

Preparing for College: How to Navigate Disability Support Services

Bridget Humphries, Ed.D., Director of Accessibility Services,
Hood College



DISCLAIMER

The information in this presentation is intended as general information about the accommodations process in higher education. **It is not legal advice.** Each institution is different and has different requirements.

AGENDA

- Introduction
- Disability in K-12 vs. College
- Common Types of Accommodations
- Common Types of Documentation
- Accommodations Process
- How to Prepare
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Friendly Advice
- Q&A
- Contact Information and Resources

WHAT IS AN ACCESSIBILITY/DISABILITY OFFICE?

The goal of a disability support office in college is to engage in an **interactive dialogue** with students with disabilities to determine **needed accommodations to reduce barriers to access** and promote a full college experience.

DISABILITY IN K-12 VS. COLLEGE

K-12	College
The focus is on student success .	The focus on providing student access .
Primary law is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	Primary laws are Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as amended in 2008
The school is responsible for identifying a student's disability, determining eligibility, and implementing services and accommodations.	Students are responsible for disclosing a need for accommodations based on documented disability.
Modification of instruction and curriculum is common, in addition to accommodations.	Courses are not modified. Students participate in an interactive interview process to identify reasonable accommodations that ensure equal access.
Parents communicate routinely with teachers and can easily monitor student academic progress.	Parents have no contact with instructors and no access to student information without written FERPA consent from student.

Source: The Advocacy Consortium and [Learning Disabilities Association of America](#)

COMMON ACCOMMODATIONS

Academic	Housing	Dining
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Testing• Notetaking• Assistive Technology• Accessible materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ADA accessible room and bathroom• Service animal or Emotional Support Animal (ESA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allergen-free dining options• Pre-ordering meals

COMMON DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

- **The IEP or 504 plan will not transfer automatically to your college or university.**
- Often, a copy of the IEP or 504 plan is not enough to qualify for services.
- Documentation requirements will vary from school to school. It is very important to check your college's requirements. Look for requirements related to:
 - Verification forms vs. medical provider letterhead
 - Age of testing
 - Length of time with the provider; frequency of appointments

TYPICAL ACCOMMODATION PROCESS

Register and provide documentation.



Participate in an intake interview with the disability services office.



Receive an accommodation plan/letter if accommodations are approved.



Share your accommodation plan/letter with relevant faculty/staff.



Typically, renew your request every semester or school year.

HOW TO PREPARE

1. **Research the process:** Look up the accommodation process at your chosen colleges and determine required documentation. Are there priority deadlines for housing?
2. **At your last IEP or 504 meeting:** Attend and discuss potential college supports and gather copies of any evaluations or testing information that is part of your file.
3. **Gather relevant documentation:** This can take time, so start early. Contact the disability office after selecting a college, especially for housing needs.
4. **Talk to your caregivers:** Discuss the types of support you might need and practice self-advocacy.
5. **Check with service providers:** Determine if virtual services are available; explore options for 90-day prescriptions; connect with a local pharmacy.
6. **Connect with Department of Rehabilitation Services** (if relevant)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS, 1 of 3

Will my disability paperwork automatically transfer? What if I start at a community college and transfer?

- No. Under the ADA, students must self-disclose a disability.

Does every college have a disability support office?

- Yes. Every college and university is required to provide reasonable accommodations. They may only have one staff member, but there will be a point of contact.

I don't know if I will need accommodations in college. What should I do?

- Schedule an appointment with the disability support office. Even if you don't qualify for accommodations, they can point you in the right direction.

Can my caregiver come with me to meetings?

- Only with your consent; you may be asked to sign a FERPA waiver.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS, 2 of 3

Will my disability status go on my record? Will it hurt my ability to get a job?

- No and no. Future colleges or employers are not entitled to know that you are a person with a disability unless you self-disclose.

I did not get accommodations in high school. Could I still qualify in college?

- It's possible. Some mental illnesses present in young adulthood, for example. Be mindful of documentation requirements.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS, 3 of 3

What questions will the disability office ask me in the intake?

- Every disability office is different. Some general questions they may ask include:
 - Describe your disability and where it shows up in your life. How does it impact you? What barriers do you encounter as a result?
 - Describe yourself as a student. Where did you thrive in high school? Where did you struggle? Notetaking? Tests? Studying? Homework?
 - What accommodations did you use in high school? How helpful were they?
 - What accommodations do you think you might need in college? Why?

FRIENDLY ADVICE

- Attend your IEP or 504 meetings. Lead them if you can. Learn to talk about your disability and how it impacts you as a student.
- “Disability” is not a bad word. Look for schools that have disability affinity groups (e.g. disabled student unions or neurodivergent student clubs).
- Register with the disability support office even if you don’t think you will need accommodations. They are not typically retroactive!
- The transition to college is tough for everyone, whether they show it or not. Use the supports that are available to you.

QUESTIONS?

Drop them in the chat!

CONTACT INFORMATION

Website: <https://www.hood.edu/accessibility>

Email: accessibilityservices@hood.edu

Phone: (301) 696-3569

Secure Fax: (301) 696-3952

IG: @hood_accessibility

RESOURCES

- Regional Education Lab (REL) Mid-Atlantic (October, 2024). Paving the Way to Better Postsecondary Outcomes for Students with Disabilities.
 - <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/Products/Region/midatlantic/Resource/108333>
- Regional Education Lab (REL) Mid-Atlantic (June, 2024). Secondary Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities.
 - https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/regions/midatlantic/pdf/RELMA_MD_STPlanning_infographic.pdf
- Regional Education Lab (REL) Mid-Atlantic (August, 2024). Facilitating Post-Secondary Success: Strategies to Remove Service Roadblocks for Students with Disabilities.
 - <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/regions/midatlantic/pdf/RELMA-MD-ST-BB-infographic.pdf>

THANK YOU

