

Preparing for a Postsecondary Program

A Resource Guide for Students with Disabilities

Deciding to go to a postsecondary school, whether it be a college, a trade school or a technical school, is both an exciting and anxious time for any student, let alone a student with a disability. Students with learning differences, however, are attending colleges, universities and other post-secondary institutions in greater numbers today than ever before. Twenty years ago, there were approximately 32 support programs across the country; today there is an office of disability services in almost all postsecondary schools.

In general, students with disabilities are expected to fulfill the same requirements, both in admissions and in academic work, as non-disabled students. One of the biggest differences for families to understand is that public schools are an “entitlement” system: under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), students with disabilities are provided an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) which ends upon graduation from high school.

Colleges, trade schools, or technical schools operate under a system of “eligibility”: students with disabilities are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This act provides some accommodations, given appropriate documentation for a specific disabling issue or condition.

The process of selecting, applying to, and surviving a post-secondary program can be very stressful for students with disabilities. The information in this handbook is designed to provide a look at some of the factors required for success, to offer suggestions for getting started now, and to offer help in answering the question, “How do I prepare for life after high school?”

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Getting Ready 3

Whatever your future holds, there are many things you can do to prepare. Your Special Education Teacher or Guidance Counselor can guide you toward making good decisions.

- Select high school courses that will begin to prepare you for the vocational or college curriculum in which you're headed.
- Understand your learning challenges and be able to explain them to others.
- **ADVOCATE** for yourself. Be able to express your needs and the support you require.
- Don't be afraid to challenge yourself in school. With the appropriate accommodations and a desire to succeed, there can be many choices available to you.
- If you have academic strengths in some areas and are interested in a specific major in college, take advanced courses or courses related to that major, when appropriate.
- Know your responsibility for documentation requirements at the postsecondary level.
- Never use your learning challenges as an excuse.
- ***NEVER GIVE UP BELIEVING IN YOURSELF!***

Questions to Ask If Attending a Postsecondary Program

Almost all schools provide some type of support services. Assistance is provided, but much of the responsibility will fall on your child.

A support program is more comprehensive and is for students who require a great deal of structure and support.

Here are some questions to ask when looking for the appropriate level of support to meet your child's needs:

- Does the school have a support program or support services for students with disabilities?
- What does the service program include?
- What placement tests/documentation are needed to access this support?
- Are there summer/transitional courses offered for learning support services?
- Are course substitutions or waivers granted to students because of their disability?
- Are there support groups for students with disabilities?
- Are there any special costs involved?
- Who will be the academic advisor? Does the advisor have any training in special education?
- What types of accommodations are available?
- Are there special admissions considerations for students with disabilities?

The Application Process

Postsecondary students are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which makes it unlawful for postsecondary educational institutions to discriminate against students on the basis of disability.

Students with disabilities applying to a postsecondary program must meet the entrance standards of that school, including minimum SAT scores, regardless of disability.

Legally, the student does not need to reveal a disability, nor can a school ask.

Students may choose to write a personal essay revealing how their disability has impacted them and put a positive spin on how they have grown from their personal challenges. High school teachers can also write letters of support, commenting on how the student has overcome educational obstacles.

The Individualized Educational Plan (IEP), Evaluation Report (ER) or 504 Plan are not accepted documents in a post-secondary setting. While they may have identified supports and services the student needed and used in a high school setting, they generally are not sufficient documentation for postsecondary programs. This is because postsecondary education presents different demands than a high school education, and what is needed to meet these demands may be different.

Once a student has been accepted into a program and requests academic accommodations, current documentation must be submitted. Documentation by a qualified evaluator should include:

- Background and history of the disability, including relevant medical and social history;
- Diagnostic interview including student self-report and interviews with others;
- Transcripts and standardized test scores;
- Assessment of aptitude, academic achievement, information processing;
- Medical or psychiatric assessments, where appropriate;
- A specific diagnosis;
- Functional limitations of the disability (i.e. How does the disability substantially limit a major life activity?);
- Current medication regimen and possible side effects;
- Identification of how the disability substantially limits the student in the college setting (e.g. in the dorm, classroom, extra-curricular activities, *etc.*);

- Recommendations for reasonable accommodations per 504/ADA guidelines as applied to college settings.

