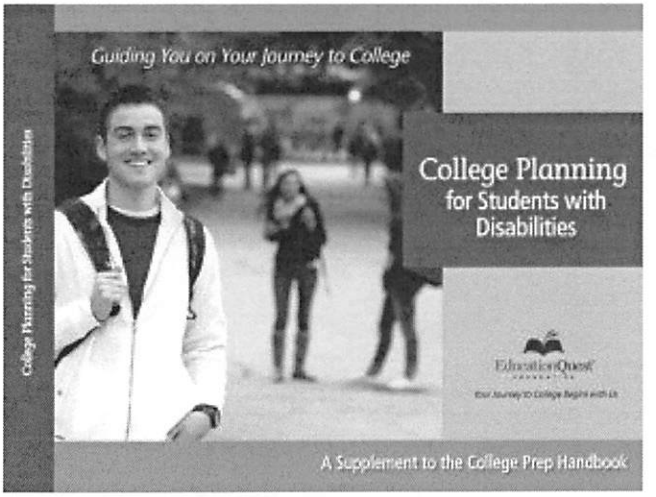
Information for Students with Disabilities



As a student with disabilities, you face unique considerations as you plan for college. To help you address these issues, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and EducationQuest have developed these steps you should follow:

Step 1: Understand the importance of self-advocacy

Becoming a self-advocate in high school will help you succeed in college. In college, ***you*** will be responsible for identifying and requesting support services. Parents aren't automatically involved with your college education, and most colleges prefer working directly with the student.

As a **"self-advocate"** you communicate your needs with logical and positive language. To be an effective self-advocate, you must understand your disability, know how it impacts your learning, and become comfortable with describing your disability and academic-related needs to others. Follow these tips for becoming a self-advocate.

Step 2: Explore your career options

- Ask your school counselor or school transition specialist about career interest inventories and a vocational assessment to help you identify your career interests. Ask how your learning needs may influence these career areas.
- Discuss career options with your parents, friends, and people working in jobs that interest you. Look into job shadowing, attend local career fairs, and explore volunteer opportunities in your areas of interest.
- Become involved in extracurricular activities. Volunteer and paid work can teach responsibility, reliability and teamwork. A part-time job is also a good way to earn money for college. Track your

activities using the *Activities Resume*.
- Review the Exploring Careers section for additional career information.

Step 3: Prepare for college entrance and placement exams

- **ACT/SAT entrance exams**
  You typically take the ACT and/or SAT entrance exams in the spring of your junior year and again in the fall of your senior year. The following links provide details about requesting accommodations for the ACT and the SAT.
- **ASSET and COMPASS**
  Test-taking accommodations also apply to the ASSET or COMPASS tests – a series of short placement exams often required by community colleges. These exams are designed to help identify your strengths and needs.



Step 4: Narrow your college choices

Finding a college that meets your needs will require research, campus visits and asking the right questions. See the Selecting a College section for steps to follow.

Once you narrow your college choices, meet with the **disability services coordinator** at each college to determine services and accommodations that may be available. This will help you decide which college best meets your needs. To prepare for that meeting review these questions to ask the disabilities services coordinator and questions you may be asked.

Step 5: Apply for admission and financial aid

Ask your prospective colleges about deadlines and the process for applying for admission, financial aid and college-based scholarships. Ask about scholarships that may be available for students with disabilities.

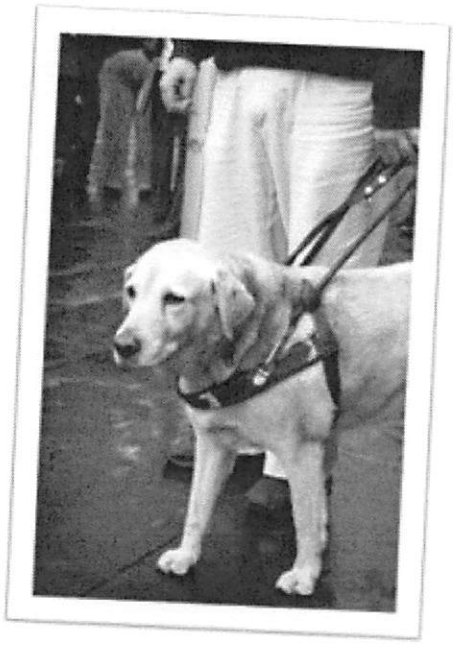
When you apply for financial aid, inform the college's financial aid administrator of your disability-related expenses keeping in mind that financial aid will not cover expenses already covered by assisting agencies. Possible disability-related expenses include:

- services for personal care attendants
- special education equipment related to your disability and its maintenance
- special transportation

- medical expenses relating directly to your disability not covered by insurance

If you need help with the financial aid process, contact EducationQuest Foundation.

