

Considerations for College

Parents, counselors, teacher and students with disabilities may use this list as a reminder of helpful skills and necessary steps to take as a high school students with a disability moves toward college.

1. Make sure psychological testing is up-to-date. P.L. 94-142 mandates this testing be done every three years for students in special education programs.
2. Obtain all special testing records before high school graduation. Some school systems destroy these records upon the student's graduation. Colleges, as well as vocational rehabilitation offices, request these records to assist in providing special services to student.
3. Make contact with the local office of vocational rehabilitation (OVR) office before graduation. OVR offers a variety of services to eligible students such as vocational assessment, job placement, etc.
4. Consider a vocational assessment as a way to amplify present and future goals
5. Make sure the student's knowledge of study skills is adequate. In addition to high school assistance, consider special study skills classes/programs offered at community colleges, private agencies, or individual tutoring.
6. Consult with the high school to get a good understanding of how much support or special help the student is receiving. It is important to determine realistically whether minimal support services or an extensive support program at the college level will be needed.
7. Help students to increase their independent living skills. Help them learn to manage their own checking accounts, do their own laundry, cleaning, some cooking, etc.
8. Encourage part-time jobs or volunteer positions. These are helpful to improve socialization skills as well as to give a better understanding of work situation and expectations
9. Make sure student have a good understanding of their particular disability. They should know and be able to articulate their strengths and weaknesses as well as what compensating techniques and accommodation work best for them.
10. Help student understand how their disability is connected to social experiences with peers, families, and employers. A visual or auditory discrimination deficit, and/or attention deficit disorder frequently lead to missed cues and inappropriate timing in conversation.

11. Encourage students to be their own advocate. A good first step is to encourage them to discuss their disability and needed accommodations, if any, with their regular high school instructors.
12. Learn about Section 504 of the rehabilitation act of 1973. This law indicated what types of accommodations must be provided an/or allowed at post secondary institutions if a student requests them. The responsibility is on the individual to initiate the provision of services and accommodations unlike the requirements of P.L. 94-142 which puts the responsibility on the local school districts.
13. Get information on special exam arrangements of SAT and/or PSAT. Options include untimed tests, readers or cassettes.
14. Obtain two copies of all college application (or duplicate the one received). Use the first copy to collect needed information. Type the information onto the second copy to be sent.
15. Contact the office for services fro student with disabilities of colleges before applying. Get information on what kinds of services and support are available, if there are modified admissions for students with disabilities, and if there are any special pre-admission requirements when making application.
16. Visit colleges before making a definite choice. Also, look at the communities in which they are located.
17. Consider having students start college in a summer session rather than fall. Summer classes tend to be smaller and instructors tend to have more time for individual help. Students can get orientated before fall crowd arrive.
18. Consider an appointment with a qualified optometrist. IF the student has visual perception problems there may also be functional vision problems with tracking and focusing. Sometimes these problems can be partially corrected with special lenses.
19. Encourage students to have their own membership in organizations, which advocate for their disability group. Newsletters from ACLD, Orton Dyslexia Society, United Cerebral palsy, etc. can help keep students informed about new resources and special programs.
20. Make sure it is the student's choice to attend college. The most successful college students are those who have high motivation and good understanding of their particular strengths and weaknesses. They understand that it may be harder and take more time to manage college level work. They are committed to spend the extra time on studying, and to request and use appropriate accommodations when needed.