

FAMILY NAVIGATION GUIDE

Center for AI Equity and Access

For Families Navigating Disability, Education,
and the Fight for Your Child's Access to AI Tools

"You are not alone. We have walked this road. And we built this guide so you do not have to walk it in the dark."

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CO-FOUNDERS

We Know This Road

When you find out your child has a disability — dyslexia, ADHD, autism, Asperger syndrome, or another developmental difference — the first feeling is often not the one anyone talks about. Before the grief, before the determination, before the advocacy — there is often just overwhelming confusion. Where do we go? Who do we talk to? What does this mean for their future?

We know that feeling. The founder of this Center lived it. Her son — now an independent adult and co-founder of this Center — was that child. And the years between that diagnosis and his independence were filled with exactly the kind of navigation this guide is designed to help you do.

We are not offering you a pamphlet. We are offering you the roadmap we wish someone had handed us — and a community of people who have walked every step of this journey.

And we are offering you something new: a guide specifically focused on AI tools — the most powerful assistive technology your child may ever have access to, and the one that schools are currently, wrongly, trying to take away.

Let us walk you through it. One step at a time.

STEP 1 — UNDERSTANDING THE DIAGNOSIS

What the Diagnosis Means — and What It Does Not

The most important thing to understand about a diagnosis of dyslexia, ADHD, autism, or Asperger syndrome is what it is not. It is not a measurement of your child's intelligence. It is not a ceiling on their potential. It is not a life sentence.

It is a description of how their brain processes information differently. And different does not mean less.

What Each Diagnosis Means for Learning

Diagnosis	How the Brain Works Differently	What This Means for School
Dyslexia	Processes written language differently — letters, sounds, and words take more cognitive effort to decode	Reading, spelling, and writing are harder — but comprehension, reasoning, and vocabulary are often strong
ADHD	Regulates attention and executive function differently — sustaining focus, managing time, and organizing tasks require more effort	Long tasks, deadlines, and structured environments are harder — but creativity, hyperfocus, and problem-solving are often exceptional
Autism Spectrum Disorder	Processes social information and sensory input differently — communication and social navigation require more conscious effort	Social interaction and flexible thinking can be harder — but detail focus, pattern recognition, and deep expertise are often extraordinary
Asperger Syndrome	(Now classified as ASD Level 1) — strong verbal ability alongside challenges with social communication, flexibility, and sensory processing	Social communication and unwritten rules of classroom life can be hard — but depth of knowledge, honesty, and commitment to interests are often remarkable

Your child is not broken. They are differently wired. And AI may be the tool that finally lets the world see what their mind can do.

STEP 2 — KNOW YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS

What the Law Guarantees Your Child

You have more power in this system than it may feel like. Here are the most important things to know:

In K-12 Schools — IDEA and Section 504

- Your child has the right to a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) — at no cost to your family.
- Your child has the right to an Individualized Education Program (IEP) if they qualify under IDEA, written specifically for their needs.
- Your child has the right to a 504 plan if they do not qualify for an IEP but still need accommodations.
- Your child has the right to assistive technology — including AI tools — if it is needed for them to access their education.
- You have the right to participate in every IEP meeting, disagree with evaluations, request independent evaluations, and file complaints if your rights are violated.
- You have the right to an advocate or attorney at IEP meetings.

In College — Section 504 and the ADA

- College students with documented disabilities have the right to reasonable accommodations through the disability services office.
- Documentation of disability (psychological evaluation, medical diagnosis) is typically required — start gathering this in high school.
- AI tools can be requested as accommodations — the Center provides documentation templates and guidance.
- The college cannot deny an accommodation without an individualized assessment of whether it is reasonable.

The law is on your child's side. Learning to use it effectively is one of the most important things this Center will help you do.

STEP 3 — GETTING AI INTO YOUR CHILD'S PLAN

How to Fight for AI Access in Schools

This is the heart of what the Center exists to help you do. Here is a step-by-step guide to getting AI tools recognized as accommodations for your child.

