October is known as Learning Disabilities / Dyslexia / Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Awareness (ADHD) Month. According to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, approximately 7.3 million students aged 3 – 21 receive special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Of that 7.3 million, 32% are students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD). Specific Learning Disabilities refers to conditions where genetic or neurobiological factors alter brain functioning in a way that affects cognitive processing related to learning and can often interfere with the development of skills such as oral language, reading, written language, and mathematics. There are a vast range of symptoms and conditions that can fall under the designation of "learning disability", including but not limited to Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia, as well as many others.

ADHD is not technically considered a learning disability, but research shows that 30-50% of children with ADHD also have a specific learning disability. ADHD is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects approximately 11% of school aged children and continues into adulthood for over 75% of those diagnosed. ADHD is characterized by developmentally inappropriate levels of inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity, as well as having issues with executive functioning and other cognitive functions. While a significant amount of those diagnosed with ADHD are diagnosed in childhood, the population of adolescents and adults diagnosed has been steadily increasing over the last several years, and even more so over the years associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, with research showing a 10% increase in those who received prescriptions for stimulant medication (a common treatment for ADHD) during 2020-2021, for several adolescent and adult age groups. ADHD and some other neurodevelopmental conditions are also known to exist under the umbrella of neurodiversity. Neurodiversity is often used to describe individuals with diverse or variant cognitive functioning. The term asserts that the cognitive differences of neurodiverse conditions are just variations of the human brain.

The processing problems related to learning disabilities and neurodiversity can inhibit obvious skills such as writing, reading, handwriting, and math. They can also affect higher executive functioning skills such as time management, memory, organization, attention, and abstract or metaphorical reasoning. People with learning disabilities might not only experience struggles within a classroom setting, but might also experience issues with interpersonal relationships, workplace environments, and in their daily lives, and those diagnosed can struggle with their symptoms their whole lives. Additionally, these conditions often run in families as research has shown strong evidence that learning disabilities and neurodiversity is genetically inherited. While the conditions can be disabling or impair participation

in certain activities, with proper accessibility and support neurodiverse individuals/those with learning disabilities can be successful in education, work, and all aspects of their lives.

Further resources on intellectual disabilities and ADHD/neurodiversity can be found through the links below:

- Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDAA): https://ldaamerica.org/
- AAVMC DEI Glossary: https://www.aavmc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/AAVMC-DEI-Glossary-2023-01.pdf
- AAVMC Diversity & Inclusion on Air Podcast, Disability Topics in Veterinary Medicine Playlist: https://soundcloud.com/diversitymatters-at-aavmc/sets/shows-on-disability
- Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD): https://chadd.org/
- International Dyslexia Association (IDA): https://dyslexiaida.org/

Sources:

- https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgg/students-with-disabilities
- https://ldaamerica.org/types-of-learning-disabilities/
- https://ldaamerica.org/disabilities/adhd/
- https://chadd.org/for-professionals/trends-in-stimulant-prescription-fills-among-commercially-insured-children-and-adults-united-states-2016-2021/
- https://chadd.org/about-adhd/overview/