

About the Participants

Yui Awai

Yui Awai is a fourth-year student in the Department of Culture, Media, and Society at Waseda University in Tokyo, Japan. Born with cerebral palsy, Yui attended regular schools in Kagawa Prefecture on Shikoku Island until she moved to Tokyo. In addition to her studies at Waseda University, Yui is also involved with the DO-IT Japan Program at Tokyo University modeled after the DO-IT Program at the University of Washington in the United States (<http://www.washington.edu/doiit/>), the program supports individuals with disabilities in accessing higher education and trains them in disability leadership and advocacy.

As a TOMODACHI trainee, Yui would like to learn how students with disabilities access college in the United States, how they advocate for themselves, and the role that social services and college disability services play in facilitating access and enabling students to be more self-determined and independent.



Tomomi Takata

Tomomi Takata works full-time at Avinton Japan in Tokyo, a network engineering company. Prior to her employment, Tomomi attended Kapi'olani Community College in Hawaii, majoring in social studies. She still has the dream of becoming a social worker one day. As a college student, Tomomi was seriously injured in a bicycle accident. Despite successful surgery, the injury got worse and led to osteonecrosis, a disease that causes bones in the joints to break down. Tomomi had to start using a cane for walking. After the injury, Tomomi realized that people with and without disabilities live in separate worlds due to a lack of awareness and mutual understanding.

As a TOMODACHI trainee, Tomomi wants to learn how technology assists people with disabilities in becoming more independent and moving around more safely. She is also interested in how people can benefit from universal design for physical spaces and for learning.



Toshiko Kudo

Toshiko Kudo works part-time at the Tachikawa Independent Living Center (ILC) in Tokyo, Japan. Diagnosed with muscular dystrophy at the age of thirteen, she is a passionate advocate for disability issues. At the Tachikawa ILC, Toshiko assists individuals with disabilities to lead more independent lives by connecting them with resources, information, and supports. She is also involved in a project to raise disability awareness among school-age children.

As a TOMODACHI trainee, Toshiko is interested in issues related to physical accessibility, as well as disability perceptions and attitudes. She would like to learn more about disability activism in Boston, including how people with disabilities become activists and leaders and contribute to social change.

