March 24, 2026
8:00 am – 1:00 pm
Tacoma Community College
6501 South 19th Street
Tacoma WA 98466

Welcome…

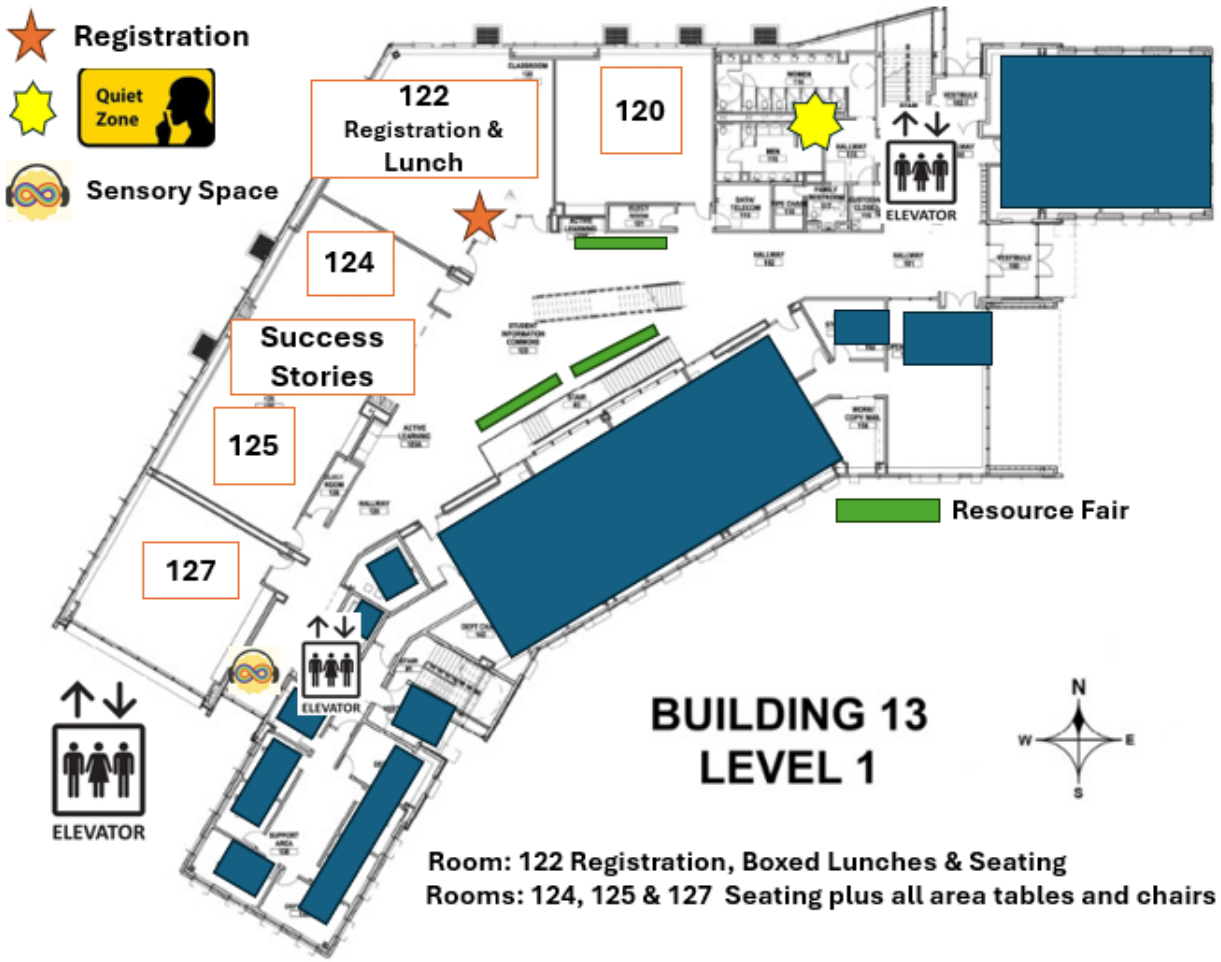
The Tools 4 Success Planning Committee gratefully acknowledges Tacoma Community College's ongoing commitment to the career and college readiness of individuals with disabilities through its support of this conference.