Neither the high school nor the post-secondary school is required to conduct or pay for a new evaluation to document disability.

It is the student's responsibility to provide the necessary documentation to the disability service provider. Documentation should also be recent. "Recent" depends on the nature of the disability, e.g. medical or mental health disabilities of a changing nature may require more frequent assessments and/or updates.

Self-Advocacy: Managing Your Disability

A big change and surprise to parents is that they are no longer the primary advocate for their child in the postsecondary system. In fact, teachers cannot communicate with parents without a signed release from the student. *This is the time for students to learn to advocate for themselves.*

Here are some guidelines:

The Student is the Responsible Party

- The student has the responsibility to self-identify as a student with a disability, if assistance or support is desired.
- Higher education does not use team decisions as is done at the secondary level (no IEP, 504 Plan, or Evaluation Report)
- The student has to request accommodations.
- Decisions regarding accommodations are a result of collaboration between the student and the disability service provider.

The Student Decides When or If to Disclose the Disability

- The student retains the right to decide whether to disclose to professors or instructors. (The disability service provider does not always notify them.)
- The student may need accommodations in some classes, but not others.

- The student need only to disclose the disability when accommodation requests specifically involve the professor or instructor; e.g., test accommodations.
- The student must take the initiative.
- The student must contact professors/instructors in a timely manner, at least 3-4 days notice in advance. (Most times, the professor or instructor is not on campus all day.)
- They must be notified before each test, not once a semester.

The Student Presents the Appropriate Documentation

- The student provides the documentation that identifies functional limitations and supports the requests for accommodations.
- A diagnosis itself doesn't make it a disability.
- Communication regarding documentation is between the student and the disability service provider.

The Student Requests and Negotiates Reasonable Accommodations

- All requests are initiated by the student (not by the disability service provider, parent/guardian or advocate) at the beginning of the semester.
- The accommodations that may meet the student's needs, cannot substantially alter the fundamental nature of the course, program or college standards.
- Accommodations not requested are not provided.
- Requested accommodations must be specific to the course and setting and may not generalize to other courses or settings.
- The student is the liaison between the disability service provider and the professors/instructors; i.e., alternate test arrangements usually made a week in advance.
- The student provides the specifics regarding requests for accommodations; e.g., text chapters to be taped, scribes, additional time, etc.
- The student is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the used accommodations; e.g., quality of taped textbooks, notes from a note-taker, etc.

8 How Does High School...

High School

- * Courses require less time out of class.
- * Short reading assignments are usually covered in class, depending on the disability.
- * Direct instruction by resource teacher available.

Studying

- * Student is expected to study 2-3 hours daily for each hour in class.
- * Substantial amounts of independent reading may be assigned and not reviewed in class.
- * Study time may increase 50-100%.

College

High School

- * Teachers check for completed homework and remind students to turn in assignments.
- * Teachers approach student if they believe assistance is to be needed.
- * Students are encouraged to approach the teacher.
- * Teachers are certified and have been trained in teaching methods to assist in learning new material.
- * Teachers present material to help the student understand the text.
- * Teachers often put important information on the board or overhead to be copied for notes.
- * Outside sources may be required less often.

Instructors

- * Professors distribute course syllabus and expect students to complete assignments and prepare for exams as scheduled.
- * Professors expect students to approach them if assistance is needed.
- * Professors are often experts in their fields, but may not be trained as teachers in special education instruction.
- * Professors may not follow the textbook and often elect to supplement the text with additional material.
- * Professors often lecture in a free-style manner, leaving the student to identify important points and/or a format for note taking.
- * Professors frequently require library research.

College

High School

- * Grades are given for most assigned work.
- * Homework grades often help when test grades are low.
- * Graduation occurs when all required courses are passed with a "D" or better, or if IEP goals have been met.

