

# Possibilities

## in Education and Training

Summer 2025



## Chyna's Journey: A Story of Communication, Choice, and Community

By Michelle Johnston, Program Coordinator, Iowa UCEDD, Center for Disabilities and Development



Chyna enjoying a beautiful sunny day at an inclusive playground.

**Chyna Jenkins** is a young woman whose energy, charm, and determination lights up every room she enters. With the help of a Dynavox eye gaze communicator and an adapted pencil, she confidently expresses herself, shares her preferences, and connects with those around her. These tools have opened a world of communication for Chyna, allowing her to voice her thoughts and make choices that reflect her personality and independence.

Chyna previously lived at Hills and Dales in Dubuque, where she received excellent care and created many cherished memories. Her journey has been shaped by the people who believe in her. One of those people is Mickey King, who first met Chyna when she was in middle school. Their bond deepened during Chyna's sophomore year in high school, when Mickey had the opportunity to work with her one-on-one during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mickey quickly recognized Chyna's intelligence and quick learning ability. With a connection to Hills and Dales, Mickey eventually was asked to become Chyna's guardian. Though Chyna's mother remains

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**Chyna and her guardian, Mickey, at her high school graduation.**

passing by. She also enjoys taking the bus to appointments and meeting people for lunch. Starting in July, she will begin attending a day program, about which she is excited.

Chyna is known for her big personality—she is a people person who brings joy and laughter wherever she goes. Her guardian Mickey emphasizes the importance of including everyone on her care team when making a transition to the community. “The caregivers aren’t always in the meetings,”

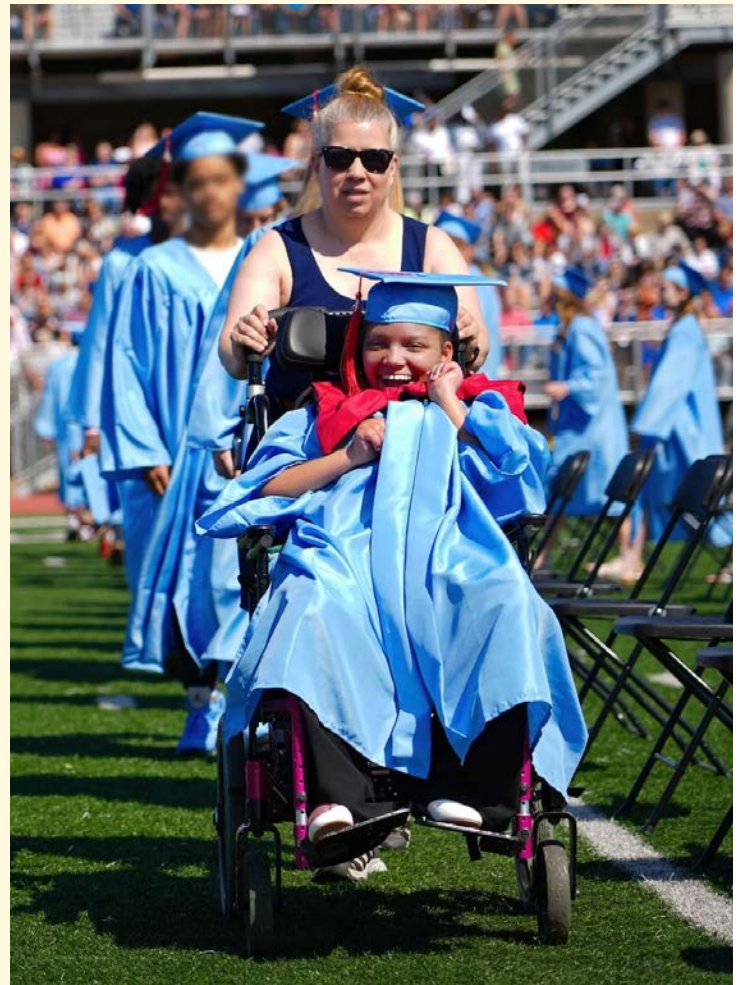
Mickey noted, “but they should be, since they know things about daily life that others might not have thought of.” Chyna’s story is a beautiful reminder of what’s possible when communication, choice, and community come together.

a very important part of her life, she lives out of town, and as Mickey says, “It takes a village!”

Recognizing her potential, Chyna’s dedicated team began exploring opportunities for her to transition into community living. Jodi Ruden at Hills and Dales was instrumental in connecting Chyna with the Money Follows the Person (MFP) program, which supports eligible Medicaid recipients with funding for transition services and enhanced supports during their first year in the community. MFP Transition Specialist Jodie Schmidt ensured the move was seamless and efficient, going above and beyond to make Chyna feel at home. Her unwavering commitment played a vital role in making the transition a success.

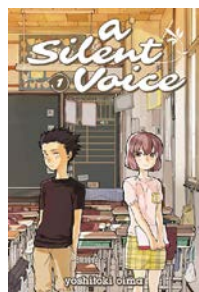
Now, Chyna lives in an apartment with one roommate and is actively involved in choosing a second. She enjoys the freedom to make decisions about her daily life—something she did not always have in the past. Whether it is deciding when to go to bed or how long to play on her iPad, Chyna relishes having control over her routine.

