



A Parent's Guide to College

A short guide to help parents understand the transition process
from high school to college for students with disabilities



Is my student ready to assume the responsibilities that come with college, and if not, how will he or she learn to handle them?

College life poses different challenges for students with disabilities. When students enroll in college, they are considered adults by faculty and staff, and it is expected that they will assume for themselves responsibilities that may have been met previously with the help of parents, school teachers, staff, and administrators. This added responsibility, coupled with a change in environment, can create a stressful experience for students who are not prepared. College students must work closely with disability support staff and instructors to ensure accommodations are in place and that they are meeting the student's needs.

How well does my student describe his or her specific disability and the services needed?

In college, self-advocacy is critical. Services will be available through the college Disability Support Services (DSS) office, but students are responsible for seeking services and support themselves. Students must become adept at realistically assessing and understanding their own strengths, weaknesses, needs, and preferences. And they must become experts at communicating this information to other adults, including instructors and service providers. Knowledge of one's self and good communication skills are crucial to success in college and beyond.

How do college support services compare with high school support services?

In high school, under entitlement law (IDEA):

Services are delivered to the student

Services are based on annual goals/outcomes

A case manager acts as advocate

There is an Annual Review and IEP/504

There is regular parent contact

In college, under antidiscrimination law (ADA):

Students must seek out services

Services are based on situational/individual needs

The student acts as his/her own advocate

There is no annual review or IEP/504

There is no or limited parent contact

Take steps now to help your student prepare for college:

Plant the idea that college is important, that you expect your student to go to college, and that you will help your child to prepare. Such messages need to be shared repeatedly and through different types of activities.

Preparation for college needs to start early in your students's IEP meetings. Ask the high school staff for their suggestions as to which post-secondary option (e.g., technical school, community college, or a four-year college or university) would be best for your student.

Work closely with your student's high school teachers and support staff, including the counselor, school psychologist, transition coordinator, and vocational rehabilitation counselor. Ask about transition activities to help prepare your student for college.

Contact the admission offices of several colleges. Ask college staff for information about their admissions process and the process for qualifying students for accommodations.

Ensure that your student will have the necessary recent testing needed to document a disability. This testing can be done during the senior year of high school, but schedule it early. Ask each college that your student is considering for their specific requirements.

Have your student referred to Vocational Rehabilitation services through the Department of Labor to determine whether he or she meets disability guidelines. VR services may help finance college and/or help with equipment/technology needed by students with disabilities.

If your student's college requires entrance test results such as the ACT or SAT, find out how to request testing accommodations. If your student needs testing accommodations, the need must be documented.

Ensure that your student knows and learns to use appropriate accommodations in areas which may be challenging. Test-taking, note-taking, reading text, and using computer software for speech recognition are examples.

Remember that your student is responsible for notifying the college in a timely manner if he or she has a disability and needs services. The college then has the responsibility to provide appropriate accommodations so that all students have equal access.

If your child/student plans to attend Dalton State, please contact
Andrea Roberson, Coordinator, Disability Support Services
aroberson@daltonstate.edu or 706.272.2524