Grades

- * Grades may not be given for all assigned work.
- * Extra credit or homework is rarely used to compensate for low test scores.
- * Graduation will occur only if the standards of the program and of the school have been met.

College

...Compare to College? 9

Classes

High School

- * Six hours/day or 30 hours/week.
- * School year – 180 days.
- * Teachers and parents monitor attendance.
- * Textbooks provided.

College

- * 12-15 hrs/week & may include evening and/or Saturday classes.
- * School year is divided into semesters or trimesters.
- * Professors may or may not check attendance.
- * Student pays for books; at least \$300-\$500 each term.

Tests

High School

- * Given frequently and cover small amounts of material.
- * Make-up tests available.
- * May emphasize memorization of factual information.
- * Modification/alteration to test does occur.

College

- * Infrequent and cover large amounts of material.
- * Make-up tests not always available.
- * Often includes inferential reasoning and analysis/synthesis of material.

Personal Freedom

High School

- * Time structured by others.
- * Need for money is for special events/purchases.
- * Student is often dependent on parents to inform and remind them of their responsibilities.

College

- * Time management is the responsibility of the student.
- * Need for money is to meet basic necessities first and entertainment is second.
- * Student is responsible for actions and must adhere to the school's code of conduct.

With the transition from high school to a post-secondary institution, the student will see an increased number of areas in which personal responsibility plays a critical role. This transition can be exciting and challenging too. Preparation is the key.

10 Community Colleges

A community college is a great place for some students to begin their postsecondary education if they are unsure about their ability to handle the academic demands of college along with living on their own for the first time. It provides an environment where students can focus on academics, while learning skills such as time management and self-advocacy with the support of living close to home. Some community colleges offer transitional courses that a student can take the summer before entering school.

A community college can be a starting point for students who are still unsure of their goals, allowing them the opportunity to gain maturity, confidence and a better focus on their postsecondary studies. A community college can be a starting point for students who may struggle with a full workload at a four-year college or university. The transition from high school to a community college and then to a four-year school may ensure a greater chance of success.

A community college also offers an excellent beginning to a student's postsecondary education without the high tuition costs of a private college or university. Many students begin at a community college to decrease their costs for a four-year education, transferring to a state or private college/university for their last two years of school. Delaware County Community College has transfer agreements with 40 area colleges and universities, which can result in a smooth transition without the loss of acquired credits.

A community college can provide associate degree programs if a student's goal is to focus on skills for a specific career. Frequently an associate degree can be obtained within two years if the student attends full-time. For students whose strengths lie in hands-on learning, certificate programs are also available and provide them with the skills necessary for direct entry into many careers.

A community college utilizes entry exams to assess students' skills and assist them in their placement into appropriate levels of classes. The three developmental levels of English and two levels of math are designed to build a solid foundation for students and to prepare them for success in college level classes. Accommodations and support services are available based on individual needs.

Delaware County Community College provides a host of supports and services for incoming students. They include the following:

The Academy for College Excellence (ACE) was launched in the fall of 2010 as a program aimed at helping students, who struggled in high school, to better prepare themselves for handling college-level coursework.

Act 101 is a program for Pennsylvania residents who are educationally under-prepared and who need financial assistance in order to become ready for college-level courses. This program is designed to provide educational support services that strengthen students' academic skills and increase their confidence in their own ability to achieve. Students participating in

Act 101 have the unique opportunity to improve skills in English, reading and mathematics before starting the regular college experience.

Delaware County Community College offers a wealth of **computing resources** to support students in their studies. Resources range from its academic computer network, which supports the entire College, to individual computers for student use. College staff members are also available to support and train students on how to use the available technology.

The **Career and Counseling Center** offers a wide range of services to help students with academic, career and personal issues. Resources include one-on-one sessions, career workshops, and printed and electronic materials. Career counseling, personal counseling, academic counseling and advisement, transfer advisement, and the availability of community programs are among the services provided.