Conference Overview:

8 am: Registration Opens in Building 13, H.C. Joe Harned Center for Health Careers

- **8:30 – 9:15 am: 1st Sessions Begin in Building 13**
- **9:25 – 10:10 am: 2nd Sessions Begin in Building 13**
- **10:20 – 11:05 am: 3rd Sessions Begin in Building 13**

8:30 – 11:50 am: Vendor Resource Fair
11:10 – 11:50 am: Subway Boxed Lunches & water available in Room 120
12:00 – 1:00 pm: Keynote Speaker Cody Brown in Building 2



Workshop Descriptions – Building 13

① Mobility and Independence with Pierce Transit - Eden Standley and Melvin Smith
Room 120 (3 sessions 8:30, 9:25 and 10:20 am) Pierce Transit and the Travel Training program are here to help folks learn to use public transit in Pierce County! Travel Training is a free program designed to support our disabled, neurodivergent, elderly, and other marginalized communities gain mobility and independence. In this session, our Travel Trainers will give an overview of our local public transit options, how to use them, and connect you to the Travel Training program where you can access personalized support as you learn to ride!

② Success Stories - Panel Presentation facilitated by Christina Roberts
Room 124 & 125 (3 sessions: 8:30, 9:25 and 10:20) Gain valuable insights and inspiration from the experiences of your peers. A panel will share their stories about work, advocacy, leadership, independent living, college navigation, and other topics that can help you achieve success! This interactive conversation offers a unique opportunity to ask questions and learn from their lived experience! **Presented Self-Advocates and DDCS Transition Case Manager.**

③ Understanding and Requesting Accommodations – Julia Patton, Rowan Monahan and Sky Chafee
Room 127 (3 sessions: 8:30, 9:25 and 10:20) In this workshop, participants learn what accommodations are, why they're important, and how to recognize what supports help them thrive. Through hands-on practice and real-life scenarios, we build skills and confidence needed to ask for accommodation in school and work.
Presented by Vadis and Pierce County Developmental Disabilities.

④ The Opportunity Circle - Adult Day Programming – Alisha Vilela
Room 265 (1st Session: 8:30) and **Room 220** (2nd & 3rd Sessions: 9:25 and 10:20)
Share about The Opportunity Circle, in Pierce County, which offers supported socialization, life skills development, physical activity, and recreational classes, contracted through DDCS's Respite in Community Settings. This Day Program is a unique approach focusing on personal development, goal identification, and support toward a life of inclusion. **Presented by The Opportunity Circle.**

⑤ Show Me the Money (But Don't Mess Up My Benefits) - Common Myths and Facts about Social Security – Heather Evans
Room 222 (1st Session: 8:30) **Room 265** (2nd Session: 9:25) **and Room 222** (3rd Session: 10:20)
Understanding Social Security Benefits is an important part of being able to advocate for yourself and make decisions about your future. Come learn about the basics of Social Security Benefits, common myths and facts, and resources you can connect with to understand your personal benefits. Heather Evans is a Cornell Certified Benefits Planner with over 20 years of experience in employment and advocacy. She lives, works, and has raised her family here in Tacoma WA.

⑥Occupational and Life Skills Program - Bellevue College – Meg Iyer
Room 222 (2nd Session: 9:25 am) **Occupational & Life Skills Bellevue College (OLSBC)** is an associate degree program for students with disabilities. In our uniquely supportive skills-based program, students apply academic knowledge through community activities, service learning, and social experiences. Students identify a career pathway, gain marketable, workplace-ready competencies, develop better interpersonal skills, and complete an internship in alignment with their career goals.

---

⑦ Interviewing for Success. Owning your Story. Showcasing your Strengths – Karla Martinez
Room 223 (2 sessions: 9:25 and 10:20 am) This presentation will empower participants to approach job interviews with confidence, preparation, and self-advocacy skills. Participants will learn how to effectively communicate their strengths, skills, and lived experiences to highlight their value to employers. **Presented by Department of Services for the Blind.**

⑧ Self-Advocacy At Work: Top Ten! – Tim McCue
Room 224 (2 Sessions: 9:25 and 10:20 am) Now you can learn the top ten essentials for self-advocacy on the job, no matter where you work! You'll find out how to ask for the accommodation you need, how to communicate with your coworkers, and even where to turn to if your rights aren't being respected. Spoiler alert: **It's the DD Ombuds office!** We are here to help you today!

