

# Transitions

## College Guide for Students with Disabilities



Understanding the differences between the responsibilities of high schools and colleges, and your role in the process, is crucial to making a successful transition to higher education.

Laws governing disability services for high school and college are different, and so is the accommodation process. But the biggest difference you will see as a college student concerns who is responsible for what. In a word, YOU are responsible for managing your disability and the accommodations it may require. It is your responsibility as a college student to contact the office which handles accommodations for students with disabilities, and to provide the required documentation. Likewise, individual instructors will not be automatically notified that they have a student with a disability in their classroom. It is now your responsibility, along with your disability services provider, to notify each instructor and make plans for the accommodations you will require.

Another change is that unlike high school, students attending college who are 18 or older have the privacy and confidentiality considerations afforded to adults. Therefore, college professors and administrators must talk directly with the students themselves and cannot talk with parents or guardians about a student's activities without written permission from the student. Whereas parents used to be the student's primary advocate, the student must now advocate for her/himself.

### Catalogs for Choosing a College

*Colleges with Programs for Students with Learning Disabilities*, Sixth Edition (2000), edited by Charles T. Mangrum II and Stephen S. Strichart. Peterson's Guides, Princeton, NJ.

*The K & W Guide to Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities or Attention Deficit Disorder*, Seventh Edition (2003), edited by Marybeth Kravets and Imy F. Wax. Harper Perennial, a division of Harper Collins, New York, NY.



## An Overview

When it comes to preparing for and selecting a college, there are many areas of particular concern for students with disabilities. Some specific areas of interest include:

- Legal protection for persons with disabilities
- Legal definition of a person with a disability
- Types of disabilities
- Testing
- Making the transition from high school to college, and the differences between high school and college disability services
- Choosing a college
- Documentation
- Accommodations and eligibility requirements
- Suggestions for success
- Resources for additional information

There is a wealth of information available for students with disabilities. So much information is available, in fact, that it can be a bit overwhelming to wade through it all. To help you in the process of information sorting and gathering, we have provided an overview of topics of interest to students with disabilities and their families in this publication. In addition, the Resource Guide at the end of this publication includes contact information for relevant organizations and websites which will provide more details on topics of interest.

### Major Differences Between Accommodations in High School and College

- In high school, the school is responsible for identifying, evaluating, and providing services to students. In college, the student is responsible for self-identifying in order to obtain accommodations.
- In high school, parents and guardians are major advocates for the student and have access to student records; in college, students advocate for themselves. Parents and guardians do not have access to student records without express written consent from the student.
- In high school, applicable laws are I.D.E.A., Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and A.D.A.; in college, applicable laws are A.D.A. and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.
- In high school, required documentation is an I.E.P. (Individual Education Plan) and 504 Plan; in college,

I.E.P. and 504 Plan are not sufficient documentation. Documentation varies according to the disability and must include the testing on which the request for accommodations is based, as well as a specific diagnosis and recommended accommodations.

- High school teachers may use a multi-sensory approach to teaching; college professors tend to rely on the lecture method and may or may not use a multi-sensory approach.
- College classes are larger, and students are more responsible to gain the information independently.
- In high school, grades may be modified, based on the curriculum; in college, grades reflect the quality of the work submitted.

### Major Differences Between the Responsibilities of a High School and a University or College

- The high school must provide a free and appropriate education for students with disabilities; for college, students must meet all admission standards and accept responsibility for paying costs such as tuition, fees, books, room and board.
- The high school will provide evaluation at no cost to the student; in college, the students must get an evaluation at their own expense.
- The high school will identify a student with a disability and share the nature of the disability with teachers and other service providers. At the college level, the student must self-identify as having a disability, and the college will then only disclose to professors and others that the student is entitled to certain accommodations.
- The high school is required to prepare an I.E.P. or 504 Plan; the college or university is not.
- The high school must provide health-related services, through a school nurse, personal attendants, or other school staff. A college is not required to provide health-related services, aides or personal attendants. A high school may be required to provide tutors, but a college is not.
- High school teachers may modify curriculum; college professors are not required to reduce or adjust essential requirements of a course.

## Choosing a College

For students with disabilities, one of the most important factors in choosing a college is to begin the process early! Allow extra time to adequately research services offered

at different colleges and the different rules for documentation of a disability that apply at the schools of interest to you. If you do not start your search until your senior year of high school, it may well be too late to get into the school of your choice.

