

# Preparing for Life After High School

## *A Resource Guide for Parents and Their Children with Complex Needs*

Planning for life after high school is both an exciting and anxious time for any student, let alone a student with complex needs. Students with complex needs, however, have more postsecondary opportunities available today than ever before. Now consideration can be given to student-supported two-year or four-year college degree programs; two-year college certificate programs for students with intellectual disabilities; one-year or two-year trade or technical schools; or employment in the community upon graduation.

In general, if your child is planning to attend a postsecondary program, students with disabilities are expected to fulfill the same requirements, both in admissions and in academic work, as non-disabled students, unless they are attending a program with entrance requirements, courses, and work expectations specifically created for students with intellectual disabilities. 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) that ends upon graduation from high school.

Colleges, trade schools, or technical schools operate under a system of “eligibility”. This means that 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. Even in the workplace, students are protected under the ADA and can be provided reasonable accommodations to meet success in the workplace.

The information in this handbook is designed to assist in the process of choosing the direction in which a student will go upon leaving high school. It will also provide assistance to parents in answering the question, “How do I prepare my child for life after high school?”

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# Planning for the Student with Autism and/or Intellectual Disabilities

Parents are not the only ones responsible for planning the student's transition to life after high school. Many individuals, as IEP participants, will play a role in this process as the transition plan continues to develop throughout the student's time in secondary education. There will be important questions asked by the team and answers carefully considered.

- Will the student be able to attend a college program designed around his/her unique needs?
- Will the student be able to seek competitive employment, with or without support?
- Will the student be able to live independently, with or without support?
- How will the student access the community?
- What recreational activities are available so the student can further pursue his/her interests?

Deciding if the student is able to participate in a postsecondary program, seek competitive employment, access the community and/or live independently is a daunting task for any parent; however, today there are more resources than ever to assist parents, students, and other IEP Team members with planning. The team will draw upon the expertise of its various members and pool their information to make decisions and recommendations for the student.

The IEP Team will begin to consider work opportunities and career exploration opportunities for the student. Accommodations to support the student in his/her endeavors will also be decided. More intensive supported employment services may be needed in order for a student to perform a designated job.

Independent living or life skills, which encompass leisure and recreation, home maintenance and personal care, and community participation, must also be considered and planned for the student. Determining goals in the area of independent living will need to be discussed during IEP meetings. A range of activities, skills, and learning needs are involved in independent living; therefore, the nature and severity of the student's disability will impact the planning.

The student's IEP meetings may begin to include representatives from outside agencies who can inform the team of the comprehensive system of services in the community that are responsive to the needs of individuals with autism and intellectual disabilities. Employment-related services often available through these agencies can include supported and sheltered employment and competitive employment support for individuals who need minimal assistance.

Some **local and state agencies/resources** to explore are:

- **Association on Higher Education and Disability** (704-947-7779)
- **Association For Habilitation and Employment of the Developmentally Disabled (AHEDD, INC.)** (866-902-4333)
- **Autism Living and Working** (267-322-5800)
- **Autism Link** (412-377-8778)
- **Delaware County MH/MR Program** (610-713-2400)
- **Job Accommodation Network** (800-526-7234)
- **National Down Syndrome Society** (800-221-4602)
- **Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)** (800-442-6351)
- **Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare**
  - **Office of Developmental Programs** (717-787-3700)
  - **Bureau of Intellectual Disabilities Services -Southeast** (215-560-2247)
- **Pennsylvania Association of Resources For Autism and Intellectual Disabilities** (717-236-2374)
- **Pennsylvania Community Providers Association** (717-364-3280)
- **Pennsylvania Council on Independent Living** (866-302-7245)
- **Pennsylvania Parents and Caregivers Resource Network** (888-572-7368)
- **Pennsylvania Recreation and Leisure Helpline** (800-986-4550)
- **Pennsylvania Association of Goodwills** (717-234-1738)
- **Self-Determination Housing Project** (610-873-9595)
- **Social Security Administration** (800-772-1213)
- **The Arc of Delaware County** (610-325-3950)
- **The Center for Autism** (215-878-3400)

Whatever the future holds, there are many things parents and students can do to prepare. The Special Education Teacher, Guidance Counselor, and outside agencies are there to guide parents and students toward making good decisions.

