

## College Bound Students with Disabilities

Many high school students with learning disabilities are facing the exciting and perhaps scary prospect of starting college this fall.

College is by most accounts a wonderful experience. It will also help you to earn more in your lifetime. That being said, if you have a learning disability, you will probably need to be more proactive in college to obtain any accommodations or services that you need. As your Individualized Education Program (IEP) will be officially ‘complete’ the day you graduate from high school, it will be up to you to find the right resources—both at your college and, if necessary, outside of it.

Fortunately, the National Center for Learning Disabilities provides some great resources for navigating the transition to college, including a very helpful checklist. It also provides a podcast that covers the process.

### Let’s consider the Differences between High School and College

As the student makes the transition from high school to college it is important to recognize the significant differences between the two educational levels – high school & college.

<b>Public High School</b>	<b>College</b>
All students are guaranteed an education by law until age 21.	Students have no rights for education but cannot be discriminated against.
Schools must screen and evaluate students with a possible disability.	Colleges are not obligated to screen or evaluate.
An Individual Education Plan (IEP) must be developed for students identified with a disability.	Students are responsible for developing their own educational plan.
High schools must provide appropriate fundamental services, modifications and accommodations to meet the individuals’ needs.	Colleges are obligated to provide “reasonable accommodations.”
Students and parents have the right to request a due process hearing.	Students may only file a grievance with the college and have no right to due process.
Parents are legal advocates for students until age 18.	Students act as their own advocates.

## **AN ACTION PLAN FOR HIGH SCHOOL**

It is important that LD students take the following steps in order to ensure a smooth transition from high school to college:

1. Enroll in a college-preparatory academic program. Work closely with your school counselor and case manager starting in freshman year to select courses where you will achieve maximum success.
2. Get involved in sports, clubs and community service activities. Colleges are looking for the “well-rounded” student.
3. Become familiar with your learning disability. Be able to discuss it intelligently. Understand what your disability is, how it affects your learning process, and what services you require to help compensate.
4. Practice self-advocacy. Be comfortable and confident in describing your learning difference and your academic needs.
5. Work to improve your study skills, organizational skills and time management ability.
6. Establish your short-term and long-term goals.
7. Be realistic in your college search. Assess how well a post secondary setting is equipped to meet your needs, as well as how well-equipped you are to meet the needs of the institution.
8. Consider enrolling in a summer pre-college program specifically designed for LD students in either the summer before or after your senior year. These programs are incredibly helpful preparation for the real college experience.
9. Know your rights. Be familiar with laws PL 94-142, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Act, and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.
10. Be an active participant in the development of your IEP (Individualized Education Plan). Work cooperatively with your parents, teachers, school counselor and LD specialist who are there to help you.

### **Here are some additional tips to prepare for this big step:**

- Parents and students need to identify and prioritize the student’s most important areas of need – in regards to accommodations.
- Parents and students need to utilize the expertise of their high school academic counselor, transition coordinator, teachers and other school personnel.
- Parents and students need to take advantage of both print and computer resources.
- Parents and students need to seek information for their specific question(s). ie. College admission policy, fees for services, deadlines, etc.
- Parents and students need to collect all information and compare to determine the college that best fits their criteria.
- In most cases, for students with disabilities, there might be additional steps such as, identifying the special services office or person, student services application, release of current Full Individual Evaluation (FIE) documentation that identifies disability, etc.

## **INFORMATION RESOURCES**

Association on Higher Education and Disability  
P.O. Box 21192  
Columbus, Ohio 43221-0192

Attention Deficit Disorder Association  
P.O. Box 972  
West Newbury, Massachusetts 01985

Learning Disabilities Association of America  
4156 Lily Road  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15234-1349  
<http://www.danat.org/>

National Center for Learning Disabilities  
381 Park Avenue South, Suite 1420  
New York, New York 10016

SAT Services for Student with Disabilities  
College Board  
P.O. Box 6226  
Princeton, New Jersey 08541-6226