Two **Learning Centers**, the General Learning Center and the Math/Science Learning Center, are available to support students and help them succeed at DCCC. The centers provide information, education and technology resources for the college's students, faculty and staff. They include assistance with a basic service, tutoring, testing, and support with using technology. Highly skilled instructional assistants teach students how to use technology efficiently and effectively in their courses.

Perkins Services are available for career and technical education students. DCCC receives federal funding which is used to strengthen the academic, career and technical skills of students who are enrolled in career and technical programs. Perkins funding supports a variety of opportunities for Career and Technical Education (CTE) students.

SOAR (Students Occupationally and Academically Ready) is a career and technical education initiative that establishes statewide articulations between secondary and postsecondary education. These programs of study enable high school graduates in career or technical programs to earn college credit that can be applied to their continued studies at the postsecondary level. Statewide articulation agreements are currently in place for the Automotive Technology, Carpentry, Electronics Technology, HVAC, and Medical Assistant programs. Assessment advisors in the Assessment Center provide assistance in obtaining credits from DCCC.

Office of Disability Services assists students with disabilities. DCCC ensures equal access to educational opportunities for students with disabilities. Students with learning, ADHD, physical, and/or psychological disabilities seek accommodations through contact with the Director of Disability Services and with the provision of current comprehensive documentation.

The **Achieving the Dream Initiative** is a national effort aimed at helping community college students succeed. Supplemental Instruction (SI) is an important part of the Achieving the Dream initiative at DCCC. SI sessions are designed to help students develop skills for success in math, English, and reading courses. Students take part in extra activities directly related to the class subject. These activities help students to become better listeners, note-takers and test-takers, and also reinforce good study habits.

Tutoring is available when extra help is needed with a difficult class. Professionals are available each semester to provide assistance through the use of the professional tutorial lab, SMARTHINKING online tutoring, the Technology Resource Center, tutoring lab, and the Writing Center.

For the student who is not college-bound, Delaware County Community College offers professional non-credit certificate programs that are open to everyone. A student can register for individual courses without pursuing a certificate.

Horticulture Training

Prepares students for the Pennsylvania Certified Horticulturist examination, sponsored by the Pennsylvania Landscape and Nurseryman's Association.

Interior Decorating

Created for individuals considering entry into the design industry or those wanting to make the best decisions for their own home interiors.

Food Certification

Designed to satisfy the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and the Chester County Health Department's educational requirements for certification and recertification of those who serve food to the public.

Early Childhood Education Certification

For family homecare providers, center-based providers, individuals working toward the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, teachers and those pursuing a career in early childhood education. These courses are open to all, including those not seeking a certificate.

Certified Personal Trainer

On-campus lectures and hands-on training at an athletic club – covering anatomy, exercise, physiology, nutrition, injuries, health screening and more – will get students ready to work with clients.

Allied Health Certifications

For health care professionals looking to update their skills and their certifications as well as for those interested in pursuing careers in health care. DCCC offers programs in the following specialties:

- Registered nurse continuing education
- Pharmacy technician
- Physical therapy
- Venipuncture (phlebotomy)
- Dental assistant
- Medical front office
- EKG
- CPR
- BLS
- Computer Certifications

A wide variety of programs and courses are offered to help sharpen computer skills and earn IT certifications that will distinguish an individual professionally and make him/her more marketable.

Community colleges also recognize that attending college does not consist solely of going to classes. Campuses offer a variety of social activities including college and intramural sports. Clubs and activities, career and counseling services, student employment services and co-op centers provide students with opportunities to prepare for the future.



14 Vocational, Technical & Trade Schools

Attending a four-year college or university program is not for every student pursuing a postsecondary career. Today's campus-based vocational, technical and trade schools offer career-oriented degrees in a variety of high-growth occupational areas, so students can get the education they need to succeed. Many of these programs can be completed within one to two years, and sometimes less.

