

## **Post-Secondary Education: What Students with Disabilities And Their Parents/Guardians Need to Know**

### **ADVICE FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENTS**

The middle school and high school years are important as children grow, learn, and prepare for life after public school. Students in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade need to learn study skills, how to use tutorials, and appropriate work skills for school and future jobs. Being in school and class on time, turning in work on time, studying for tests, and monitoring their grades are adult job skills that we call responsibility, timeliness, time management, work completion, etc. These skills are difficult to learn in adulthood and also in high school. It is important to learn good work behaviors in elementary and middle school. Students who enter high school knowing how to help themselves and use the available resources to prepare themselves for life after high school will be more successful in high school, whether or not they have a disability. Start now to have high expectations of your child.

***NOTE: When we say the word “college,” it is all-inclusive. We mean postsecondary education and higher education. This includes college, university, trade school, technical school, community college, and junior college!***

#### **You won't get help in college, trade school, technical school or at universities!**

Should I go to college?

1. That statement is incorrect. Learn about disability services in higher education.
2. Don't set limits for yourself.
3. Try it, you just might like it.
4. Should you go to a technical college, community college or university?
5. Should you go away to school or stay at home and attend a local college?

#### **Where do I go to find the help?**

1. Colleges/universities, technical schools, etc. have offices for students with disabilities.
2. Make an appointment and go visit the colleges or universities you are interested in attending.
3. Documentation of disability is required.
4. SHOP AROUND! Everybody is different.

#### **What about admissions requirements?**

1. Since the fall of 2009, students must graduate on the recommended or distinguished graduation plan to enter as a freshman at Texas public colleges and universities.
2. Students graduating on the minimum plan may enter as a freshman at a community college or trade/technical school.
3. Some schools have more admission requirements than others.
4. Some schools look at the TAKS, SAT, and ACT scores.
5. Students who do not score at the required level of the TAKS (above the public school pass rate), the ACT, or the SAT will be required to take a placement test. This varies at each community college.

6. Some schools have a formula for admission, and testing is only part of the requirement.
7. Your resume of work experience, extra-curricular activities, and references are important.

#### **What if I can't pass the entry tests?**

1. Most colleges and universities require a type of placement tests if the TAKS score, ACT, or SAT are below certain numbers.
2. The most common are known as the THEA, AccuPlacer, or Compass.
3. Some are paper/pencil and some are computer versions.
4. What if I don't pass this test?

#### **Are there exemptions if you don't pass the tests?**

1. No, but there are exceptions and requirements that vary from college to college.
2. What are developmental classes?
3. What if I don't pass the developmental classes?

#### **Okay, so I make it to college, then what?**

1. Self-identify at the school's disability services office (The name of the office that serves students with disabilities is not the same at each college. It could be Office of Disability Services, Student Accessibility Services, etc.). Parents can't help you on this one.
2. This is your life--take charge!
3. Enroll and apply at the disability services office.
4. Ask your caseworker to help you find a good academic advisor.

#### **Can I afford to go?**

1. Talk to your parents.
2. If you are a senior, apply NOW with the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS).
3. Check with the financial aid office at the college or university.
4. Apply for scholarships.
5. If you are a junior, talk with the DARS representative on your high school campus to obtain information about supports available to go to college. Be ready to apply at the beginning of your senior year.
6. DO NOT get so busy with your senior year that you do not have everything in place and decided prior to graduation (DARS funding for books and tuition).
7. If you do not have the DARS application and acceptance completed before graduation, chances are really good that YOU WILL NOT HAVE THE BOOKS AND TUITION FROM DARS FOR THE FALL SEMESTER!! You will have to pay for college yourself and try again in the fall to apply for DARS funds for the next semester in the spring.

#### **What if college is too hard?**

1. You are not your disability.
2. You will not be the only person who has trouble, so don't blame the disability.
3. Organize your resources.
4. Use your resources.
5. Don't quit when the going gets tough.
6. Recognize problems before it is too late to do anything about it.

### **The college education is more than books!**

1. Become part of the college.
2. Join an organization that interest you.
3. Get involved with student government.
4. Join a sorority or fraternity.
5. Balance the classes with getting involved in the college life.

