

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Postsecondary Options

While there are many options available for students after high school, there are two major types of postsecondary education:

- Community colleges or vocational/technical schools teach students a specific occupation or trade. There are numerous areas of study, including construction, food service, computer programming, human services, healthcare services, and many others. Graduates may earn associate's degrees or certification in their area of specialization.
- Colleges or universities provide more specialized training and education in a particular field of study. Areas of study offered in colleges and universities are too numerous to mention. Students may receive a bachelor's degree or higher levels of education.

Within these options, there are many ways a student can access college. Possibilities include auditing classes, taking individual courses for credit, taking courses online, enrolling in a certificate program, or enrolling in two or four year programs. Dual enrollment is also a possibility, where the student enrolls in postsecondary courses while still in high school.

A postsecondary institution may not refuse to admit someone simply because of a disability, but they may deny admission if the student does not meet their specific admission requirements.

The Law

Laws regarding educational services provided in high schools and in postsecondary institutions are very different. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), schools are required to provide testing to determine if a student has a disability and to provide the needed educational services and accommodations.

However, postsecondary education is not covered by IDEA. This means that students are not entitled to services and supports in college, but rather must be determined eligible for them. Students must apply for postsecondary education and meet the admission criteria, regardless of disability, at the

institution they wish to attend. In addition to high school coursework requirements, tests such as the ACT, SAT, ASSET, and COMPASS are commonly used to determine eligibility for admission.

Preparation

It is important that students interested in attending some type of postsecondary program after high school begin working with their IEP team or high school counselor as early as possible to find out about admissions requirements. Then, the student's high school curriculum can be designed to make sure s/he meets the coursework and testing requirements. Students may also want to begin early to visit the colleges or vocational schools they are interested in to help determine which one is right for them.

Disclosure of Disability

A student does not have to identify him/herself as a person with a disability when applying for admission to a college or university. BUT, students must identify their disability if they wish to receive accommodations. Accommodations are forms of assistance, adaptive devices, or other tools used in the classroom or when taking tests to alleviate the impact of the disability. Examples of accommodations include alternative testing, assistance with note-taking, interpreter services, alternative formats for course materials, assistive listening devices, and alternative seating. Accommodations do not allow for adjusting the general curriculum or coursework required in degree or certificate programs.

Postsecondary Assistance

Postsecondary schools are required to have an office or a person on staff to coordinate services for persons with disabilities. This office or coordinator, frequently called the Office for Students with Disabilities, Section 504/ADA Coordinator, or Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities is usually located in the college's counseling center or student services office. After providing required documentation of disability, students may work with this coordinator to address their needs at that particular school. The required documentation varies by institution, so it is important that the student inquire about these requirements early in order to prevent a delay in receiving needed accommodations.