Pennsylvania is a state that hosts a variety of these schools. *The Department of Labor estimates that several of the fastest-growing occupations in the state of Pennsylvania between 2008 and 2018 will require postsecondary education through vocational, technical, and trade school training.*

Cutting edge programs can be found in many areas such as:

- Accounting
- Art & Design
- Automotive
- Computer Programming, Computer Networking and Computer Drafting and Design
- Construction
- Cosmetology and Barbering
- Criminal Justice and Paralegal
- Culinary Arts
- Dental Assisting
- Electronics
- Health Care-Related Fields such as pharmacy technicians, hospital care technicians, physical therapist assistants, and radiation therapists
- Information Technology
- HVAC
- Plumbing
- Skin Care Specialists
- Veterinary Technologists and Technicians
- Web Development

These are just a few of the many careers that can be attained through a vocational, technical, or trade school.

Vocational, trade and technical schools located in the immediate area:

- CHI Institute
- Williamson Free School of Mechanical Trades
- The Art Institute of Philadelphia
- Automotive Training Center
- Empire Beauty School
- Jean Madeline Aveda School
- Lincoln Technical Institute

Surviving No Matter Where You Go 15

Whether a student chooses a college, university, vocational, technical, or trade school, this experience will not compare to high school. For the first time, students will be juggling demands of their academic or training requirements while learning to manage their personal life at the same time.

Many responsibilities that may have fallen on parents, will now fall on the student. Unless a student gives his or her postsecondary school permission, no information can be communicated to parents. Here are some survival tips that students can begin to practice in preparing themselves for life after high school.

Survival Tips for NOW:

- With the assistance of your guidance counselor or advisor, begin to take preparatory courses in high school whether attending a college, university, vocational, technical, or trade school.
- Seek volunteer activities or clubs in your area of interest.
- Practice managing your time with the use of a calendar or planner.
- Know and understand your learning challenges. This is very important since you will be the one who decides to disclose or not disclose your disability after leaving high school.
- Practice self-advocacy skills. Be able to explain your disability and which accommodations allow you to successfully access your education.
- Practice reading strategies by setting aside time for reading.
- Be realistic when considering the program you wish to attend after high school.

Survival Skills for POSTSECONDARY PROGRAMMING:

- Balance the courses you select in college and try to avoid too many classes on the same day.
- Schedule your classes at the time of day that works for you.
- Balance academics with activities.
- Prepare for tests early. Don't cram!

- Request extended time on tests at least 3 days in advance. Each test must be requested individually.
- Become involved on campus.
- Make good choices.
- Be careful with your money and know how to budget for your living expenses, whether you continue to live at home or go away for your program.
- Seek out and familiarize yourself with on-campus supports and resources before they are needed, such as disability services, health center, academic advisor, psychological services, tutoring, etc.
- Provide the appropriate documentation to request accommodations immediately. Don't wait until you experience academic problems.
- Understand your disability so you can advocate effectively for your needs.

Parent's Role

Your role as a parent is now changing in important ways. Up until now, you have been able to advocate for your child. However, once your child leaves high school, they are now in the adult world.

Your child must be self-reliant know matter what he or she chooses to do after high school. If a postsecondary program is selected, understand that the college professor or instructor will not discuss your child's progress with you without his or her permission.

No longer being able to advocate for your child will be a frightening experience but begin early providing your child with the necessary tools to successfully navigate life after high school.

Here are a few suggestions you can make should your child begin to experience difficulty in his or her postsecondary program:

- When there is a problem that arises, have your child go to the resource person or specific professors/teachers/instructors on campus to seek assistance.
- Rather than providing quick solutions, encourage your child to brainstorm for possible solutions and guide him or her toward choosing one that will work.
- Understand that postsecondary programs can be more academically demanding so the student needs to work harder, be more organized, and actively problem solve. These demands come just as the student is beginning to enjoy enormous freedom. Expect that he or she will make mistakes but hopefully they will be ones from which they can learn.

The goal at the Upper Darby High School is to provide our students with the skills and strategies needed to assist them towards success. It is important that the student attends all IEP meetings and is an active participant. This is an opportunity for students to express their needs, develop their own goals and begin self-advocating. Guidance counselors and Special Education Teachers are committed to supporting postsecondary transition by providing information and suggestions based on their understanding of the student's needs.



