor.

\_\_ The student is responsible for contacting WorkLink staff for questions about classes, assignments, or if he/she will be late or absent.

\_\_ The student is responsible for contacting his or her professor for academic classes with questions on assignments, or if he or she will be late or absent from class. The student should ask the professor for his or her policies on absences and tardiness, typically included in the course syllabus.

\_\_ The student is responsible for making appointments with the Office of Student Disability Resources (SDR) regarding accommodations. If accommodations are needed, SDR will provide an 'accommodations letter' that outlines the accommodation(s); the student is responsible for giving the letter to the professor. A new letter is needed each semester.

\_\_ The student is responsible for his/her behavior in campus and will be held to Penn State University's Code of Conduct.

**I confirm that I understand the above statements by signing on the line below.**

Parent/Caregiver \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Penn State WorkLink Program Student Expectations

Please read the following statements and if you agree, please place your initials next to each commitment.

**As a student,**

I agree to participate in the new student orientation meetings and individual progress reporting and planning meetings.

I agree to pursue my interests on campus, such as student organizations and events, in addition to my academic course(s) and WorkLink coursework.

I understand the WorkLink program does not offer intensive one-on-one support. There will be times when I am on my own on campus and will participate independently in WorkLink activities. It is expected that support will be provided as needed and be faded over time.

I am responsible for completing my homework and course assignments and may request peer mentor support. I should direct questions or concerns about peer mentor support to WorkLink faculty and staff. Individual one-to-one support is not provided unless arranged in advance.

Work done for college classes is held to a higher standard than work done in high school.

I am responsible for contacting WorkLink staff for questions about classes, assignments, or if I will be late or absent.

I am responsible for contacting the professor for my academic class if I will be late or absent from class. I should consult the syllabus and/or ask my professor for his or her policies on absences and tardiness.

I am responsible for making appointments with the Office of Student Disability Resources (SDR) regarding accommodations. If an accommodation is needed, the SDR will provide an 'accommodations letter' that outlines the accommodation(s) for my course(s); and I am responsible for giving the letter to the professor/instructor. A new accommodations letter is needed each semester.

I am responsible for my behavior and will follow Penn State University's Student Code of Conduct.

\_\_\_\_\_ *My Voice Matters!*

**I confirm that I understand the above statements by signing on the line below.**

**Student Signature** \_\_\_\_\_



**CONSENT, LICENSE AND RELEASE AGREEMENT**

I, the undersigned, hereby grant my permission and consent to The Pennsylvania State University ("Penn State") and its affiliates, officers, agents, and employees (together, "Penn State Representatives") to photograph, video record, or audio record me.

I hereby grant an irrevocable, world-wide, royalty-free right and license to Penn State and Penn State Representatives to utilize, adapt, modify, reproduce, distribute, publicly perform and display the photographs, video, and/or audio (collectively "Media") taken of me for use in promotional, educational, informational, advertising or commercial materials and communications in any form now known or later developed, including but not limited to publications, websites, articles, brochures, books, magazines, newsletters, exhibits, videos, films, social media, advertisements, and training programs (collectively "Materials"). Furthermore, I hereby authorize and consent to the use of my name, image, likeness, and voice (collectively, "Likeness") in the Media for all Materials or any other purposes deemed appropriate by Penn State.

I hereby waive any right to be notified or to inspect or approve the Media or any Materials that are created using my Likeness, now or in the future, whether that use is known or unknown to me. I hereby waive any right to royalties or other compensation arising from or related to the use of the Media or Materials. I hereby release and hereby agree to indemnify and hold harmless Penn State and its trustees, Penn State Representatives, and their licensees and assigns for any and all claims that I or any third party may have now or in the future for invasion of privacy, right of publicity, copyright infringement, defamation, or any other cause of action arising of the use, utilization, adaptation, modification, reproduction, distribution, publicly performance or display of my Likeness in the Media or Materials. In accordance with this complete release of all rights in my Likeness used in the Media and Materials, I hereby waive any and all claims, damages, or liability arising from or related to the use of the Media, including but not limited to any misuse, distortion, blurring, alteration, optical illusion, or use in composite form, either intentionally or otherwise, of my Likeness that may occur or be produced in taking, processing, reducing, adapting, modifying, producing, reproducing of the Media and Materials and their publication, distribution, display or performance.

I understand and agree that Penn State is and shall be the exclusive owner of all right title and interest, including any copyright, in the Media and Materials.

I have read this Consent, License and Release before signing below, and I fully understand the contents, meaning, and impact of this Consent, License and Release. This Consent, License and Release shall be binding upon and inure to the benefit of my successors and assigns and contains the entire understanding of the parties with regards to the Media and Materials.

I hereby represent that I am eighteen (18) years of age or older and I am competent to contract in my own name.

\_\_\_\_\_ Name (print) \_\_\_\_\_ Email (non-PSU) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date

I hereby certify that I am the parent and/or legal guardian of the above-named minor and do hereby give my consent without reservation to Penn State on behalf of such minor child.

\_\_\_\_\_ Name (print) \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Parent or Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date