

*Guiding You on Your Journey to College*



# College Planning for Students with Disabilities



*Your Journey to College Begins with Us*

A Supplement to the College Prep Handbook



# College Planning for Students with Disabilities

## A Supplement to the College Prep Handbook

This publication is a supplement to EducationQuest Foundation's *College Prep Handbook*. If you don't have the handbook, ask your counselor for a copy, or see "Contact Us" at [EducationQuest.org](http://EducationQuest.org) to order a free copy.

Here's what you'll find in *College Planning for Students with Disabilities*:

- The importance of self-advocacy ..... page 2
- Considerations during the admissions process..... page 4
- Steps to follow once you select a college..... page 9
- Your legal rights and responsibilities..... page 14

Keep up with college planning tips and resources!

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# THE IMPORTANCE OF Self-advocacy

In college, **you** will be responsible for identifying and requesting support services.

To be an effective self-advocate, you must understand your disability, know how it impacts your learning, and become comfortable with describing your disability and academic-related needs to others.

*How can you become a self-advocate?* These practices will help you move in that direction:

**Review your case file** with your parents/guardians and Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan team to better understand your disability and its effect on your learning. Ask for copies of your IEP/504, summary of performance, and other assessment reports.

Ask these questions:

- What is my disability?
- How does it affect how I learn?
- What are my academic strengths?
- How do I learn best?
- What strategies can I use to help me learn?

**Consider meeting with the doctor or school psychologist** who performed your assessment (testing) for the terms needed to explain your disability.



**Take an active part in the discussions at your IEP/504 meetings.** Understanding your learning strengths and weaknesses can influence your IEP planning and the services you may request in college.

**Before each IEP/504 meeting:**

- Understand the purpose of the meeting.
- Know who will be there and their role at the meeting.
- Review the report from your last meeting. Understand the goals listed on the report. Practice saying how you accomplished the goals.
- Establish new goals and be prepared to state them.

**At the IEP/504 meeting:**

- Summarize your past goals and accomplishments.
- State your new goals.
- Ask for ideas and feedback.
- Know what support you will need to accomplish your goals—and ask for it. Give examples of types of support that were successful for you.

- Ask what accommodations you will need for standardized testing such as the PSAT, SAT and ACT.
- Ask questions if you don't understand.



# CONSIDERATIONS DURING The Admissions Process

As a student with a disability, you have unique considerations as you prepare for college admission.

- What course of study will fit your skills and interests?
- What questions should you ask when visiting colleges?
- What accommodations might you need for college entrance and placement exams?
- How will your disability affect financial aid?

## Finding the right course of study

Follow these steps to explore potential career options.

- 1** Ask your school counselor or school transition specialist about career interest inventories to help you explore your career interests. Ask how your learning needs may influence these career areas.
- 2** Discuss career options with your parents/guardians and people working in jobs that interest you. Look into job shadowing, attend career fairs, and explore volunteer opportunities in your areas of interest.
- 3** Become involved in extracurricular activities. Volunteer and paid work can teach responsibility, reliability and teamwork. A part-time job is also a good way to earn money for college.





## Preparing for college entrance exams

### ACT and SAT

Take the ACT and/or SAT exams in the spring of your junior year and again in the fall of your senior year. Colleges use your best score to award scholarships and to make admission decisions. To request accommodations, visit [actstudent.org/regist/disab](http://actstudent.org/regist/disab) or [sat.collegeboard.org/register/for-students-with-disabilities](http://sat.collegeboard.org/register/for-students-with-disabilities).