It is extremely important to select a college that best suits your interests and meets your needs. The more research you do, the better your chances of finding the best match. The work you do up front will pay off enormously in the years to come.

### Research Schools

The best way to start researching schools is by reviewing college catalogs and visiting online sites. *CFNC.org* has information on more than 100 North Carolina colleges in its College Fair section, plus summary descriptions of basic information such as size, cost, and majors offered. Catalogs and websites offer general information about a college or university's programs, costs, history, requirements, services, and more. You may also call 866-866-CFNC to request that information be mailed to you regarding North Carolina colleges and universities.

The absolute best way to know about a college is to visit the school itself. Nothing can replace a campus visit. You should be in contact with the disability office as soon as you schedule your campus visit to explore the services provided at that institution. Most schools have regularly scheduled tours and may have a special "Open House" for students with disabilities. It is extremely important to talk with an admissions counselor about your plans and to establish a point of contact with the institution you would like to attend. Remember, the school you choose is one of the most important decisions you will make regarding your education. Carefully consider all your options and then look for the school that matches your most important needs and goals.

#### General considerations when choosing a college include:

- support services
- location
- majors
- financial aid options
- admissions requirements
- degree requirements
- transfer of credits
- application deadlines
- number of students
- student life
- extracurricular activities
- housing options
- size of campus and terrain
- cost of tuition, fees, housing, books and supplies, etc.

## Documentation

It is the student's responsibility to identify herself or himself to the disability support services office if that student requires any kind of accommodation. Keep in mind that while documentation is an essential first step, accommodations will be provided only if the condition is substantially limiting.

### Requirements for Documentation of a Disability

Generally, the documentation you present to your school needs to do the following:

- State the specific disability, as diagnosed by a qualified professional.
- Provide medical, educational and developmental histories. The treatment history generally includes a treatment plan, how the disability will affect the student in an academic setting, and the reasoning behind recommendation requests for specific accommodations. Educational and developmental information can include transcripts, teacher comments, tutorial evaluations and third party interviews, as well as psychological and educational testing.
- Establish the professional credentials of the evaluator, providing certification information, license number, and area of specialization. Most schools require that the documentation be printed on the letterhead of the provider and be signed by that provider.
- Describe testing and techniques used to arrive at the diagnosis, including evaluation dates and test results, etc.
- Be up-to-date (check with the school in question to find out their timeline).

Acceptable documentation of a disability includes, but is not limited to, physicians' statements, medical reports, psychological evaluations, reports from the Division of Services for the Blind, Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Vocational Rehabilitation.

In most cases, a university will not share specific information regarding a student's disability with a third party without the student's written permission to do so. Once a student has signed the forms required by his or her college, the disability services provider may distribute information to the appropriate faculty and/or staff members regarding a student's need for accommodation. It is the student's right not to disclose specific information regarding his or her disability to faculty and/or staff; however, the disability services provider can help the student determine when it is appropriate and helpful to do so.

## Legal Protections

Students with disabilities are expected to meet the same academic standards as other students at their college or university. To accomplish this, accommodations may be needed which make the method of instruction accessible to the student. Failure of a school to provide appropriate accommodations for students with documented disabilities is a violation of a student's civil rights, and is against the law.

### Section 504

In September 1973, Congress passed Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which states: "No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall, solely on the basis of his or her disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

This includes all aspects of academic and nonacademic activities, including but not limited to admissions and recruitment, admission to programs, academic adjustments, housing, financial assistance, physical education and athletics, counseling, and testing.

### The ADA

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) extends the standards of compliance established in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The ADA provides protection from discrimination for individuals who have a disability as defined in the law. It covers all policies, procedures and practices that affect students with disabilities and has helped focus public attention on increased access to institutions of higher education for persons with disabilities.

### The Rehabilitation Act and ADA Definition of a "Person with a Disability"

According to both Section 504 and the ADA, a "Person with a Disability" is anyone with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of his or her major life activities, such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, and learning. The definition covers not only people with visible disabilities, but also a range of hidden disabilities such as learning disabilities and psychological disabilities, as well as chronic health problems.

A person is "disabled" if he or she meets at least one of the following tests:

- 1) He or she has a disability;
- 2) He or she has a record of such an impairment;
- 3) He or she is regarded as having such an impairment.