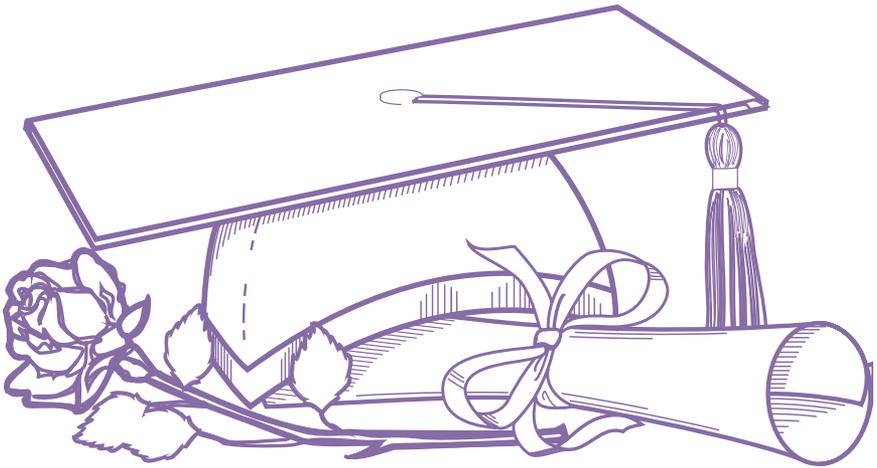
**If your child is planning to attend a postsecondary program**, there are steps you and your child can take together in preparation for that transition.

- Provide assistance in the selection of high school courses that will begin to prepare your child for the vocational or college curriculum in which he or she is headed.
- Ensure your child understands his/her learning challenges and is able to explain them to others.
- Let your child know his/her strengths every chance you get. Point out the unique talents and skills he/she has because of their disability.
- Teach your child to **ADVOCATE** for him/herself. It is important that your child express his/her needs and the support required to meet success.
- If able to do so, don't be afraid to have your child challenge him/herself in school. With the appropriate accommodations and a desire to succeed, there can be many choices available.
- If your child has academic strengths or interests in an area(s), encourage him/her to take classes related to his/her strengths, interests, and or the contemplated college major.
- Know the documentation requirements needed at the postsecondary level and teach the responsibilities your child will have to ensure all reasonable accommodations are provided.
- Do not allow your child to use his/her learning challenges as an excuse.

**If, upon leaving high school, your child is planning to seek employment, with or without support, or aspires to independent living, with or without support**, there are preparations that can begin now.

- Talk to your child about the importance of work. Ask him/her about jobs of interest. Discuss various occupations when in the community or watching TV.
- Explore the possibility of having your child take a class and/or participate in a summer experience in an area of strength or interest.

- Discuss your child's challenges and the supports needed to attain success at school and in the community.
- Encourage your child to ask for help whether it be for assistance at home, in school, or in the community.
- Provide some level of independence at home and/or in the community. Step back and allow your child to complete a task or make a decision independent of you. If concerned about safety, shadow your son or daughter in his/her endeavor.
- Point out things that need to be done on a daily basis so your child is aware of the responsibilities he/she will have if choosing independent living with or without support. Your child can share in budgeting, food shopping, doing the laundry, cooking meals, cleaning the house, etc.
- Explore outside agencies and the supports and services they provide to students.



# Questions to Ask If Attending a Postsecondary Program

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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 the your child's needs:

- Does the school have a support program or support services for students with disabilities including students with autism spectrum disorder or with intellectual disabilities?
- What does the service program include?
- What placement tests or documentation are needed to access this support?
- Are there summer or 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, regardless of their 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 challenge. High school teachers can also write letters of support, commenting on how the student has overcome educational obstacles. Upon acceptance, students can send documentation to the appropriate service provider or office of disability services.

