


Chapter 23

College Bound?

First Stop – Disability Support Services (DSS)

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ABSTRACT

Increasing numbers of students with disabilities who have been included in high school have transitioned to college over the past several decades. While many of those students are eligible for accommodations in high school, fewer of those same students with disabilities request or receive accommodations in college. The purpose of this chapter is to present the need to begin the transition process early, present the self-knowledge and skills that students need to support their success, outline the language, laws, and culture of college that students must negotiate, and propose the use of the summary of performance as an initial solution to the challenge of transition. Inclusive education has done much to spur changes in higher education and disability support. The supports are available in higher education. Students need the knowledge and skills to access them, use them, and self-advocate with their college counselors and instructors to meet their goals.

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INTRODUCTION

Graduation from high school and going to college can be an exciting, and often a daunting, time. It may be the first time that many students are living outside of their home. It may be the first time that they will need to be more fully independent. It may be the first time they will rely on peers and faculty/staff for support. Oftentimes, it can help to think about the transition to college like the planning that occurs for a trip. Where to go? What to take? Who is there to help you? In reality, each of these questions is just as relevant to planning for college.

For example, on an overseas trip, you're going to encounter different languages, different laws, and different experiences. It is overseas so it is going to be out of the ordinary - and, hopefully, exciting. To prepare for the trip you will have many things to do and many questions both in how to prepare for the trip and what to expect once you are at your destination. In preparation for the trip (college) you first need to purchase the tickets (admission to the college), understand the laws at the destination (legal rights for students with disabilities), learn the language (new names for support services at the college), and determine the customs and experiences that can be had in a new country (learning the culture of college). Using an overseas trip as a lens through which to view the transition from high school to college can help make the planning phase more real.

For the individuals with disabilities, college involves an additional layer of details they must learn to navigate this transition successfully. These additional layers include learning the terminology of the new support structures (Special Education vs. Disability Support), the change in applicable laws (IDEA vs. 504, ADA), and the new advocacy parameters (parental involvement vs. self-advocacy). Much like an overseas trip, it is important to understand these differences prior to departing.

In addition, both family members and the individual with disabilities may have questions about specific support structures within the higher education setting.

- **Admissions:** Which colleges or universities can I attend if I have a disability?
- **Support Services:** I've graduated from high school and I am going to college. I accessed special education support services in high school – can I do that in college too? What support services are available for me?
- **Assessments:** How do I verify that I have a disability?
- **Documentation Requirements:** Do I need to fill out forms or attend a meeting? Can my parents come too?
- **Instructors:** How does my teacher/instructor know what I need?

The purpose of this chapter is to begin to pack and unpack college transition for students with disabilities with a focus on the skills they need to learn in self-advocacy, the language or lexicon that students (and families) will need to acquire, the assessments and documents that are necessary, and the types of supports that are available. Although college may feel like a foreign country to many, this chapter proposes a guidebook for students with disabilities to follow on their path from an inclusive high school to an inclusive (and successful) college experience.

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