### Possible Types of Disabilities (If Substantially Limiting)

- Blindness and visual impairment
- Deafness and difficulty hearing (ranging from slight hearing loss to total deafness)
- Mobility impairments (a broad term indicating partial or complete loss of the function of a bodily part)
- Learning disabilities
- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD; formerly known as ADD/ADHD)
- Certain medical conditions or chronic health conditions (including seizure disorders, acquired brain injuries, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, cerebral palsy, and muscular dystrophy)
- Psychiatric disorders (diagnoses may include depression, manic depression [bipolar disorder], schizophrenia, post-traumatic stress disorder, multiple personality disorder and borderline personality disorder)

### Is My Condition a Disability?

If you think you may have a disability that would require accommodation from your college or university, ask yourself the following questions:

- Are there documents on file at my school that show I have a disability?
- Do I now receive accommodations for tests that I take in school (reading help, a different version of the test, extra time, etc.)?
- Do I have a condition that substantially limits my ability to learn or to otherwise participate in any aspect of the college's programs or activities?



## Accommodations

Students with disabilities are expected to meet the same academic standards as other students at their college or university. To accomplish this, accommodations may be needed which make the method of instruction accessible to the student. Colleges have responsibility to provide reasonable accommodations requested by students with documented disabilities as defined in the law. Accommodations can include making campus events and housing accessible, in addition to academic accommodations.

Accommodations for students with disabilities can vary as widely as the students themselves. Examples may include allowing extra time to complete a test, special seating arrangements, large print material, priority registration, tape recording of lectures, use of sign language interpreters, note taking services, flexible attendance requirements, auxiliary aids or equipment, or any number of other modifications which allow students with disabilities to work up to their potential.

Students with disabilities do not have to disclose a disability before or after admission unless they are seeking accommodations. To receive accommodations while attending a specific college or university, the student must adhere to the procedures of that particular school. Generally this process will include the following steps:

- 1) The student must complete an application for admission to the university.
- 2) The student must request accommodations within a time frame that allows the university to make necessary arrangements.
- 3) The student must provide documentation of his or her specific disability when requesting accommodations.
- 4) Once appropriate documentation of the disability has been evaluated, the student and the disability services provider will meet and determine what accommodations are necessary for equal access for the student.
- 5) The disability services provider may coordinate notification to the student's instructors each semester to advise the accommodations to which the student is entitled. This process differs from school to school, so be sure to check with the disability office to find out how this is handled at a particular school.
- 6) The disability services provider may be available for consultation and meetings with the student and his or her instructors.

## Testing Accommodations

### The College Board

A student with a documented disability may be eligible for accommodations on College Board Tests, including the Advanced Placement (AP), SAT and PSAT/NMSQT. For more detailed information, contact The College Board's Services for Students with Disabilities at <http://www.collegeboard.com/ssd> or by telephone at 609-771-7137 (voice) or 609-882-4118 (TTY).

### ACT Assessment

If you currently receive accommodations in school due to a professionally diagnosed and documented disability, you may provide documentation to request accommodations for the ACT. For more information, contact the ACT's Services for Students with Disabilities division at <http://www.act.org/aap/disab/index.html>, or by telephone at 319-337-1000 (voice) or 319-337-1701 (TDD; must call from TDD).

### Testing Information

#### ACT Assessment

[www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

(319) 337-1000

(319) 337-1701 (TDD; Must call from TDD)

#### ACT Services for Students with Disabilities

[www.act.org/aap/disab/index.html](http://www.act.org/aap/disab/index.html)

#### College Board Services for Students with Disabilities

[www.collegeboard.org/ssd](http://www.collegeboard.org/ssd)

e-mail: [ssd@info.collegeboard.org](mailto:ssd@info.collegeboard.org)

(609) 771-7137 (voice)

(609) 882-4118 (TTY)

College Board

Services for Students with Disabilities

P.O. Box 6226

Princeton, NJ 08541-6226

## Resources

### **HEATH: The National Clearinghouse on Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Disabilities**

[www.heath.gwu.edu](http://www.heath.gwu.edu)

Major source of information, wealth of publications available online, FAQs, an extensive listing of toll free telephone numbers and links to additional resources.

