



# TOMODACHI Story Jam for Youth with Disabilities

## Empowering a new generation of Japanese and American youth leaders with disabilities through digital storytelling

### TOMODACHI Story Jam for Youth with Disabilities

is an 8-week digital storytelling and youth leadership program that brings together Japanese and American college students and young professionals with disabilities to collectively explore experiences in the time of COVID-19. We want to share and discuss moments when you felt deeply challenged by access barriers, how you navigated these challenges, and what you learned about yourself during or post-pandemic.

### About the program

**TOMODACHI Story Jam for Youth with Disabilities** aims to equip Japanese and American youth with disabilities with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to use digital storytelling to **advocate for themselves and others in their communities**. It is an opportunity to interact with peers from Japan and the U.S. and learn about each other's cultures. We will introduce you to digital storytelling, both as a process and method to explore and describe your pandemic experiences in a way that speaks to a broader community.

### Program activities

**Storytelling and Youth Leadership Sessions.** We will host sessions at 8 p.m. Eastern Time and 9 a.m. Japan Time on Zoom. Session dates are listed in the program application.

- **Peer Mentorship & Support.** Between sessions, you can support and mentor each other to develop your emerging stories. We will facilitate and offer support and encouragement throughout the program via an online chat platform.
- **Your Advocacy Story.** You will capture your story in a 2 to 4-minute video, which we will feature at a public online event.

### What is Digital Storytelling?

Digital storytelling uses smart phones, tablets, and computers to amplify our voices and bring our stories to life. Connecting through stories is important, particularly in difficult times like a pandemic. Our stories can foster connection with people all over the world!



### Session Topics

- Introduction to digital storytelling for disability and social justice advocacy
- Discussion about how access barriers can change and be resolved
- Building an effective advocacy story, including script writing and writing prompts
- Group sharing of story ideas and drafts, including peer feedback
- Introduction to mobile filmmaking, editing, and captioning, including accessibility considerations
- Self-reflection about filmmaking and disability advocacy storytelling
- Discussion of effective story sharing strategies, including target audiences and outlets

- **Engagement Opportunities.** During sessions, you can engage with alumni of the [TOMODACHI Disability Leadership Program in America](#), which trained 19 Japanese youth with disabilities in the U.S. on disability leadership and advocacy. You will also meet Japanese and American disability activists and disabled storytellers, who will discuss access barriers and the role of advocacy in both countries.
- **Celebration.** At the end of the 8 weeks, we will host a 90-minute, public online celebration to share your advocacy stories.

## Who can apply?

You do not need prior experience in digital storytelling to apply for this program. However, to apply, you must:

1. Be a Japanese or American individual with a disability between ages 18 and 35
2. Be a student currently enrolled at a Japanese or American college, or a young professional (e.g., part-time, full-time, self-employed)
3. Have basic English language skills (conversation, reading, and writing), or if you are Deaf, have basic English language reading and writing skills and, ideally, basic American Sign Language skills
4. Have a computer (PC or Mac) with an updated web browser, Internet access, and a mobile phone\*
5. Have a compelling story about your experience of navigating the COVID-19 pandemic at college, work, or other areas of life (e.g., relationships), and lessons learned
6. Complete an 8-week digital storytelling and youth leadership program and participate in a public online event
7. Give permission to have your digital story be shared at a public online event and published elsewhere

We encourage individuals with any types of disabilities to apply. We will provide American Sign Language interpretation and English Live captions (CART) upon request.

*\*Please consult with us if you have Internet access issues.*

## How to apply:

[Apply online](#) or  
via the QR code below.



[Download the application here in a word doc](#) or  
via the QR Code below.

Email the completed form to [Heike.Boeltzig@umb.edu](mailto:Heike.Boeltzig@umb.edu)



**Applications are due **JULY 16.****

# Important Dates: Application & Selection Process

## July 16

### Online application closes.

A panel of ICI program staff, TOMODACHI staff and alumni will review all applications and select candidates.

## July-August

### Candidate interviews held.

We will invite candidates to participate in a brief, 20-minute interview with ICI program staff, conducted in English over Zoom. The purpose of the interview is to get to know you and learn about your story and advocacy message. We will share the results from the interviews with the panel.

## August 20

### Finalists announced.

The panel will select the 10 finalists (5 Japanese and 5 American youth).

## September-November

### Storytelling and Youth Leadership Program

Session dates are listed in the program application.

## Mid-November (Date TBD)

### Public online event



**To ask questions and learn more about this program, contact:**

Dr. Heike Boeltzig-Brown, Program Director  
[Heike.Boeltzig-Brown@umb.edu](mailto:Heike.Boeltzig-Brown@umb.edu)



**Institute for Community Inclusion**  
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TOMODACHI Story Jam for Youth with Disabilities is part of the [TOMODACHI Initiative](#), a public-private partnership between the [U.S.-Japan Council](#) and the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo. The program is supported by [Northrop Grumman Corporation](#) and implemented by the [Institute for Community Inclusion \(ICI\) at UMass Boston](#). TOMODACHI Story Jam for Youth with Disabilities is part of ICI's Japan-focused disability initiative "Inclusion Matters."