Step 6: Select a college and request services



Once you select a college, keep in mind that you will receive services related to a disability only if you contact the coordinator of disability services, provide required documentation, and request services each term or semester.

- **Gather required documentation**
  All colleges require documentation of a student's disability to determine eligibility for services. They may request copies of your **IEP (Individualized Education Plan)**, **MDT (Multidisciplinary Report)**, or other appropriate documentation.
  - **Contact the office that provides services for students with disabilities at the college you plan to attend.** Ask what you will need to provide to receive appropriate services in a timely manner.
  - **Request a copy of your high school IEP before you graduate**. If you had an IEP in high school, that means you were tested by the school psychologist or a medical doctor. A copy of that assessment may be sufficient documentation of your disability.
  - **Update your tests**. Some colleges have a three-year time limit on accepting certain documentation, particularly if you have a learning disability or Attention Deficit Disorder. If you received testing in high school, work with your school to have your tests updated the last year you receive special education services. Disability testing after high school graduation can be expensive.
- **Meet with the disability services coordinator**
  Review the documentation and discuss accommodations with the disability services coordinator at your college. After meeting with you and evaluating your documentation, the disability services coordinator will understand how your disability impacts your learning and can determine possible accommodations. The law does NOT state that all students with a disability must receive ALL accommodations.

- **Request accommodations**
  Partner with the disability services coordinator and the course instructor to find accommodations that work best for you. Although the college may not always agree to your request for a specific accommodation, they are required by law to provide an effective accommodation. Determining effective accommodations may involve experimenting and making adjustments.
- **IMPORTANT! You must request services from the disability services office *each term or semester*.** You will not receive services unless you make the request.

Step 7: Become familiar with the campus environment

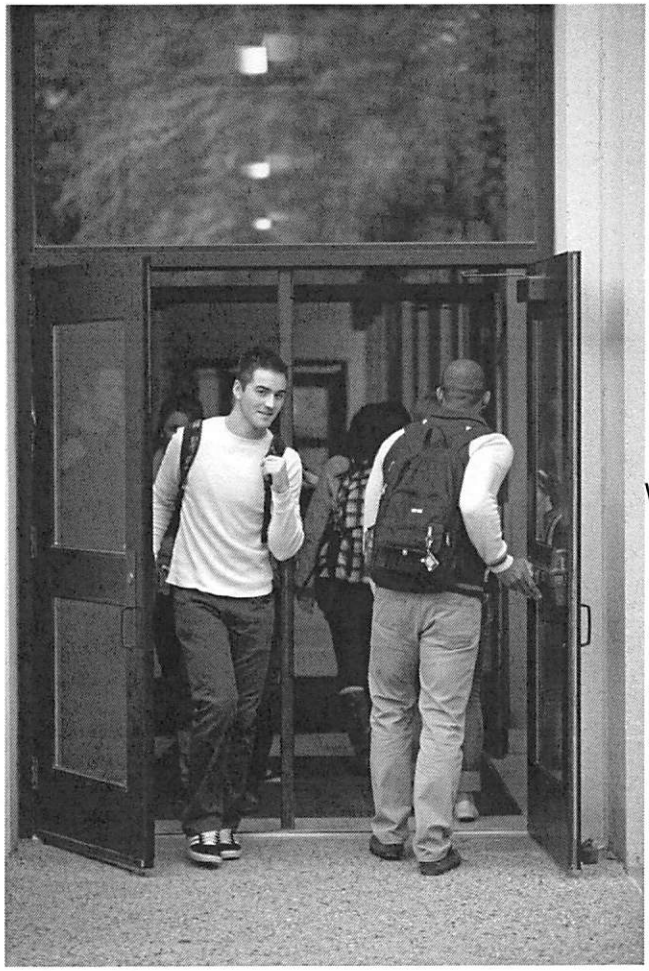
- **Register for campus orientation**. The disability services coordinator may also provide a special campus orientation.
- **Determine where to go and who to contact in case of an emergency**. If you have special needs (especially medical needs) inform appropriate college personnel of any advance preparation that should be in place.
- **Ask the admissions office if a summer transition program is offered**.
- **Obtain a copy of your class schedule** and visit all buildings where your classes will be held to become familiar with locations and layout.
- **Become familiar with parking facilities and procedures** if you are commuting and will drive yourself.
- **Consider signing a release of information** so the school has permission to share information with your parents.

