



FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Frequently asked Questions about Postsecondary Options:

Planning for college and other postsecondary options should be part of every high school student's vision. Students with disabilities **MUST** begin their planning early in high school to assure successful outcomes. Although there is an abundance of information available on postsecondary education, too often transition information and guidelines may be either incomplete or unclear regarding the eligibility and/or availability of services and supports in college for students with intellectual disabilities.

I was told that college was only for students with learning disabilities and it is not a realistic option for my child with more significant intellectual disabilities.

For students with intellectual disabilities, low expectations have moved people toward other options without full understanding for the benefits of the college experience. It is important to consider the broad range of both academic and social opportunities that college and other adult learning environments offer determined by a student's preferences, interests and vision for the future.

How do I begin to involve my child as we begin to talk about learning after high school?

Start by dropping by the local community college. They have a lot to offer. Have lunch, go to a play or performance, buy a T-shirt at the bookstore, and visit the Student Center, library, or Disability Support Office. You will find they may be interested in visiting your high school to encourage others to attend.

How is funding support for postsecondary options determined?

Funding depends on a student's eligibility. For students with disabilities 18 – 22 who have not received a state diploma, all funding would continue from their local education agency (LEA). In this case, special education supports would continue to be determined by the IEP process. While these students are still in special education and accumulating credit, they are not matriculating toward a college credential. Students are however enjoying the benefits of being in an adult learning environment, auditing courses, taking other coursework, making friends and feeling the rhythms of the college experience.

For students who have received a state diploma and ended their special education eligibility, they should check with the local vocational rehabilitation agency or other adult agency to determine their eligibility and funding support options.

Who should go with my child to pre-enrollment activities?

This would depend on the student's primary funding source. If the student has not graduated and is still in special education, as part of the transition plan it could be a teacher, guidance counselor, transition coordinator or other LEA staff person. If the student has graduated it may be a VR counselor or another adult agency support person.

What is the role of the vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor or other adult agency person in this process?

For eligible students, this person can assist the student in identifying a career goal and choosing courses (along with the help of an academic advisor). He/she can work with the student to arrange for a tuition waiver or payment of fees. And with the student's permission, the VR counselor can have contact with the Disability Support Office regarding documentation of the student's disability.

What is the role of the school district or Transition Coordinator in this process?

The school team can assist the student in learning how to coordinate all the needed services and supports and how to advocate effectively for their needs in college. A school district can assist with any or all of the following: financial aid, the registration process, orientation, tutoring, transportation, or educational coaching. Additionally, a Transition Coordinator typically will assist students to secure a paid employment or internships related to their course of study.

What courses would my child take?

Students can take courses that do not have a prerequisite of an English or Math proficiency. Also the professor may be approached to allow the student in a particular class. Consider "hands on" course options that provide a more concrete understanding of the subject and provide access to a variety of learning styles.

Are support services in college different from special education?

There is no special education in college! This is determined by state and federal laws.

Although a variety of accommodations are provided at the postsecondary level, students will need clear current documentation of their disability to access these services provided under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by the college Disability Support Office (DSO). Students MUST also be able to self advocate for whatever supports they need. While still in high school, students should prepare for this important next step by including critical transition goals in their IEP.

My child has significant intellectual disabilities and has difficulty communicating. Can I call the college to request progress reports and other info regarding my child/student with a disability? How can I be involved with educational decisions in college?

As is the case with all college students, individuals are responsible to manage their own records. Privacy laws do not allow the college to discuss anything about the student without the student present.

Although there are personnel who can help students coordinate supports that they will need (See #5, #6) self advocacy skills are critical and should be addressed as part of a high school transition plan.