At home, Chyna enjoys a variety of activities. She loves watching YouTube videos and playing games on her iPad, coloring, and spending time with staff. One of her favorite pastimes is simply hanging out in her bedroom or sitting on the patio, watching birds at the feeder and people



**It’s graduation day!**

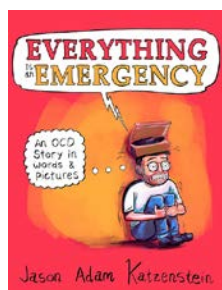
Often times, graphic novels are dismissed as simple “comic books.” But over the last two decades, more and more titles have earned literary recognition, while multiple studies are exploring their value. As the medium continues to evolve and more stories are published, many now feature the experiences of people with a wide range of disabilities. The disability resource library would like to highlight the following graphic novels that feature such characters, which are available for check out from its collection. For further information or questions, you may contact the disability resource librarian, Mitch DeFauw, at [mitchell-defauw@uiowa.edu](mailto:mitchell-defauw@uiowa.edu).



### El Deafo

by Cece Bell

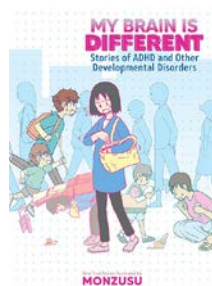
At her old school, everyone in Cece's class was deaf. Here, she is different. She is sure the kids are staring at the Phonic Ear, the powerful aid that will help her hear her teacher. Then Cece makes a startling discovery. With the Phonic Ear she can hear her teacher not just in the classroom, but anywhere her teacher is in school. This is power. Maybe even superpower! Cece is on her way to becoming El Deafo, Listener for All.



### Everything is an Emergency: an OCD Story in Words & Pictures

by Jason Adam Katzenstein

Jason Adam Katzenstein is just trying to live his life, but he keeps getting sidetracked by his over-active, anxious brain. Jason has obsessive compulsive disorder, a mental illness that compels him to perform rituals in order to protect himself from dangers that do not really exist. Then, he fully short-circuits. Everything is an Emergency is a comic about all the self-destructive stories someone tells himself, over and over, until they start to seem true.



### My Brain is Different: Stories of ADHD and Other Developmental Disorders

by Monzus

This intimate manga anthology is about the struggles and successes of individuals learning to navigate daily life with a developmental

disorder. The comics follow the stories of nine people, including: a junior high dropout finding an alternate path to education; a former “troublesome” child helping kids at a support school; a so-called problem child realizing the beauty of his own unique quirks; and a man falling in love with the world with the help of a new medication. This book illustrates the anxieties and triumphs of people living in a world not quite built with them in mind.



### The Oracle Code

by Marieke Nijkamp

After a gunshot leaves her paralyzed, Barbara Gordon enters the Arkham Center for Independence, where Gotham's teens undergo physical and mental rehabilitation. Now using a wheelchair, Barbara must adapt to a new normal, but she cannot shake the feeling that something is dangerously amiss. Within these walls, strange sounds escape at night; patients go missing; and Barbara begins to put together pieces of what she believes to be a larger puzzle.



### A Silent Voice

by Yoshitoki Oima

Shoya is a bully. When Shoko, a girl who cannot hear, enters his elementary school class, she becomes their favorite target, and Shoya and his friends goad each other into devising new tortures for her. But the children's cruelty goes too far. Shoko is forced to leave the school, and Shoya ends up shouldering all the blame. Six years later, the two meet again. Can Shoya make up for his past mistakes, or is it too late?

Possibilities in Education and Training is a quarterly publication of University of Iowa Stead Family Children's Hospital Center for Disabilities and Development, Iowa's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities. It is an outreach initiative of the Conner Training Connection, a program funded by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to support the transition of individuals with disabilities from congregate to community-based settings.

**Friendship... is not something you learn in school. But if you haven't learned the meaning of friendship, you really haven't learned anything.**

**-Muhammad Ali**

## How to get in touch with *Possibilities*:

**EMAIL:** [michelle-johnston@uiowa.edu](mailto:michelle-johnston@uiowa.edu)

**FAX:** 319-384-6241    **PHONE:** 319-356-1434

**MAIL:**

University of Iowa Health Care  
Center for Disabilities and Development  
100 Hawkins Dr., Rm. S374  
Iowa City IA 52242-1011

**Disability Resource Library**

**PHONE:** 800-272-7713

**EMAIL:** [disability-library@uiowa.edu](mailto:disability-library@uiowa.edu)

**WEBSITE:** [uichildrens.org/cdd/drl/](http://uichildrens.org/cdd/drl/)

**IOWA**  
**HEALTH CARE**

University of Iowa Health Care  
Center for Disabilities and Development  
100 Hawkins Dr.  
Iowa City IA 52242-1011