⑨ Students First! – Robert Wardell and Lizzie Johnston
Room 225 (2 Sessions: 9:25 and 10:20) Student First Clubs are developed within the high school and transition programs, working with students who experience intellectual and developmental disabilities to help them develop their leadership skills and to demonstrate the importance of self-advocacy and self-determination. **Presented by People First of Washington.**

⑩Tacoma Public Library's Top Resources for Career Success - Rhonda Kristoff & Darian Lorrain
Room 227 (2 Sessions: 8:30 and 9:25) Whether you are a job seeker or wanting to improve your skills and knowledge in particular subject areas, **Tacoma Public Library** has free resources to help. Join library staff for a visual tour of where and how to access them. Handouts and free library card sign-up will be available for participants residing in most Pierce County locations.

⑪ Access Services at TCC! – Griselda Curington
Room 265 (3rd Session: 10:20) Let's talk about what Access services are and can do for you! **Presented by Tacoma Community College.**

Room 265 will be videotaping these three sessions from the back of the room to offer on-demand recorded sessions for all after the conference. Only the presenters will have microphones.

1st Session at 8:30 am:
④ The Opportunity Circle - Adult Day Programming – Alisha Vilela
Share about The Opportunity Circle, in Pierce County, which offers supported socialization, life skills development, physical activity, and recreational classes, contracted through DDCS's Respite in Community Settings. This Day Program is a unique approach focusing on personal development, goal identification, and support toward a life of inclusion. **Presented by The Opportunity Circle.**

2nd Session at 9:25 am:
⑤ Show Me the Money (But Don't Mess Up My Benefits) - Common Myths and Facts about Social Security – Heather Evans
Understanding Social Security Benefits is an important part of being able to advocate for yourself and make decisions about your future. Come learn about the basics of Social Security Benefits, common myths and facts, and resources you can connect with to understand your personal benefits. Heather Evans is a Cornell Certified Benefits Planner with over 20 years of experience in employment and advocacy. She lives, works, and has raised her family here in Tacoma WA

3rd Session at 10:20 am:
⑪ Access Services at TCC! – Griselda Curington
Let's talk about what Access services are and can do for you! **Presented by Tacoma Community College.**

Thank you to all our attendees, presenters and vendors!

8:00 - 8:30 Registration - Building 13 (TCC Location and Map)

8:30 to 9:15 Workshops in Building 13 - H.C. Joe Harned Center for Health Careers

① Mobility and Independence with Pierce Transit Room 120	② Success Stories Room 124	③ Understanding and Requesting Accommodations Room 127
④ The Opportunity Circle - Adult Day Programming Room 265	⑤ Show Me the Money - Common Myths and Facts about Social Security Room 222	

9:25 to 10:10 Workshops in Building 13

① Mobility and Independence with Pierce Transit Room 120	② Success Stories Room 124	③ Understanding and Requesting Accommodations Room 127	④ The Opportunity Circle - Adult Day Programming Room 220
⑤ Show Me the Money - Common Myths and Facts about Social Security Room 265	⑥ Occupational and Life Skills Program - Bellevue College Room 222	⑦ Interviewing for Success. Owning your Story. Showcasing your Strengths Room 223	⑧ Self-Advocacy At Work: Top Ten! Room 224
⑨ Students First! Room 225	⑩ Tacoma Public Library's Top Resources for Career Success Room 227		

10:20 to 11:05 Workshops in Building 13

①Mobility and Independence with Pierce Transit Room 120	② Success Stories Room 124	③ Understanding and Requesting Accommodations Room 127	④ The Opportunity Circle - Adult Day Programming Room 220
⑤ Show Me the Money - Common Myths and Facts about Social Security Room 222	⑦ Interviewing for Success. Owning your Story. Showcasing your Strengths Room 223	⑧ Self-Advocacy At Work: Top Ten! Room 224	⑨ Students First! Room 225
⑩ Tacoma Public Library's Top Resources for Career Success Room 227	⑪ Access Services at TCC! Room 265		