

Are you ready?

The Family Guide for
students with disabilities

TALK ABOUT IT!

- Are you ready to go to college now or do you want a different type of experience first ?
Employment, vocational training or a socialization program?
- There is no one right way to go to college! You can go part time or full time, audit or take classes for credit leading to a degree.

If you decide to explore college now:

- Talk with your family and your guidance counselors about the following issues:
- College major- Decided or Undecided?
- Type of College Two year or Four year?
- Location?
- Residence? Live on campus, commute from home or other residence?
- Budget? Work while in college or not?

Explore possible post-secondary institutions

- Community Colleges offer two options, degrees that transfer to four year colleges OR
- Two year programs leading to employment
- Affordability- Many students choose to transfer to a more challenging, more expensive four year school from a two year school
- Narrow down your options to 3-5 schools

Application process

- Gather what you need- Do you need letters of recommendation? An essay?
- Immunization record
- Records of disability from high school- Save a copy of your 504 plan, your IEP and your psychological evaluation at home, you may need it later.
- High School transcript
- Disclosure of disability or not?

College Visits

- Visit your favorites if you can
- If you can't visit, explore college websites
- Take a campus tour, come with a list of questions
- Visit the Disability Services office, ask what services they provide?
- Talk to students there, see how they like it, what is the average class size?
- Campus culture? Are there things to do?

College Service checklist

- Transportation around campus?
- Parking access- good signage and directions?
- Computers- Availability, adaptive technology?
- Events
- Size of campus
- Residence halls, singles, doubles, suites?
- Health services- Are they offered? Is counseling offered?
- DSO services- How are these arranged? Who is your contact?
- Tutoring?

The legal landscape changes

- FERPA will go into effect
- No more child study teams, or services automatically set up
- Student responsible for initiation of services, you need to send your documentation or ask your high school to do so, it is not automatic
- College staff cannot make students use services
- The Americans with Disabilities act goes into effect (ADA).

Will services be the same as in high school?

- Not all! Colleges provide “ACCOMMODATIONS,” not “MODIFICATIONS.”
- Few, if any waivers, changing of course content, extended assignments. Classes are mainstreamed.
- More emphasis on technology- important to have computer skills. You may need to learn new technology!
- Tutoring can replace resource room support!
- You will most likely be testing in a testing center.

How competitive is the college?

- Two year public colleges are open admission
- Will you take the SAT's?
- If not there may be college placement test
- Review, if you are not taking math your senior year prior to testing
- Use your testing accommodations!
- Do not be angry if you test into remedial sections

Financial aid

- Start early to complete the required forms
- New York State also offers TAP, there is “ADA TAP” which if awarded can also cover part time studies
- Apply to Access-VR or the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired
- Explore scholarships
- Be very careful about debt!

Your meeting with the Disability Services Office

- Will you go alone or with your parents?
- Speak for yourself! You will be expected to know what your disability is and how it effects you. What services do you want to use?
- Residence Hall Accommodations? Drug and alcohol policies?
- Food allergies, medications, emergencies?
- Mental Health services? Anxiety, depression
- Aides? Readers?
- Attend orientation

Study Strategies

- Bring a set of noise cancelling headphones
- Find a quiet spot that you like
- Build study time into your schedule
- Visit professors during office hours
- Notetaking?
- Tutoring?
- Study buddies or study circles
- Use planning device of some type

College isn't just about work!

- Join a club or start a club
- Make new friends
- Try something different
- New chance, different from high school
- Ask questions
- If you have a problem address it!
- You may feel homesick at the beginning!

Time management

- More independence will be expected!
- Many students report going to sleep between 2-3:00 am, if so, do not select early morning classes
- If something is going wrong tell your professors and DSO
- Don't take on too much, especially the first semester.
- Look up the withdraw policy

Tips for parents:

- Be supportive but do not hover
- Do not perform tasks for the student that they should be doing
- Have a back up plan
- You will go through a transition too!
- Don't compare or expect perfection
- "Letting Go: A Parent's Guide to the College Years" by Karen Levin Coburn

Reduce Anxiety

- Parents and students may both be anxious during this process. Try to support each other, not pass the anxiety back and forth.
- Parents, do not do the entire process for the student!
- Student, take some responsibility!
- Chunk it out and take it step by step, start early! Don't compare yourself to others!

Learn about yourself

- Ask yourself some hard questions-
- Do I want to attend college or do my parents want me to attend college and I am not sure?
- Full time or part time? Nothing wrong with part time
- Are you a morning person or do you do better later in the day?
- What services will I need? You will mature and change. Take charge, role play to practice!

More Tips

- Normalize!
- You are NOT “THE ONLY ONE.”
- Ask for help!
- Change happens over time with a support team. Who is that?
- Predictable times of stress, beginning, mid-terms, final exams
- Practice healthy stress relief, when you do well
- Appreciate yourself! Don’t give up!

Enjoy and thank you!

- Nancy Carr
- 315-498-2834
- carrn@sunyocc.edu
- Director, Office of Accessibility Resources,
Onondaga Community College, Syracuse, N.Y.