## 8 Documentation

*The Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) and the Evaluation Report (ER) are not accepted documents in a postsecondary setting.* While your child may have identified supports and services 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 your child 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 your child'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: 9

## 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 unless the student is attending a program for students with intellectual disabilities. *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.

## Providing Postsecondary Education Supports for Students With Autism Spectrum Disorder

The student on the spectrum faces several potential areas of problems with higher education:

- Gaining admission to a desired college
- Moving away from home, if decided
- Handling emerging social situations
- Handling pragmatics such as time management, budgeting, and transportation
- Completing the required course work
- Securing needed services
- Planning for and actually transitioning to life after college

Today there are a number of colleges and universities that provide support services that meet the needs of students on the spectrum. Many schools are offering a range of stepping-stones. The following is a list of schools in the tri-state area with recognized postsecondary programs:

**Carnegie Mellon University** Pittsburgh, PA  
Through AHEADD, students are provided coaching and mentoring

**Community College of Philadelphia** Philadelphia, PA

**Drexel University** Philadelphia, PA  
Peer mentors help students with Asperger's plan their study schedules and manage competing demands

**Lebanon Valley College** Annville, PA

**Mercyhurst College** (The Asperger Initiative) Erie, PA  
Includes social tutoring and the option of not having a roommate. Graduate-student mentors are available to share quiet tables at each meal. Self-sufficiency is emphasized.  
Cost: \$4000/year + tuition

**Rutgers University, Main Campus** New Brunswick, NJ  
(Asperger's College Program)  
Provides full support services and life coaches.  
Cost: \$2500/semester + tuition

Some programs even offer supervised housing, along with nutrition education, stress management, and academic support. Prices for the most intensive services can run up to \$72,000 a year.

**For more colleges** with identified programs for students with Asperger's Syndrome, go to [www.insidecollege.com/reno/Colleges-for-Students-with-Aspergers-The-Very-Friendly-Ones/421/list.do](http://www.insidecollege.com/reno/Colleges-for-Students-with-Aspergers-The-Very-Friendly-Ones/421/list.do)

**AND**

[www.collegeautismspectrum.com/collegeprograms.html](http://www.collegeautismspectrum.com/collegeprograms.html)

## Some Resources for Students With Asperger's Syndrome

**St. Joseph's University's Kinney Center** sponsored its first two-day college-bound retreat June 21-22, 2011 to give teens with autism spectrum disorders a look at higher education; participants learned about living away from home, choosing a major, and using social skills on campus. (For information: <http://kinneyautism.sju.edu>)

**AHEADD (Achieving in Higher Education with Autism/ Developmental Disabilities)** Provides coaching and mentoring to students, including some at Philadelphia-area campuses. For information: 1-877-243-2331 or [www.aheadd.org](http://www.aheadd.org)

**College Autism Spectrum** offers mentoring, counseling, and advocacy on many campuses. For information: [www.collegeautismspectrum.com](http://www.collegeautismspectrum.com)

### Books for students and parents:

**Developing College Skills in Students with Autism & Asperger's Syndrome**, by Sarita Freedman, a California clinical psychologist (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2010)

**Autism Tomorrow: The Complete Guide to Help Your Child Thrive in the Real World**, by Karen Simmons and Bill Davis (Sicoli Group Inc., due out August 2011).

**A Professional Guide to Students with Asperger's Syndrome in Higher Education**, by Jane Thierfeld Brown

## Should I Even Think of College for My Son or Daughter Who Has An Intellectual Disability?

Postsecondary education options for students with intellectual disabilities have grown in recent years. There are **three main types of Postsecondary Education models**: mixed or hybrid, substantially separate, and totally inclusive. Within each model, a wide range of supports and services is provided. Each model is described in the order of prevalence.

### **Mixed/hybrid model:**

Students participate in social activities and/or academic classes with students without disabilities (for audit or credit) and also participate in classes with other students with disabilities (sometimes referred to as “life skills” or “transition” classes). This model typically provides students with employment experience on- or off-campus.

### **Substantially separate model:**

Students participate only in classes with other students with disabilities (sometimes referred to as a “life skills” or “transition” program). Students may have the opportunity to participate in generic social activities on campus and may be offered employment experience, often through a rotation of pre-established employment slots on- or off-campus.