The HEATH Resource Center of the George Washington University is the national clearinghouse on postsecondary education for individuals with disabilities. Support from the U.S. Department of Education enables the clearinghouse to serve as an information exchange about educational support services, policies, procedures, adaptations, and opportunities at American campuses, vocational-technical schools, and other postsecondary training entities.

Publication titles include *Creating Options: A Resource on Financial Aid for Students with Disabilities* (2001); *HEATH National Resource Directory on Postsecondary Education and Disability* (2001).

HEATH Resource Center  
2121 K St. NW, Suite 220  
Washington, DC 20037  
(800) 544-3284 (V/TTY) or (202) 973-0904 (V/TTY)  
Fax: (202) 973-0908  
e-mail: [help@heath.gwu.edu](mailto:help@heath.gwu.edu)

### **AHEAD – Association on Higher Education and Disability**

[www.ahead.org](http://www.ahead.org)

AHEAD is an international, multicultural organization of professionals committed to full participation in higher education for persons with disabilities. Site offers helpful publications and resource information.

AHEAD  
University of Massachusetts – Boston  
100 Morrissey Blvd.  
Boston, MA 02125  
(617) 287-3880 (Voice)  
(617) 287-3882 (TTY)

### **NCAHEAD: North Carolina Association on Higher Education and Disability**

[www.ahead.org/about/regional\\_affiliates/northcarolina/](http://www.ahead.org/about/regional_affiliates/northcarolina/)

NCAHEAD is a statewide organization for professionals in postsecondary education, both public and private, who provide academic accommodations to students with disabilities. Site offers resource and school contact information. Check the site for current contact information.

### **North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

<http://dvr.dhhs.state.nc.us>

A Division of the NC Department of Health and Human Services, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services works with federal, state and local advocacy groups to promote the involvement of business in maximizing employment of individuals with disabilities.

### **North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Client Assistance Program**

<http://dvr.dhhs.state.nc.us/DVR/CAP/caphome.htm>  
2801 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-2801  
(919) 733-3600 or (800) 215-7227 (voice or TTY)  
or through the Department of Health and Human Services Care-Line  
(800) 662-7030, Mon. - Fri., 8 am - 5 pm

### **North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind**

[www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dsb](http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dsb)

2601 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-2601  
(919) 733-9700  
Fax: (919) 715-8771  
TDD: (919) 733-9700

### **Regional Resource Center (RRC) Network**

[www.ihdi.uky.edu/msrrc](http://www.ihdi.uky.edu/msrrc)

The RRFC Network comprises the six Regional Resource Centers for Special Education and the Federal Resource Center for Special Education. The RRFC Network offers tools and strategies that identify appropriate solutions for effective education and human services delivery systems, serving all states and outlying jurisdictions. North Carolina is served by the Mid-South Regional Resource Center.



### **Federal Resource Center for Special Education**

[www.dssc.org/frc](http://www.dssc.org/frc)

The Federal Resource Center for Special Education (FRC) is a five-year contract between the Academy for Educational Development (AED), its partner, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), and the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

The FRC supports a nationwide technical assistance network to respond to the needs of students with disabilities, especially students from under-represented populations.

### **The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition**

[www.ncset.org](http://www.ncset.org)

The Center is headquartered at the University of Minnesota, and is a partnership comprised of six organizations currently involved in a wide range of efforts focused on the secondary education and transition of youth with disabilities. The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition seeks to increase the capacity of national, state and local agencies and organizations to improve secondary education and transition results for youth with disabilities and their families.

The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition  
Institute on Community Integration (UAP)  
University of Minnesota  
Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Dr. SE  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
(612) 624-2097  
Fax: (612) 624-9344  
e-mail: [ncset@umn.edu](mailto:ncset@umn.edu)

### **NICHCY State Resource Sheets**

[www.nichcy.org/states.htm](http://www.nichcy.org/states.htm)

This page contains a link to a resource sheet for every state, which will help you locate organizations and agencies that address disability-related issues. Included are state senators, governors, state agencies serving children and youth with disabilities, state chapters of disability organizations and parent groups.

### **National Rehabilitation Information Center**

[www.naric.com](http://www.naric.com)

The National Rehabilitation Information Center (NARIC) has collected and disseminated the results of federally funded research projects for 20 years. NARIC's literature collection, which also includes commercially published books, journal articles, and audiovisuals, averages around 200 new documents per month. Funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR), NARIC serves anyone who is interested in disability and rehabilitation.