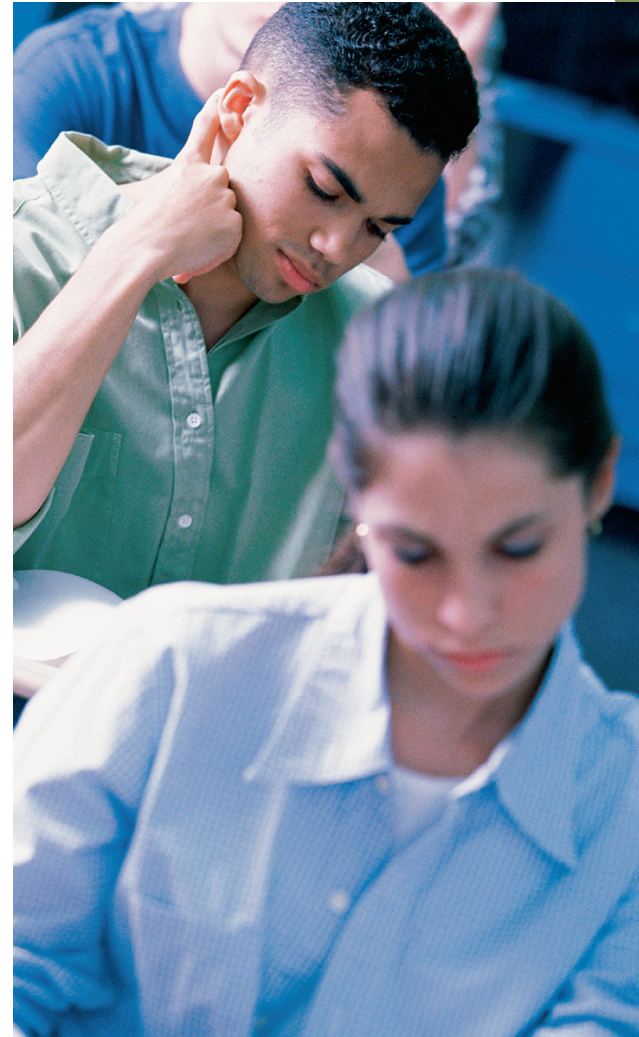
### ASSET and COMPASS

If you plan to attend a community college, you may be required to take the ASSET (a series of short placement tests that identify your strengths and needs) and/or the COMPASS (a computer-adapted placement test).

For more information about these exams, visit [act.org/compass](http://act.org/compass) or [act.org/asset](http://act.org/asset). To request accommodations, contact the college's disability services coordinator or admissions office.

Accommodations for the SAT, ACT, ASSET and COMPASS may include:

- individual administration of the test
- audio or large print test editions
- special answer sheets
- extended testing time and breaks
- an interpreter
- Braille editions



## Selecting a college

Most colleges have an office that provides services to students with disabilities. It is usually located in the college's counseling center or in student services.

Once you narrow your college choices, meet with the disability services coordinator at each college to determine services and accommodations that may be available. This may help determine which college will best meet your needs.



## Questions to ask the disability services coordinator

- What documentation must I bring to identify myself as a student with a disability entitled to reasonable accommodations? How current must it be?
- How is confidential information handled?
- Who decides if I qualify for accommodations, and are the accommodations I need available?
- How do I access textbooks in a format that accommodates my disability?
- Is tutoring provided? What is the cost?
- Are waivers or substitutions granted to students who, because of their disabilities, cannot pass certain courses?
- Are courses in basic skills or study skills offered? Can they be counted as hours toward full-time status?
- Is there a support group on campus for students with disabilities?
- Is there an adaptive technology lab on campus?



### Questions you may be asked

The disability services coordinator may ask you these questions. Prepare your answers and review them with your IEP/504 manager, a teacher, school counselor, or parent/guardian.

- What is your disability?
- How does it affect your learning?
- How comfortable are you in discussing your disability with teachers?
- What are your academic strengths?
- In what areas do you have difficulty or problems?
- What accommodations will you need?
- What kind of support services have you used in high school?
- What was most helpful?
- Are you willing to work harder than other students to be successful in college?
- How do you manage your time?

▶ For general college selection information, see EducationQuest's *College Prep Handbook* or visit [EducationQuest.org](http://EducationQuest.org).



## Applying for admission and financial aid

As you visit colleges, ask about deadlines and the process for applying for admission, financial aid and college-based scholarships. Ask if scholarships are available for students with disabilities.

### How disability-related expenses may affect financial aid

After you apply for financial aid, inform the financial aid administrator of your disability-related expenses keeping in mind that financial aid will not cover expenses already covered by assisting agencies.

Possible disability-related expenses include:

- special education equipment related to your disability and its maintenance
- special transportation
- medical expenses relating directly to your disability not covered by insurance
- services for personal care attendants

### Seek help

The financial aid process may seem overwhelming, so ask for help from EducationQuest or the college financial aid office.





# STEPS TO FOLLOW Once You Select a College

Once you select a college, you must perform these tasks to receive disability-related services:

- contact the disability services coordinator shortly after you're accepted
- provide the required documentation
- request services each term or semester

1

## Gather required documentation.

- **Request a copy of your high school IEP/504 Plan** and a copy of an updated assessment (performed by a medical doctor). Most high schools only retain student records for five years.
- **Request an original copy of your diagnosis** from your physician or other psychological service provider.
- **Update your tests.** Some colleges have a time limit on accepting certain documentation, particularly for a learning disability or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. If you received testing in high school, ask your school to update your tests the last year you receive special education services. Testing after high school can be expensive.