**Inclusive individual support model:**

Students receive individualized services (e.g., educational coach, tutor, technology, natural supports) in college courses, certificate programs, and/or degree programs, for audit or credit. The individual student's vision and career goals drive services. There is no program base on campus. The focus is on establishing a student-identified career goal that directs the course of study and employment experiences (e.g., internships, apprenticeships, work-based learning). Built on a collaborative approach via an interagency team (adult service agencies, generic community services, and the college's disability support office), agencies identify a flexible range of services and share costs.

**Funding Strategies**

One of the greatest challenges for college attendance is how to pay for it, and this can be particularly true for students with intellectual disabilities. Historically, students with intellectual disabilities had not been eligible for federal financial aid, due to the non-traditional ways they may access college (non-matriculated, very part-time, etc). The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, for the first time, allows these students access to federal financial aid such as Pell Grants, Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants and the Federal Work-Study program when they are attending a Comprehensive Transition Program.

**Scholarships:**

Many foundations provide scholarships to students enrolling in postsecondary education regardless of their financial status, providing the student meets other requirements. Individual colleges also award annual scholarships based on demonstrated financial need. You can find a listing of scholarships for students with all types of disabilities at [Disaboom](#). There are also a growing number of scholarship programs specifically for students with Down Syndrome.

**Tuition waivers:**

Tuition waivers may be available through the state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency or through local community colleges; however, there is no universal implementation of waiver options nationally. A waiver that is provided by the state VR agency would typically apply to any state college. Usually, a waiver only covers the cost of tuition, and does not include student fees or books. In some cases, however, VR agencies have been known to cover the cost of tuition and fees, and book vouchers. Students are eligible to receive this type of support if they have been deemed eligible for VR services and if the classes in which they want to enroll are related to an identified vocational goal. Relating the course or program of study to a specific vocational goal is key to getting VR approval for fiscal support. Some community colleges also offer tuition waivers

to individuals who receive Supplemental Security Income through the Social Security Administration. Often, information about these waivers is listed in the college catalog as a benefit for senior citizens; however, these waivers apply to students of any age receiving SSI. Community colleges offering these waivers require students to complete a form, available from the bursar's office, and have their status verified at a local Social Security office.

### **Resource Mapping/Resource Aligning:**

Resource mapping is a process where multiple agencies outline what types of services each offers across specific areas (such as postsecondary education and/or employment). This process can help interagency teams to identify overlaps and/or gaps in services. Once the overlaps and gaps have been identified, the interagency team can discuss cost-saving and cost-sharing strategies in order to address the needs of the individuals in their community.

### **Individual Training Accounts (ITA):**

ITAs are funds set aside by the One-Stop Career Centers to help individuals pay for training that will lead to obtaining employment. However, eligibility for an ITA is at the discretion of the local One-Stop. Often, an individual must demonstrate a financial need and the likelihood of improved employability as a result of receiving further training. For more information, visit [the Department of Labor website](#).

### **Benefits Counselor:**

Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach is funded under the Ticket-to-Work legislation. There are organizations in every state that assist SSA disability beneficiaries with making choices about work. Services are free and can be identified by going to the Social Security Administration website, then clicking "Service Providers" listed on the site map on the left side of the page: <http://www.ssa.gov/work>

### **Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS Plans):**

PASS Plans were developed by the Social Security Administration (SSA) as an incentive to encourage individuals who may be receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Supplemental Security Disability Income (SSDI) to enter the workforce. In essence, this plan allows an individual to work and save money and not be penalized by a deduction from their SSI or SSDI check. However, there are restrictions on what the saved money may be used for. To learn more about PASS Plans in general, or to find out what is covered under this type of plan, go to: <http://www.passplan.org>

**Medicaid funds:**

In some instances, individuals who are receiving funding from Medicaid for community based supports have used those funds to help pay for the services and supports they need for college. Tuition payments are typically not an allowable expense, but transportation,



educational coaching, etc. may be. To find out more about this source of funding, contact an adult developmental disabilities agency in your area.

