

Transitioning from High School to College

MIDDLE SCHOOL



Find a friend group who accepts you as you are.

Be a caring, supportive friend.

If desired, find a structured peer mentoring program/social group (school; local community organizations).

Know the technical terms for your disability.

Find role models: what friends, family, teachers, neighbors, celebrities have the same disability that you do?

Know your personal goals, your IEP goals, and your IEP case manager.

EARLY HIGH SCHOOL

Friend groups often shift at this time. Surround yourself with people who help you be the best version of yourself and who support you! Do the same for them.

Work with your team to make sure your last three-year re-evaluation tells the story of how your disability impacts you functionally. (Final re-evaluation may happen in 10th, 11th, or 12th grade.)

Solid documentation helps pave the way for a smooth transition from high school to college!



Practice self-advocacy: discuss accommodations privately with your teachers; assist your case manager in running your IEP meetings each year; hand-deliver IEP meeting invitations to your general education teachers and administrator!



Remember that your IEP can be adjusted if needed.

If you realize you need a certain support that is not already an accommodation, talk with your case manager.

At age 16, your IEP will include a Secondary Transition section.

Work with your IEP team to set meaningful and ambitious but doable goals for: Education/Training, Employment, and Independent Living Skills.

You & your team will also plan out your high school Course of Study to get you to your post-high school goals.

LATE HIGH SCHOOL

Career/academic pathway exploration: your school might do an official project or program that all students take part in (job shadowing, service learning, senior capstone, etc.).

If so, make sure that your project/program includes time and space for exploring the additional layer of how your disability may impact pursuing further studies, job training, and professional programs.

What perspectives and strengths will you bring to the table as a result of living with a disability? What factors may need to be accommodated?

Run your IEP meetings! Let your IEP case manager be YOUR right-hand person, instead of you assisting them. ☺

Put together a file (hard copy and digital) of your most recent three-year re-evaluation and your most recent IEP. Add any supporting documentation from doctors, private therapists, etc. Save this file to take to the Disability Services office at college!

Be present and open: soak in the experience of being a junior and senior in high school! Learn as much as you can, and make time for friends.

SPRING/SUMMER BEFORE COLLEGE

Visit the campus of the college you're enrolling in. Visit key supports & resources in person: the Tutoring Center, the Writing Center, the library, etc. Laying eyes on is important for visualizing yourself using these resources.



Set up an appointment with the Access & Disability Services office (name of this office may vary at different colleges/universities), if you plan to disclose your disability status and seek accommodations.

Plan to make friends with the folks in these offices. They are here to support your success!

When you meet with Access & Disability Services, start the official process of registering with them. You can often start this process online, before your appointment.

This process is student-driven: share your documentation file with them; let them know what supports you need to be successful, and work with them to agree on reasonable accommodations for the college setting.

STARTING COLLEGE

Get involved!

Find study buddies/groups from your classes. Plan study time in the Tutoring and/or Writing Centers or library. Join a club or undergraduate professional organization for your field.

Check in with your professors right at the beginning of the quarter/semester. Going to their office hours to chat ensures privacy.

Make sure they know if you want to use your accommodations for their class, and that they know what those accommodations are.



Keep tabs on your learning and your stress levels. A certain level of feeling challenged and stressed is NORMAL for college. But feeling constantly and severely overwhelmed and stressed out is not going to help you be successful.

As needed, check in with your ADS contact person and your advisor. Maybe accommodations need to be revisited. Maybe your course schedule needs to be adjusted. Maybe regular appointment tutoring or Academic Coaching/Mentoring would be helpful.

Keep your goals front and center. Visualize yourself getting your degree. And...know that YOU'VE GOT THIS!