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Tips for becoming a self-advocate

Review your case file with your parents and Individual Education Plan (IEP) team to better understand your disability and its effect on your learning. Ask for copies of your IEP and other assessment reports. Ask these questions:

- What is my disability?



- How does it affect how I learn?
- What are my academic strengths?
- How do I learn best?
- What strategies can I use to help me learn?

Consider meeting with the doctor or school psychologist who performed your assessment (testing) for the terms needed to explain your disability.

Take an active part in the discussions at your IEP meetings. Understanding your learning strengths and weaknesses gives you valuable knowledge that can influence your IEP planning and the services you may request in college.

Before each IEP meeting:

- Understand the purpose of the meeting.
- Know who will be there and their role at the meeting.
- Review the report from your last IEP meeting. Understand the goals listed on the report.
- Practice saying how you accomplished the goals.
- Establish new goals and be prepared to state them.

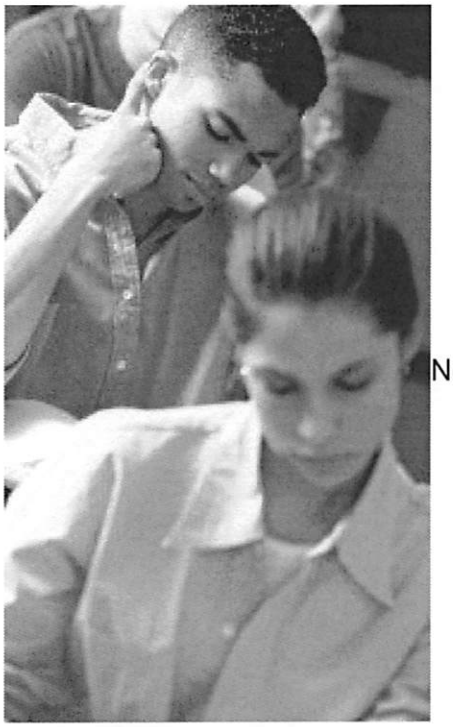
At the IEP meeting:

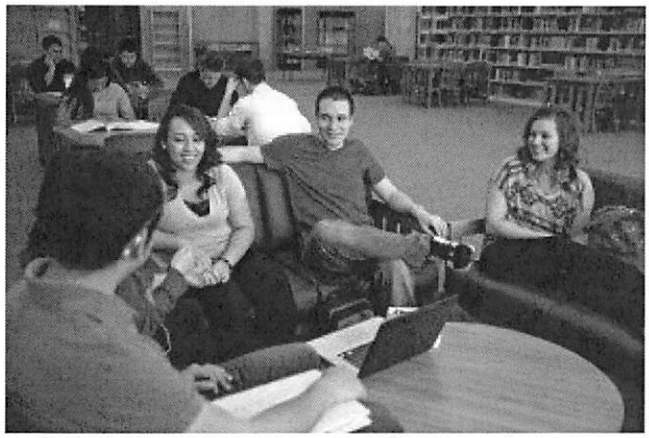
- Summarize your past goals and accomplishments.
- State your new goals.
- Ask for ideas and feedback from other members.
- Know what support and help you will need to accomplish your goals — and ask for it.
- Ask questions if you don't understand.

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Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Depending on your disability, your college may be able to provide some of the the following accommodations:

- 
Notetakers, tutoring, proofreaders, and editing services
- Textbooks and other educational materials in alternative form, such as Braille, large print, and audio-tapes
- Access to educational materials in advance, such as class syllabus and study guides
- Sign language, oral interpreting, and real-time captioning services
- Test-taking alternatives, such as extended time, taped tests, oral tests, alternate test site, elimination of computer scored answer sheets, and use of a computer or spell-checking device for quizzes and exams
- Access to adaptive equipment such as closed caption devices, amplified telephone receivers, low vision reading aids, tape recorders, Brailleing devices, and computer enhancements
- Equal access to classes, activities, and services



Opportunity to make up quizzes, exams, or assignments if the absence was disability-related

- Preferential seating in classroom
- Extension of timelines for completion of specific courses
- Extension of timelines to complete certification or degree requirements
- Permission to take less than full-time credit and still be eligible to receive financial aid.
- Foreign language course substitutions, for example, option to take foreign culture class instead of foreign language
- Early registration

