Postsecondary Disability Support Services

Overview

Transitioning from high school to postsecondary is a difficult and stressful process for most individuals. For individuals with disabilities, it can be a daunting task. Is it the same as high school? Where do I begin? What do I need? To whom should I speak? Am I still covered under IDEA? Are my parents still going to be meeting with the school on my behalf? These are questions commonly asked by individuals with disabilities when they are preparing for college. This fact sheet will assist in answering some of those questions. For additional information, please contact the institution you are interested in attending. You should begin planning your postsecondary education a year or two before you graduate.

Differences between High School & College

Am I still covered under IDEA and my IEP/504 Plan?
No. When you were in high school, you were covered under a law called IDEA which provided a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. Under IDEA, it was the school's responsibility to seek you out and provide services.
IDEA does not apply to colleges and universities. They are governed by a set of other laws: the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act and other pertinent state laws. The responsibilities of colleges and universities are significantly different from those of your former high school. If you attended a private school or were home schooled, you may not have had an IEP/504 Plan, but you may still require services in order to succeed in college.
The most significant difference is you (not your parents) will have responsibilities as a college student that you did not have as a high school student. These laws make it your responsibility to request services and provide appropriate documentation of your disability. You must be actively involved in the process. The responsibility now rests on you.
Will I get the same accommodations as high school?
Not necessarily, as your high school IEP/504 plan does not carry over to college. The college will determine what accommodations you will receive after your documentation has been reviewed and information has been gathered from you.

Receiving Services at College

Where do I go for services?
Every college/university has an individual who assists students with disabilities. This individual is often in the Disability Support Services (DSS) office. Please consult your institution's directory for the appropriate location. To receive accommodations and/or services, you must first self-identify to your college/university disability services. It is your responsibility to talk to your college/university about your needs.

When should I request services?
Although you may request accommodations from your college/university at any time, it is recommended that you make an appointment with the appropriate individual as soon (continued on back)
Receiving Services at College (continued)

as possible and no later than one month before the semester begins. Colleges/universities are committed to working with and providing you with reasonable services and accommodations. However, arranging services and accommodations takes time. Some academic adjustments may take more time to provide than others. You should follow your institution’s procedures to ensure that there is enough time to review your request and provide an appropriate academic adjustment.

Accommodations cannot be made retroactively. Policies concerning students who are in poor academic standing are the same for individuals with and without disabilities. Check your institution’s policy for how this may affect you.

What kind of documentation do I need to provide?
Schools may set reasonable standards for documentation. Some schools may require more documentation than others, but all schools will require you to provide documentation prepared by an appropriate qualified professional. You will be responsible for any fees associated with obtaining required documentation.

Receiving Accommodations at College

What accommodations/modifications are provided?
Accommodations are modifications to the academic requirements that are necessary to ensure equal access to qualified individuals. Reasonable accommodations may include extended time on tests, books in alternate format, sign language interpreters, screen-readers, voice recognition and other assistive technology. Your DSS office will work with you to set up reasonable accommodations. Be aware that an accommodation cannot be provided if it creates a fundamental alteration of the coursework.

What accommodations are not provided?
Accommodations that are of a personal nature or will impact the essential requirements of the individual program of study will not be provided. These include personal care attendant, private tutors and waiving of required coursework.

Other Considerations

Will I be required to follow the same requirements as others?
Yes. Colleges and universities are not obligated or able to change requirements that are essential to their programs. Having a disability that makes specific course content difficult will not automatically result in such courses being waived. In some cases, course substitutions may be accepted for students with disabilities. This should be discussed and determined when you enter college.

What will I need to do to earn a college degree?
You will be required to meet the requirements of your program of study as mandated by the state of Maryland and the institution you are attending.

Resources / References

Association of Higher Education & Disability
Voice / Text: (704) 947-7779
Email: ahead@ahead.org
Website: www.ahead.org

HEATH Resource Center of George Washington University
Voice: (202) 973-0904 / (800) 544-3284
TTY: (202) 973-0904 / (800) 544-3284
Email: AskHEATH@gwu.edu
Website: www.heath.gwu.edu

Maryland Department of Disabilities
Voice / TTY: (410) 767-3660
Voice / TTY: (800) 637-4113
Email: mdod@mdod.state.md.us
Website: www.mdod.maryland.gov

Maryland Higher Education Commission
Voice: (410) 260-4500 or (800) 974-0203
TTY: (800) 735-2258
Website: www.mhec.state.md.us

U.S. Department of Education
Office for Civil Rights
Voice: (800) 421-3481
TTY: (877) 521-2172
Email: OCR@ed.gov
Website: www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html

This fact sheet is the result of a combined effort between the Maryland Department of Disabilities, Marylan Higher Education Commission and the Maryland Disability and Higher Education Network (MDDHEN). This document is available in alternate formats upon request.