For K-12 Students — Adding AI to an IEP or 504 Plan

1. Request a meeting with your child's IEP or 504 team. You can request this in writing at any time.
2. Come prepared with specific AI tools in mind. The Center provides a tool guide matched to specific disability profiles.
3. Use this language at the meeting: "I am requesting that the team conduct an assistive technology evaluation to determine whether AI tools would support my child's access to education under IDEA."
4. If the team resists, cite the legal framework. Under IDEA, the team is required to consider assistive technology for every student with a disability. AI tools meet the federal definition of assistive technology.
5. Request that specific AI tools be written into the plan with guidelines for use — not a blanket permission, but a structured protocol.
6. If the school refuses, contact the Center. We provide advocacy support and, where needed, referrals to disability rights attorneys.

Model IEP Language for AI Accommodations

The student is permitted to use AI writing assistance tools (such as [specific tool]) to support the organization and expression of their written work. The student is responsible for all ideas, arguments, and content. AI tools are used to compensate for processing differences in written expression, consistent with the student's assistive technology needs under this IEP.

For College Students — Requesting AI Accommodations

7. Register with the college's disability services office as early as possible — ideally before the first semester.
8. Bring documentation: psychological evaluation, prior IEP or 504 plan, and any relevant medical records.
9. Specifically request AI tools as part of your accommodation package. The Center provides a sample accommodation request letter.
10. If the disability services office is unfamiliar with AI accommodations, provide the Center's position paper as supporting documentation.
11. If your request is denied, request a written explanation and contact the Center for guidance on next steps.

STEP 4 — AI TOOLS BY DISABILITY PROFILE

Matching the Right AI Tools to Your Child's Needs

Not all AI tools are equally useful for all disabilities. Here is a starting guide to matching tools to specific learning profiles:

Disability Profile	Most Useful AI Functions	Suggested Starting Tools
Dyslexia	Text-to-speech, reading simplification, writing support, spell check beyond standard spellcheck	AI reading assistants, AI writing tools, grammar and clarity tools
ADHD	Task breakdown, time management, focus support, step-by-step instruction, reminders	AI planning tools, AI task managers, AI summarization tools
Autism / Asperger Syndrome	Social communication support, script development, instruction clarification, routine building, sensory processing support	AI communication tools, AI social scenario practice, AI schedule managers
Processing Speed Differences	Extended explanation, paced instruction, text simplification, summarization	AI tutoring tools, AI summarizers, AI Q&A tools
Executive Function Differences	Organization, planning, prioritization, task initiation support	AI project planners, AI brainstorming tools, AI writing organizers

The Center provides individualized AI tool consultations for families — helping match your child's specific profile to the tools most likely to make a difference. Contact us to schedule a consultation.

STEP 5 — TAKING CARE OF THE WHOLE FAMILY

You Cannot Pour from an Empty Cup

Advocating for a child with a disability is one of the most demanding things a parent will ever do. It requires learning an entirely new system, fighting for things your child should have by right, managing your child's emotional wellbeing while managing your own, and sustaining the effort year after year.

The Center for AI Equity and Access serves the whole family — not just the child. Here is what we offer parents and caregivers:

- Peer support community — connect with other parents who are navigating exactly what you are navigating
- Navigation coaching — one-on-one guidance from a parent advocate who has been through it
- Respite and emotional support resources — because you cannot show up for your child if you have nothing left
- Celebration — we mark every milestone, every victory, every step forward. Because the wins are real and they deserve to be celebrated.

You are not failing. You are fighting. And the fact that you are looking for help means your child already has one of the most important things they need: a parent who will not give up.

RESOURCES AND NEXT STEPS

How to Connect with the Center

The Center for AI Equity and Access is here for you at every stage of your journey. Here is how to get started:

Contact and Intake

- Complete our Family Intake Form to tell us about your child and where you are in the journey
- Schedule a free initial consultation with a family navigator
- Join our family community — online and in-person
- Access our AI tool library and accommodation template repository

Key Resources

- Center for AI Equity and Access Position Paper — AI as Assistive Technology (included in this packet)
- Model IEP and 504 Plan AI Accommodation Language
- College Disability Services AI Accommodation Request Letter Template
- AI Tool Guide by Disability Profile
- Family Rights Under IDEA, Section 504, and the ADA — Plain Language Summary
- Self-Advocate Stories — hear from young adults with disabilities who found their tools and their voice

"You found this guide because you are fighting for your child. That fight is the most important work in the world. We are honored to be in it with you."

— The Center for AI Equity and Access