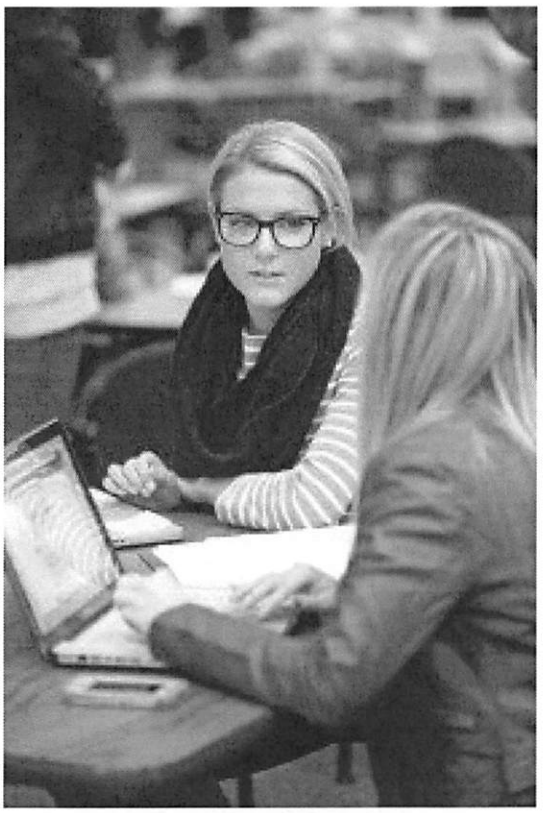
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Legal Rights and Responsibilities for Students with Disabilities

By understanding your rights and responsibilities, you will know what you need to do, and what the college is required to do, for you to have an equal opportunity for success.

Federal laws

Following is a description of laws and how they pertain to you as a college student with a disability.



Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

This civil rights statute is designed to prevent discrimination against persons with disabilities, as amended in 1990. It provides that:

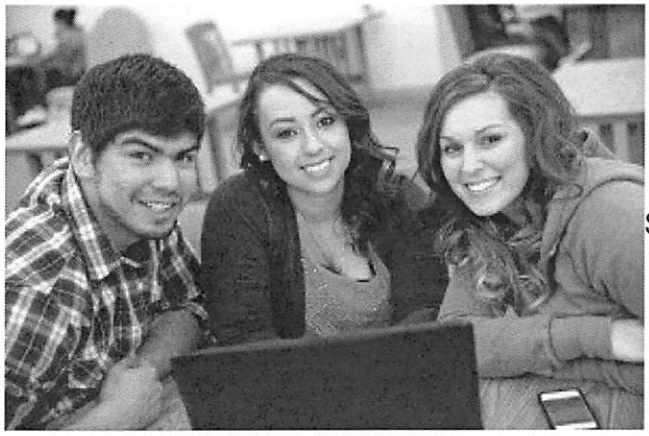
- No **otherwise qualified** individual with disabilities in the United States shall, solely by reason of his/her disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

- This law requires that postsecondary schools be prepared to make **appropriate accommodations** and **reasonable modifications** to their college's procedures and practices, so that you can fully participate in the same programs and activities that are available to students without disabilities.

The Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is also a civil rights law. It helps to implement and enforce Section 504, and also outlines additional protections. While Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act states that public institutions cannot discriminate on the basis of disability if they receive federal funds, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 states that with or without federal funds, public institutions cannot discriminate on the basis of disability. Private colleges and universities are covered under the ADA, unless they are completely owned and operated by religious organizations.

Discrimination complaints



Some individual instructors are not familiar with ADA or Section 504 requirements, or with the purpose of accommodating students with disabilities. The disability services coordinator can serve as a liaison between you and the instructor, and can advocate for reasonable accommodations.

Some colleges have an appeals committee that conducts informal hearings related to alleged violations of student rights.

If you cannot resolve your situation informally, follow the school's internal grievance procedure. All colleges are required to have complaint or grievance procedures related to discrimination. The procedures are formal steps outlined to resolve the issue.

- The formal process usually begins with the faculty or staff member most directly involved, the student and a mediator. If satisfactory resolution is not reached, the process may continue with the person's supervisor, then the department head, a Dean, and possibly members of the college's Board of Education.
- All colleges are required by law to designate at least one staff person to coordinate compliance with Section 504 and the ADA. That person may be located in the Disability Services Office. If not, inquire there to find out who to contact. If you believe you were discriminated against on the basis of disability, you can receive help from the Section 504/ADA compliance coordinator.
- You also have the right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights for investigation. You must submit the complaint within 180 days of the alleged discrimination.