**Vocational Rehabilitation (VR):**

If student's coursework is directly related to accessing employment, state VR funds might be used. Additionally, some VR agencies may offer a tuition waiver for eligible students.

**Family funds:**

Postsecondary education options can be paid for by students' families. Students without a standard high school diploma are not eligible to apply for financial aid, nor can their families use college savings or 529 plans to pay tuition and fees. This limits access for economically challenged students.

**Program Examples****Temple University: Academy for Adult Learning**

Phone: 215.204.9395

Website: [www.temple.edu/instituteondisabilities/programs/inclusive/aal.shtml](http://www.temple.edu/instituteondisabilities/programs/inclusive/aal.shtml)

**Contact Person:** Kathy Miller, Project Manager

E-mail: [millerk@temple.edu](mailto:millerk@temple.edu)

**Program Description:**

Selected individuals with intellectual disabilities spend four semesters on Temple University's main campus experiencing college life. The AAL is designed to give these individuals an authentic college experience. Participants attend classes,

explore career options based on their interests and goals, and participate in the wide variety of activities available to all Temple students. Each Academy participant is matched with a student mentor who supports the individual in accessing Temple University's many resources. Current Temple students are recruited, hired and trained by the Institute to serve as effective mentors.

**Type of college or school:**

A 4-year college grants bachelors degrees.

**Most of the students in this program:**

Adults with intellectual disabilities who are no longer getting special education services from their public school system.

**The entrance requirements for students with intellectual disabilities:**

Specifically created for students with intellectual disabilities

**Special requirements for students to enter this program are:**

- Specific disability label or type
- Have basic safety skills in an unsupervised setting
- Be willing to abide by all the rules and policies set forth institution

**Students can take the following types of classes:**

- College courses for credit
- College courses for audit
- Individual instruction or tutoring
- Life Skills instruction
- Social Skills training
- Community Based instruction
- Independent Living instruction

**College Living Experience**

**Contact Program:**

Phone: 800.486.5058 Website: [www.ExperienceCLE.com](http://www.ExperienceCLE.com)

**Program Description:**

College Living Experience is a post-secondary program for students who require additional assistance to become successful learners and more independent

adults. College Living Experience provides intensive assistance to students with varying abilities, such as autism spectrum disorders, including Asperger's Syndrome, specific disabilities or social and emotional maturation issues. CLE's individualized support complements students' higher education goals and prepares them to transition confidently to independent adulthood.

**Type of college or school:**

Community college: A public 2-year college granting associates degrees or certificates.

**Most students in this program:**

Students who are still getting special education services from their public school system, under IDEA, and adults who are not.

**The major focus of this program:** Independent living.

**The entrance requirements for students with intellectual disabilities:**

Specifically created for students with intellectual disabilities

**To attend this program the student must be at least:**

17 years old to attend the Summer Exploration Program; 18 years old to participate in regular CLE programming.

**Special requirements for students to enter this program:**

- High school diploma (state approved), high school transcript or equivalent
- Other diploma (special education certificate, certificate of attendance)
- Have basic safety skills in an unsupervised setting

**Students can take the following types of classes:**

- College courses for credit
- College courses for audit
- Courses specifically designed for students with intellectual disabilities
- Individual instruction or tutoring
- Life Skills instruction
- Social Skills training
- Community Based instruction
- Independent Living instruction
- Travel Training instruction

**Students in this program are allowed to live in a dorm on campus or some kind of student housing near the school:** Yes.

**Type of degree or certificate students earn when they finish this program:**

- Typical college degree issued by the school.
- Specialized college degree/certificate issued by the school.

**East Stroudsburg University: Career & Independent Living & Learning Studies**

**Contact Person:** Dr. Domenico Cavaiuolo, Director

570.422.3893 [dcavaiuolo@po-box.esu.edu](mailto:dcavaiuolo@po-box.esu.edu)

**Application available at:** [www.esu.edu](http://www.esu.edu)

**Program Description:**

Designed for students with intellectual disabilities. It is a full-time 3-year certificate program that includes CILLS curriculum, inclusive field experiences, and university campus extracurricular activities. Coursework is offered under the following: personal academic enrichment, vocational development, socialization and leisure, and independent life.