NARIC  
4200 Forbes Blvd., Suite 202  
Lanham, MD 20706  
(800) 346-2742 (V); (301) 459-5900 (V)  
e-mail: [naricinfo@heitechservices.com](mailto:naricinfo@heitechservices.com)

### **U.S. Department of Education**

[www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov)

The website of the U.S. Department of Education

### **U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights**

[www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html)

The Office for Civil Rights works to ensure equal access to education and to promote educational excellence throughout the nation. The Office provides publications for students with disabilities, available at [www.ed.gov/ocr/publications.html](http://www.ed.gov/ocr/publications.html). The Office provides assistance to schools, colleges, students, and parents through training, workshops, conferences, on-site consultations, and community meetings. The Office also receives discrimination complaints from students who believe they have been discriminated against by educational institutions on the basis of disability.

District of Columbia Office  
Office for Civil Rights  
U.S. Department of Education  
P.O. Box 14620  
Washington, DC 20044-4620  
(202) 208-2545 or (800) 421-3481  
Fax: (202) 208-7797  
e-mail: [ocr.dc@ed.gov](mailto:ocr.dc@ed.gov)

### **The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS)**

[www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/users/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/users/index.html)

The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) is committed to improving results and outcomes for people with disabilities of all ages. In supporting President Bush's No Child Left Behind agenda and the New Freedom Initiative, OSERS provides a wide array of support to parents and individuals, school districts and states in three main areas: special education, vocational rehabilitation and research.

### **The Transition Coalition**

[www.transitioncoalition.org](http://www.transitioncoalition.org)

The Transition Coalition site offers information and support to individuals with disabilities and others interested and involved in the transition from school to adult life. The Transition Coalition is comprised of a consortium of faculty and staff at the University of Kansas. Included are numerous downloadable publications (pdf format), as well as Internet links that are sorted by category (employment/vocational sites; transition and school-related sites, etc.).

These links will take you to websites that are neither written nor affiliated with College Foundation of North Carolina; they are provided only as convenience to the reader. Inclusion in this publication does not imply endorsement of services or products promoted, and College Foundation of North Carolina is not responsible for content on these web pages.

## Tips for Success

After you have developed a plan of action with the disability services provider at your school of choice, there are still many things you can do to ensure success in your college career. Some helpful suggestions include:

- Contact your academic advisor on a regular basis.
- Maintain regular contact with appropriate support services.
- Make contact with individual instructors before the semester begins to show your dedication, establish rapport, and discuss accommodations for your disability.
- When possible, obtain a course syllabus before registration to get a clear idea of what a class involves.
- Make sure you understand what is expected regarding grading, due dates, material to be studied, etc.
- Sit toward the front of the class and establish eye contact with your instructor to demonstrate your interest and reduce possible distractions.
- If you have trouble keeping up in class, obtain permission to bring a tape recorder. Be sure to listen to the tape as soon as possible and complete your notes while it is fresh on your mind.
- Join a study group.
- Seek out other individuals at your school with a similar disability. You can be an invaluable source of support for one another – as well as a wealth of information on how to succeed in your particular academic environment.
- Most importantly, if problems do arise, seek solutions early! Do not wait until small problems become big problems.
- Follow through on referrals to tutorials, skills labs or learning labs.
- Evaluate your classes with your disability services provider and academic advisor to ensure that you are following the curriculum choice that is in your best interest for your future plans.
- If you are overly stressed or struggling to maintain a good grade point average, consider taking a reduced course load for a term.
- Keep a complete calendar of all assignment deadlines, test dates, appointments, etc. Be sure to schedule a regular time to study.
- Take advantage of faculty members' regularly scheduled office hours to touch base and discuss issues of concern.
- Again, seek help early, preferably as soon as you suspect a problem. This is worth repeating, remembering, and doing.



*We would like to express appreciation for the college and university disability services professionals, school counselors, and students who provided their time and expertise for the writing of this publication.*

---

[www.CFNC.org](http://www.CFNC.org) • 866-866-CFNC (Toll-free)

Se Habla Español

This is a publication of the CFNC Resource Center, P.O. Box 26170, Greensboro, NC 27402-6170

PW Form DS1 (08/04) © 2004 CFNC Resource Center