This is an exciting time in your child's life. It is the milestone everyone has been working toward. It is also an encouraging time because so many postsecondary programs recognize the different learning needs of students. The majority of programs offer a variety of supports and want their students to succeed.

Whether the student's goal is a traditional four-year college, a community college, a trade school or a technical school, the key for the student is to understand his or her disability, be able to identify what is needed to be successful and to learn how to self-advocate.

18 Student and Parent Resources

Getting Started

The **Heath Resource Center** is a clearinghouse on postsecondary education for individuals with disabilities. It provides online learning modules to guide your exploration of education or training after high school.

Knowing Your Options: What to Do and Where to Go

www.heath.gwu.edu/modules/awareness-of-postsecondary-options

Vocational Rehabilitation Services: Can It Help You?

www.heath.gwu.edu/modules/rehabilitation-services

Opportunities in Career and Technical Education at the Postsecondary Level

www.heath.gwu.edu/modules/career-and-technical-education/

Non-Degree Postsecondary Options for Individuals with Disabilities

www.heath.gwu.edu/assets/9/non_degree_postsec_1.pdf

Experts Providing Support Websites

Association on High Education and Disability: Resources for Parents and Students

www.ahead.org/students-parents

Colleges, Career Colleges, Tech Colleges and School by State-pick your state or another to see what's available

www.college-scholarships.com/index.html#collegestate

DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology)-works to increase the participation of individuals with disabilities in challenging academic programs and careers. DO-IT Scholars is especially for college-capable high school students with disabilities.

www.washington.edu/doi

Education Portal-portal to degree programs, career information, school reviews, and education news

<http://education-portal.com/index.html>

What About College? General Resources

College or Training Programs: How to Decide
www.ldonline.org/article/12768

Going to College-a resource for teens with disabilities
www.going-to-college.org

Transition Checklist for Families
www.thinkcollege.net/for-families/transition-checklist

Heath Resource Center Modules available-online modules on a range of topics related to postsecondary education for individuals with disabilities as well as modules covering aspects of concern students may have once they get to college, including independent living, getting along with faculty, and emotional support. www.heath.gwu.edu/modules

Modules include but are not limited to:

- Getting Into College: What Students with Disabilities Want To Know
- Academic and Co-Curricular Accommodations in Colleges and Universities
- Community College: An Excellent Option for Students with Disabilities
- Show Me the Money! Options for Paying for College
- The Laws: What Do They Have To Do With You?



What About College? Resources on Specific Disabilities

AD/HD or Learning Disabilities: Resources for College

www.greatschools.net/LD/school-learning/resources-for-college-for-students.gs?content=798

Asperger Syndrome

www.insidecollege.com (Search: Aspergers Syndrome)

Autism Spectrum

www.collegeautism.com/students.html

Deafness or Hard of Hearing: PEPNet College Guide

<http://projects.pepnet.org/collegeguide/index.html>

Learning Disabilities: Post-High School Options

www.ncl.org/college-aamp-work/post-high-school-options

Learning Disabilities: Colleges with programs for LD Students

www.college-scholarships.com/learning_disabilities.htm

Physical Disabilities: Disability Friendly Colleges

www.disabilityfriendlycolleges.com

Psychiatric Disabilities: Handling Your Psychiatric Disability in Work and School

www.bipolarworld.net/job_school/js27.htm

Visual Impairments: Off to College Tips and Help for College-Bound Students

www.c3online.org/PHP-c170.pdf

Keys to Success in College

Study Strategies

www.d.umn.edu/student/loon/acad/strat

Study Skills Guide

www.csbsju.edu/academicadvising/helplist/htm

Ten Traps of Studying

http://campushealth.unc.edu/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=470&Itemid=65

Cornell Note Taking System & Other Academic Supports

<http://academic.cuesta.edu/acasupp/as/619.htm>

Self-Advocacy for College Students

www.ldonline.org/article/6142