**Admission criteria:**

Must be 18-26 years old

Have demonstrated the ability to learn and participate in classroom and work settings

Demonstrate an interest in possessing educational, employment, and life experiences that are necessary to attain substantial independence upon completion from CILLS.

**Web Resources**

[www.ThinkCollege.net](http://www.ThinkCollege.net)

This website is designed to share what is currently going on, provide resources and strategies, training events, and provide parents and students with ways to talk to others. The information is for transition aged students as well as adults attending or planning for college. It provides resources and tools for students, families, and professionals

[www.transitiontocollege.net](http://www.transitiontocollege.net)

[www.heath.gwu.edu](http://www.heath.gwu.edu)

[www.ahead.org](http://www.ahead.org)

[www.innovationsnow.net](http://www.innovationsnow.net)

## Community Colleges 19



A community college is a great place for some students with disabilities to begin their post-secondary education if 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. 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.



## 24 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? 25

### 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.***

## 26 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

# Work-Based Experiences 27

If you and your child have decided on competitive employment upon his or her transition from high school, exposure to work-based experiences before leaving secondary education can be valuable. These experiences help students identify employment and career preferences while being exposed to workplace expectations, specific or generic work skills, work environments, and workplace accommodations that provide optimum job success.

Any opportunity for students to come in contact with the workplace and employers can be considered a work-based experience. Below are listed various types of work-based experiences.

## **Career Exploration**

Visits by students to workplaces to learn about jobs and the skills required to perform them. Visits and meetings with employers and employees outside of the workplace are also types of career exploration activities from which a student can learn about jobs and careers.

## **Job Shadowing**

Extended time, often a full workday or several workdays, spent by a student in a workplace accompanying an employee in the performance of his or her daily duties. Many places of employment have “take your son or daughter to work day” while some companies plan annual job shadowing days where they invite students to spend time at the company.

## **Volunteer Work**

Unpaid work by a student that does not materially benefit the employer but allows the student to spend meaningful time in a work environment to learn aspects of potential careers and to learn soft skills required in the workplace.

## **Service Learning**

Hands-on volunteer service to the community that integrates with curriculum objectives. This is a structured process that provides time to think about the service experience and demonstration of skills and knowledge acquired.

## **Internships**

Formal arrangements where a student is assigned specific tasks in a workplace over a predetermined period of time. Internships can be paid or unpaid depending on the arranged experience.

**Apprenticeships**

Formal, sanctioned work experiences of extended duration in which an apprentice learns specific occupational skills related to a trade.

**Paid Employment**

May include existing standard jobs in a company or customized work assignments negotiated with an employer and feature a wage paid to the student.

The IEP Team will be the guiding force in planning the appropriate work experiences for your child. It is important that careful consideration be given to his or her interests and preferences as well as to his or hers individual needs and abilities. Continuing development of your child's self-determination and self-advocacy skills will play an important role as well. The goal is for effective pairing of your child's school and work experiences that culminates in successful postsecondary employment.

## **Employment and Accommodations for Individuals With Intellectual Disabilities**

Under the ADA, employers must provide reasonable accommodations for the known physical or mental limitations of persons with disabilities. An accommodation is any modification or adjustment to a job or work environment that will permit a qualified applicant or employee with a disability to do the job, as well as enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment. Once an employer determines that an individual has a disability that requires an accommodation, the employer must make a reasonable effort to determine the appropriate accommodation. A third party may often request an accommodation on behalf of the person with an intellectual disability. If this happens, the employer must respond to the request as if the employee or applicant requested the accommodation.

Accommodations vary depending on the needs of the person with a disability. In some instances, the appropriate accommodation will be readily apparent. In others, the proper accommodation is not obvious. In those situations, the employer should have an informal and interactive discussion with the person and/or his representative to determine a suitable accommodation.

