

## Students With Disabilities

***Know your rights and find colleges and programs to accommodate your special needs.***

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ensures that students with disabilities have equal access to post-secondary education programs, services and facilities. Whether you decide to go to a four-year university or a two-year career school, you shouldn't rule out any future education options because of a physical or mental disability.

When planning for college, you should know your rights according to the Americans with Disabilities Act.

1. All information regarding your disability must be kept confidential.
2. A post-secondary school cannot deny admission based on your disability.
3. You do not have to tell any college or university about your disability.
4. Colleges must provide accommodations and auxiliary aids such as extra time for exams, educational materials in an alternate format or note takers.
5. If the school provides housing to students without disabilities, it must provide comparable, convenient housing to students with disabilities, too.

## Action Steps

### **Make a list of the services you'll need for a successful education**

Before you look for colleges that can accommodate you best, you need to know what you're looking for. Understand your rights for education according to the ADA. Then, when planning for college, consider what programs and services you'll need from special transportation to and from classes to extra time for exams.

### **Find colleges to match your needs**

While schools must accommodate your needs, you may find more success at a college or university that already has the special programs and services you need in place. Find colleges based on your desired degree, and then request information on their current programs for students with disabilities. You should evaluate schools based on your special needs. Think College ([www.thinkcollege.net/programs/](http://www.thinkcollege.net/programs/)) has a database of more than 100 programs for students with intellectual disabilities that is searchable by state and type (two-year/four-year, dual enrollment/postgraduate, inclusive/separate). Likewise, you can find disability programs at a variety of colleges and universities on this list of Colleges with Programs for Learning Disabled Students ([www.college-scholarships.com/learning\\_disabilities.htm](http://www.college-scholarships.com/learning_disabilities.htm)). And though not exclusive to disabled college students, Best Buddies Colleges is active on more than 425 campuses, pairing people who have intellectual disabilities with undergrads.

### **Contact campus specialists**

Each of the colleges you're considering should have an office for disability services to help you navigate the system. Visit the colleges you're considering and meet with specialists to find out how the programs, facilities, procedures and policies will meet your needs. Aside from the auxiliary aid accommodations required by the ADA, many schools offer additional benefits including transition courses, special study areas, lighter course loads, scheduling assistance and extra time to meet with professors.

### **Don't feel obliged to disclose your disability on your application**

You don't need to tell your college about your disability. And federal law prohibits colleges from asking you about a disability. That said, you can explain your disability if you desire. For example, if you believe it affected your grades or test scores and you therefore may benefit from disclosing your disability. However, this is a personal choice and not necessary.

### **Consider scholarships for students with disabilities**

Check out FinAid's List of Scholarships ([www.finaid.org/otheraid/ld.phtml](http://www.finaid.org/otheraid/ld.phtml)) for Students with Learning Disabilities to apply for programs created to help fund your education.

### **Be prepared to show documentation regarding the diagnosis of your disability.**

Check with your future school to see exactly what's required. If you don't have the documentation your school requires you may need to get a new evaluation. This is your responsibility, but you may qualify for a free evaluation through your state vocational rehabilitation agency.

### **Gather additional resources**

There is a wealth of information available to help students with disabilities reach their education goals.

- DisabilityInfo.gov
- Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS)
- HEATH Resource Center
- Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD)

### **Tips & Tactics for Students with Disabilities**

- Don't wait for schools to contact you about special accommodations. You need to be proactive and initiate any requests.
- Once you choose a school and begin your program, be sure to make appointments with your instructors to ensure you get the accommodations you need.
- Develop a support network of other students with disabilities. A study group of students with similar needs can help you stay on track and boost your learning.

Source: <http://www.campusexplorer.com/college-advice-tips/E08EA3A2/Students-With-Disabilities/>