

College Advice For Students With A 504 Plan

Find out how to get your 504 plan accommodations in college.

What is a 504 plan?

A 504 plan comes from Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which outlaws excluding people with disabilities from the opportunity to participate equally in federally funded activities, including college.

Section 504 seeks to equalize opportunities for students with a disability, who may be otherwise inhibited from performing at the same level as fellow students. The term “disability” refers to a physical or mental impairment that may hinder a person’s ability to perform major life activities.

How is a 504 different from an IEP?

A 504 plan differs from an individualized educational program (IEP), in that only certain types of disabilities qualify for an IEP, but many that require assistance (and don’t qualify for an IEP) are eligible for a 504 plan.

A 504 can include physical hindrances, such as injuries, diseases, allergies or asthma. It can also include blood sugar monitoring for diabetics or even a gluten-free lunch option.

A 504 can also apply to learning problems, such as ADD, and include educational aids such as a note taker. Remember, a student with a 504 plan is not in “special education,” the aim of a 504 is to empower a student to perform at the same level as his or her peers.

A 504 plan covers students through high school, but the requirements of post-secondary institutions are different. If you are planning on applying for a 504 plan in college, you will have more responsibility than in high school. Your parents may not be very involved in the process, and you will need to be prepared to advocate for your own needs.

504 Plans in College: Tips and Tactics

- While a high school is required to identify your requirements and provide free appropriate public education to meet them, a post-secondary institution is not required to waive or change academic requirements. However, colleges cannot discriminate on the basis of disability, and must provide the necessary adjustments for you to function academically. This includes housing for students with disabilities that is comparable, accessible and affordable.
- While disclosure of your disability to a college is voluntary, it is necessary in order to qualify for assistance. You may apply for an adjustment at any time, but it is recommended that you do so early. Initiate contact with a school before the college

application process begins, and ask questions. It may take some procedural time for your application to go through, and requirements may vary amongst different colleges.

- You will also need to provide proof of your disability, so be sure to research what is necessary for different institutions, and start your evaluations before senior year. Neither the state nor your college is responsible for the cost of obtaining documentation of your disability, but your state vocational rehabilitation agency may provide funding.
- The accommodations and adjustments available at universities will differ drastically, so it's important that you begin researching early in high school. Some schools are very highly regarded for their disability awareness; The University of Illinois, Urbana, Champaign, for example, not only has an excellent disability management training system, but they also offer a comprehensive wheelchair sports program.
- If you have questions or concerns before or during your college experience, most schools have an individual (often called the ADA Coordinator or Disability Services Coordinator) to address your questions.

Source: <http://www.campusexplorer.com/college-advice-tips/B6B71A43/College-Advice-For-Students-With-A-504-Plan/>