2

## Meet with the disability services coordinator.

Meet with the disability services coordinator at your college to review the documentation and discuss possible accommodations. Keep in mind that federal guidelines do NOT state that all students with a disability must receive ALL accommodations – especially accommodations that would fundamentally change a college program or impose an undue burden on the college.





### 3

#### Request accommodations.

**You must contact the disability services coordinator each term or semester to arrange accommodations.** Although the college may not always agree to your request for a specific accommodation, they are required by law to provide an effective accommodation.

Potential accommodations include:

- notetakers, tutoring, proofreaders, and editing services
- textbooks and other educational materials in alternative form, such as Braille, large print and audiobooks
- access to educational materials in advance, such as class syllabus and study guides
- sign language, oral interpreting and real-time captioning services
- test-taking alternatives, such as extended time, taped tests, oral tests, alternate test site, elimination of computer scored answer sheets, and use of a computer or spell-checking device for quizzes and exams
- access to adaptive equipment such as closed caption devices, amplified telephone receivers, low vision reading aids, tape recorders, Brailleing devices, and computer enhancements
- equal access to classes, activities and services
- opportunity to make up quizzes, exams or assignments if the absence was disability-related
- preferential seating in classroom
- extension of timelines for completion of specific courses
- extension of timelines to complete certification or degree requirements
- foreign language course substitutions, for example, option to take foreign culture class instead of foreign language
- early registration

4

#### **Become familiar with the campus environment.**

**Register for campus orientation.** The disability services coordinator may also provide a campus orientation.

**Determine where to go and who to contact in case of an emergency.** If you have special needs (especially medical needs), inform appropriate college personnel of any advance preparation that should be in place.

**Ask the admissions office if a summer transition program is offered.**

**Obtain a copy of your class schedule** and visit all buildings where your classes will be held to become familiar with locations and layout.

**If you are commuting and will drive yourself,** become familiar with parking facilities and procedures.

**Consider signing a release of information** so the school has permission to share information with parents/guardians.



## Additional resources to help you succeed

### TRIO Student Support Services

If you have a documented disability, you may qualify for this federally-funded program that is available on many Nebraska college campuses. Services may include:

- tutoring and mentoring services
- help applying for and managing financial aid
- career exploration and job shadowing
- educational and cultural off-campus activities
- classes and workshops in areas such as study skills, leadership and time management

▶ For more information, contact your college and ask for the TRIO Student Support Services office.



### Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Voc Rehab services may include, but are not limited to:

- vocational assessment, counseling and planning
- telecommunications, sensory and other technological aids and devices
- postsecondary training – if a student's financial aid package does not meet the student's financial needs, Voc Rehab may provide a training allowance
- rehabilitation technology
- job placement

▶ To find the Voc Rehab office nearest you, call 877-637-3422 or visit [www.vr.nebraska.gov/index.html](http://www.vr.nebraska.gov/index.html)



### Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

The services provided by this organization include:

- training in non-visual (or “low vision”) skills that allow full participation in life
- educational assistance such as tuition, books, equipment, and readers
- vocational counseling and assistance in securing or maintaining employment
- occupational equipment, tools and supplies

► For more information, call 877-809-2419 or visit [www.ncbvi.ne.gov/services](http://www.ncbvi.ne.gov/services).

### Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

The services provided by this organization include:

- hearing aid bank for those who qualify
- telecommunications equipment for those who qualify
- interpreter services – if not already available through your college
- awareness training for your employer

► For more information, call 800-545-6244 v/tty or visit [www.ncdhh.ne.gov](http://www.ncdhh.ne.gov).

### WIN-AHEAD (Western Iowa and Nebraska Association for Higher Education and Disabilities)

This organization works directly with students with disabilities to ensure equal access to higher education. For more information, visit [ahead.org/affiliates/western-iowa-and-nebraska](http://ahead.org/affiliates/western-iowa-and-nebraska).



# YOUR LEGAL Rights and Responsibilities

By understanding rights and responsibilities, you will know what you need to do, and what the college is required to do for you, to have an equal opportunity for success in college.

