

DEREK SCHMITZ

ACCESSIBILITY CONSULTANT, ADVOCATE, AUTHOR, PARALEGAL
Oxford, AL | derek@derekshmitz.com | derekshmitz.com

Objective | Highly dedicated, organized, and detail-oriented Paralegal Studies student with a focus on disability accessibility and LGBTQ rights advancement.

Areas of Expertise

- Intersectionality
- Special Education
- Self-Advocacy and Empowerment
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility (DEIA)
- Disability Rights and History
- Social Security

Skills

- Leadership
- Advocacy
- Public Speaking
- Communication
- Brief and Memorandum Writing
- Westlaw
- Microsoft Office / Google Suite

Education

A.A.S - Paralegal Studies
Gadsden State Community College

Aug. 2023 – May 2025
GPA: 3.81

Jump Start Dual Enrollment
Jacksonville State University

Aug. 2021 – Apr. 2022
GPA: 4.0

High School Diploma
Oxford High School

Aug. 2019 – May 2023
GPA: 3.85

Work History

Lead Advocate
Derek Schmitz: Advocacy

Aug. 2023 – Present
Remote

I offer in-person and virtual speaking engagements, disability and LGBTQ+ inclusivity consulting, and individual advocacy services. Additionally, since 2018, I've advocated for disabled and LGBTQIA+ communities, shared personal experiences on social media and my website, facilitated disability education sessions, participated in media interviews, and engaged in webinars and calls with relevant organizations.

Marketing & Public Relations Consultant

Freelance Self-Employed

Dec. 2022 – Present
Remote

I collaborate with clients on a contract basis, providing comprehensive press release services including template creation, writing, editing, and distribution, ensuring accessibility, and leveraging connections for effective dissemination. Additionally, I serve as the designated press contact and represent organizations in press communications and interviews.

Consultant & Client Outreach Co-Manager

Neighborhood Access

Dec. 2021 – Nov. 2022
Remote

I oversaw a mailing list for project updates and fundraising, crafted digital fundraising strategies, and collaborated on client engagement. I spearheaded COVID-19 assistance initiatives, provided advisory support to the board, managed our LinkedIn presence, represented our organization at conferences, assisted with press releases, and facilitated networking for growth opportunities with other organizations.

Center for Advancing Policy on Employment for Youth (CAPE-Youth) Fellow and Working Group Member

U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy

Sep. 2021 – Aug. 2023
Hybrid

I had the opportunity to collaborate with the Office of Disability Employment Policy, The Council of State Governments, and the K. Lisa Yang and Hock E. Tan Institute on Employment and Disability at Cornell University to engage state leaders in efforts to improve the transition from high school to college or work settings for disabled youth. I delivered multiple presentations and provided input on the creation of toolkits and policy briefs.

Presentations

Accessibility and Intersectionality

Exceptional Alliances Conference
Co-Panelist

2023
Remote

Addressing the Needs of Youth with Disabilities and Other Intersecting Identities CAPE-Youth at NYEC 2023 Co-Presenter	2023 Indianapolis, IN
Youth Leadership Development in Employment Policy CAPE-Youth at NYEC 2023 Co-Presenter	2023 Indianapolis, IN
Youth Engagement in Transition Planning CAPE-Youth at CEC 2023 Convention & Expo Co-Presenter	2023 Louisville, KY
Expanding Medicaid to Ensure Access to Care for Disabled Young Adults CAPE-Youth Fellowship Internal Meeting	2022 Remote
Cross-Generational Disability Inclusion Alabama Disability:IN Co-Panelist	2022 Remote
Medicaid Expansion to Include Eligibility and Access to Services CAPE-Youth Internal Meeting	2022 Denver, CO
Disability Rights are Human Rights CAPE-Youth at Partners for Youth with Disabilities Co-Presenter	2022 Remote
Accessibility for Visible and Invisible Diseases ACI 2022 Autoimmune Health Equity Summit	2022 Remote
Trauma-Informed Policy for Youth CAPE-Youth Internal Meeting Co-Presenter	2021 San Diego, CA

Honors	James L. Brown Free Enterprise Scholarship Recipient Gadsden State Community College	Apr. 2024
	Certificate of Appreciation U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy	Jun. 2023
	Certificate of Appreciation Global Healthy Living Foundation	Oct. 2022

Affiliations	<p>Paralegal Student Member American Bar Association</p> <p>Phi Theta Kappa - Rho Rho Chapter Gadsden State Community College</p> <p>Class Representative Gadsden State Paralegal Association</p>	<p>Apr. 2024 – Present</p> <p>Jan. 2024 – Present</p> <p>Sep. 2023 – Present</p>
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Volunteer Work	<p>Anniston Area Consumer Advisory Member State of Alabama, Governor’s Office on Disability</p> <p>I am part of an active, educated, informed network of consumers with disabilities across the state and to advocate for laws, programs and services for people with disabilities and their families.</p> <p>I provide ongoing advisory support to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) on emerging issues and advocate for their interests, particularly during budget constraints. Additionally, I assist the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) with projects such as statewide needs assessments and representation at public hearings, while also serving as a local communication hub and facilitating recruitment for advisory committees.</p>	<p>Dec. 2023 – Present</p>
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<p>Outreach Coordinator Autoimmune Community Institute</p> <p>I conducted outreach to recruit volunteers, developed studies and surveys, identified funding sources, and managed outreach and screening processes. Additionally, I handled social media activities, collaborated on marketing content, hosted Twitter Chats, managed analytics, networked for growth opportunities, prepared press materials, served as a contact point for inquiries, managed a YouTube channel, and supported projects with a sister organization.</p>	<p>Oct. 2021 – Nov. 2022</p>
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References	Personal, academic, and employment references available on request.
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Writing Sample	Writing samples available on request.
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