### **What type of help could I expect?**

1. It depends on the college or university.
2. Some of the more common supports are:
  - a. Quiet place to take tests
  - b. Test read to the student
  - c. Note-taking assistance
  - d. Tutoring
  - e. Other supports include:
  - f. Priority registration
  - g. Books on tape/CD
  - h. Peer support groups
  - i. AND MORE

### **Entitlement Versus Non-Entitlement**

1. College is NOT public school. It is up to you!
2. No one will come and find you to see if you need help. No one will change the outcome if you “did not think you would need help”, “did not want to tell them you had a disability”, “your parent is mad”, or “you did not know the disability services existed”. IT IS ALL UP TO YOU!!!
3. Don’t wait until the last minute.
4. The college experience won’t find you, you must find it and grab on!

### **Attitude goes a long way.**

1. Everyone in college experiences some problems.
2. Don’t look at the challenges through disability eyes.
3. You are you! You are not your disability!
4. Know the difference between a feeling and a fact.
5. Use positive self-talk.

### **The Role of the Parent “AT THE COLLEGE” of a Student with a Disability**

1. There isn’t one!!
2. Parents, your child is considered a legal adult and therefore the college will not talk to you without your child’s permission. Even then they will be talking to your child it is the answers your child gives that the college will respond to and not yours.
3. Parents who pay for their child’s education are no more entitled to information and participation than parents who do not pay.
4. Parents whose child has a disability are no more entitled to information and participation than parents whose child does not have a disability.
5. Parents, you have one role: encourage, mentor, and emotionally support your child. If you are also able to financially support them-great, but the first sentence is more important.

6. Parents, you do not have to have a disability to fail a college class or flunk out of college. Don't panic if your child is barely getting by-they are trying!! Encourage them. With each day, they will become older, wiser, more mature and have a better chance of passing in the future.
7. **ONE THING YOU CAN DO:** Students with disabilities may apply for funding for books and tuition to attend college. If the student attends a trade/technical school, DARS may also assist with tools, etc. Eligibility is not a guarantee!!
  - a. The student must meet with DARS and complete the application in the senior year prior to graduation.
  - b. The application is not complete until the parent component is completed and signed, and the application is submitted.
  - c. The eligibility is not determined until both the student and parent has completed their responsibility in the application process.
  - d. **MANY** students with disabilities do not receive money from DARS for books and tuition because the parent did not complete their part of the requirements. Parents and students thought just meeting with DARS and filling out the paperwork was "all there was." **FINISH THE PROCESS!!**

### **College and the Family Medical Insurance**

1. Most family medical policies will remain in effect for the child who graduates from high school and goes to college, IF the child is a full-time student. A full-time student is usually a student who takes 12 credit hours per semester.
2. **NOTE:** Many family medical policies will remain in effect, IF the student submits a letter to the insurance from a doctor or the college office of disability services that states the student is unable to take the full load due to the disability. It is not a sure thing, but most of the time this is accepted to validate a reduced course load.

### **Next Steps:**

1. The importance of transition meetings:
  - a. Check with the high school counselor and diagnostician to be sure you are on track for graduation.
  - b. Discuss your plans for postsecondary education in your ARD meeting.
  - c. Discuss ways to ensure your IEP will put you on track to graduate from college and be prepared for postsecondary education.
2. Check out the college, university, or technical schools you are interested in attending.
3. Shop Around! Do your homework!
4. Don't just investigate the college and talk to admissions. Go and visit the office of disability services to find out who works there and if you get the impression they will want to help you.

**Sources:**

- Richard Lavoie's: Education's Most Damaging "Urban Legend" (July 2005). Website: <http://www.ldonline.org/lavoie/7277>
- Association of Higher Educations and Disabilities: <http://www.ahead.org/>
- Deaf Schools and Colleges: <http://www.howardcollege.edu/library/deafsch.htm>
- National Foundation for the Blind/Visually Impaired: <http://www.nfb.org/nfb/Default.asp>
- National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI): [http://www.nami.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Find\\_Support/NAMI\\_on\\_Campus1/NAMI\\_on\\_Campus.htm](http://www.nami.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Find_Support/NAMI_on_Campus1/NAMI_on_Campus.htm)
- Autism and College. Website: <http://www.autismsupportnetwork.com/news/autism-and-preparing-college>
- Developmental Disabilities and College: <http://www.txddc.state.tx.us/resources/publications/collegehtml.asp>
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