# Surviving No Matter Where They Go 29

Whether the choice ends up being a college; vocational, technical or trade school; or competitive employment, this experience will not compare to high school. 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 unless the student is attending a program for students with intellectual disabilities. Here are some survival tips that students can begin to practice in preparing themselves for life after high school.

## **Student Survival Tips for NOW:**

- With the assistance of your Special Education Teacher or Guidance Counselor, begin to take courses in high school or to participate in work experiences that prepare you for college; vocational, technical, or trade school; or competitive employment.
- Seek activities or clubs in your area of interest, whether at school or in the community.
- Begin accessing the community whether it be with or without support from your parents.
- Practice managing your time with the use of a calendar or planner.
- Know and understand your learning challenges.
- Practice self-advocacy skills. Be able to explain your disability and the accommodations that allow you to successfully access your education or the workplace.

## **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 learn to be as self-reliant as possible no 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 unless it is a program for students with intellectual disabilities and has different requirements.

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 or job:

- When there is a problem that arises, have your child go to the resource person or specific instructor to seek assistance or to the employer/manager in the workplace.
- 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 and workplaces can be more demanding so your child will need to work harder, be better organized, and be able to actively problem solve or seek assistance.

The goal at the Upper Darby High School is to provide our students with the skills and strategies needed to assist them in their postsecondary choices. It is important that the student attends all IEP meetings and actively participates as much as possible. 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 and offer a variety of supports for students to succeed.

***Whether the student's goal is college; a vocational, technical or trade school; or competitive employment, 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.***

## Additional 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](http://www.heath.gwu.edu/modules/awareness-of-postsecondary-options)

Vocational Rehabilitation Services: Can It Help You?

[www.heath.gwu.edu/modules/rehabilitation-services](http://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/](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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/doiit](http://www.washington.edu/doiit)

### What About College? General Resources

College or Training Programs: How to Decide

[www.ldonline.org/article/12768](http://www.ldonline.org/article/12768)

Going to College-a resource for teens with disabilities

[www.going-to-college.org](http://www.going-to-college.org)

College Planning for Students with Disabilities

[www.thinkcollege.net](http://www.thinkcollege.net)

**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.

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?

[www.heath.gwu.edu/modules](http://www.heath.gwu.edu/modules)

## What About College?

### Resources on Specific Disabilities

#### **Asperger Syndrome**

[www.insidecollege.com](http://www.insidecollege.com) (Search: Aspergers Syndrome)

#### **Autism Spectrum**

[www.collegeautism.com/students.html](http://www.collegeautism.com/students.html)

**Intellectual Disabilities:** Postsecondary Options for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

[www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article\\_id=178&type=topic&id=7](http://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=178&type=topic&id=7)

**Intellectual Disabilities:** Think College!

[www.thinkcollege.net](http://www.thinkcollege.net)

**Physical Disabilities:** Disability Friendly Colleges

[www.disabilityfriendlycolleges.com](http://www.disabilityfriendlycolleges.com)

## Keys to Success in College

Self-Advocacy for College Students

[www.ldonline.org/article/6142](http://www.ldonline.org/article/6142)

## Independent Living

Life Sharing through Family Living

Assists individuals with intellectual disabilities who desire to live with support in the community. Must be 18 or older with an intellectual disability and meets waiver eligibility requirements.

Contact: Phone- 484-908-6583

E-mail: [jboyle@chs-adphila.org](mailto:jboyle@chs-adphila.org)

## Employment

Office of Disability Employment Policy – [www.dol.gov/odep](http://www.dol.gov/odep)

Navigating the Road to Work – [www.ncwd-youth.info](http://www.ncwd-youth.info)

Jobs – [www.disability.gov/employment](http://www.disability.gov/employment)

The Job Accommodation Network – <http://askjan.org>

## Supported Employment

Supported Employment for People with the Most Significant Disabilities

The Network on Employment – [www.apse.org](http://www.apse.org)

## Special Health Care Needs

Transition to Adult Living in Pennsylvania: A secondary transition resource to help youth with special health care needs make a successful transition to adult living that includes their health and health care. 610.378.4352

[www.health.state.pa.us/transitionchecklist](http://www.health.state.pa.us/transitionchecklist)