## Federal laws

Following is a description of laws and how they pertain to you as a college student with a disability. Terms in bold face are explained on page 15.

### Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

This civil rights statute is designed to prevent discrimination against persons with disabilities. It provides that:

No **otherwise qualified** individual with disabilities in the United States shall, solely by reason of his/her disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

This law requires that postsecondary schools be prepared to make **appropriate accommodations** and **reasonable modifications** to their college's procedures and practices, so that you can fully participate in the same programs and activities that are available to students without disabilities.

### The Americans with Disabilities Act

Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) is also a civil rights law. It helps to implement and enforce Section 504, and also outlines additional protections. While Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act states that public institutions cannot discriminate on the basis of disability if they receive federal funds, the ADAAA states that with or without federal funds, public institutions cannot discriminate on the basis of disability. Private colleges and universities are covered under the ADAAA, unless they are completely owned and operated by religious organizations. To learn about the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008, visit <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-504faq-201109.html>

## Important Terms

### Otherwise Qualified

As a student with a disability, you are “otherwise qualified” when you meet the same academic requirements and standards as non-disabled students. These requirements and standards must be considered necessary to maintain the integrity of a course, program or college policy. For example, some colleges require students to maintain a GPA of 2.5 to maintain eligibility for a certain program or to remain enrolled as a student. You would also be required to meet this qualification. You are also required to meet an instructor’s expectations for students in regards to class participation, work standards, attendance, and ability to demonstrate acquired knowledge.

### Appropriate Accommodations

These are changes that are made in the delivery of course material and/or in the assessment of your knowledge that will help you meet the standards of the course. Examples include notetakers, recorded textbooks, time extensions on course assignments, extended test time, sign language interpreter, assistive technology during class and exams, etc. Section 504 and the ADA states that students with disabilities may need appropriate accommodations or reasonable modifications in order to meet the academic requirements and standards.

### Reasonable Modifications

Examples of modifications that may be offered include the extension of time permitted to complete a degree program (possibly due to carrying less than the required full-time credit load); or the substitution or waiver of courses that are part of the degree requirements. If a college refuses to modify academic requirements, the school must be able to prove that the change would be considerable and that the area requested to be altered is essential or necessary as offered. The college must prove the change would jeopardize the integrity of the course or program.



## Discrimination complaints

Some individual instructors are not familiar with ADA or Section 504 requirements, or with the purpose of accommodating students with disabilities. The disability services coordinator can serve as a liaison between you and the instructor, and can advocate for reasonable accommodations.

Some colleges have an appeals committee that conducts informal hearings related to alleged violations of student rights.

If you cannot resolve your situation informally, follow the school's internal grievance procedure. All colleges are required to have complaint or grievance procedures related to discrimination. The procedures are formal steps outlined to resolve the issue.

- The formal process usually begins with the faculty or staff member most directly involved, the student and a mediator. If satisfactory resolution is not reached, the process may continue with the person's supervisor, then the department head, a Dean, and possibly members of the college's Board of Education.
- All colleges are required by law to designate at least one staff person to coordinate compliance with Section 504 and the ADA. That person may be located in the Disability Services Office. If not, inquire there to find out who to contact. If you believe you were discriminated against on the basis of disability, you can receive help from the Section 504/ADA compliance coordinator.
- You also have the right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights for investigation. You must submit the complaint within 180 days of the alleged discrimination. You can contact the region representing Nebraska at:

Office for Civil Rights, Kansas City Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
8930 Ward Parkway Suite 2037  
Kansas City, MO 64114-3302

Phone: 816-268-0550  
ocr@ed.gov  
<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/complaintintro.html>



# EducationQuest Foundation

EducationQuest Foundation is a nonprofit organization with a mission to improve access to higher education in Nebraska. Headquartered in Lincoln, EducationQuest provides:

- **free** college planning services
- need-based scholarships
- grants that help high schools increase their college-going rate
- outreach services for community agencies statewide

This publication was developed through a partnership with EducationQuest and the Department of Special Education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

For **free** help with college planning, contact the location nearest you.

## Kearney

2706 Second Ave.  
308.234.6310  
800.666.3721

## Lincoln

1300 O Street  
402.475.5222  
800.303.3745

## Omaha

Rockbrook Village  
11031 Elm Street  
(108th & W. Center Rd.)  
402.391.4033  
888.357.6300

Materials and resources  
are available in Spanish.

Materiales y recursos  
disponibles en español.



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