

Differences Between High School and College for Disability Support

The transition from high school to college is challenging time for everyone. When living with a disability, this process will require a bit more planning ahead as there are several changes in disability services. When students are informed and prepared, their transition is easier.

Laws that govern services for students with disabilities in high school vary greatly from those that protect students in college. All students with disabilities in a university setting are protected under the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. These laws protect the civil rights of individuals with disabilities and ensure equal access.

The *role* of the student also changes upon entering college. Students must take an active role in seeking disability services: they must “self-advocate.”

When entering college, students must self-identify by making an appointment to meet with the Disability Student Services (DSS) Office representative. Students must provide comprehensive, written documentation of the disability, on professional letterhead from a doctor. Students then discuss their accommodations with the DSS representative. Students then meet with each of their professors to discuss their accommodations and have them sign their Faculty Notification Form (FNF). Students are also expected to follow the necessary steps well in advance of the upcoming semester in order to receive the approved accommodations.

Unlike elementary school and high school, IEP’s and 504 Plans are not part of the process in providing services to students with disabilities once in college. In addition, the university does not provide services that are “personal in nature.” There are many services that are offered in high school that fall into this category that are not appropriate in college.

The U.S. Department of Education acts as a great resource for students interested in learning more about disability services and the transition from high school to college. Find this informative article by entering the following title in an online search: [*Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education: Know Your Rights and Responsibilities*](#)

Difference Summarized

High School	College
Services provided under IDEA or Section 504.	Services provided under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.
School district responsible for identifying and evaluating disability at no cost to the student or family.	Student must self-identify and provide documentation of disability. Student must pay cost of evaluation. Postsecondary institution responsible for most, but not all costs involved in providing accommodations and/or essential auxiliary aids. Postsecondary institution not legally

	required to provide special programs with comprehensive support services.
Fewer responsibilities.	More independent living.
Student is assisted with decisions.	Increased number of decisions.
Limits set for student by parents and teachers.	<p>Increased number of decisions.</p> <p>Student expected to make independent decisions.</p> <p>More self-evaluation and monitoring required.</p> <p>More independent reading and studying required.</p> <p>Student more responsible for managing time commitments.</p> <p>Student establishes and attains own goals.</p> <p>Student determines when they need help.</p> <p>Interest in learning generated by student.</p> <p>Motivation to succeed generated by student.</p>
Attendance and progress well monitored.	Student responsible for attendance and awareness of progress or lack thereof.
Student's time structured by home and school.	Student manages own time.
Special education teacher liaison between student, parents, teachers.	Student responsible for self-advocacy.
Summary for High School	Summary for College
Students labeled as in "special education" and possibly served separately from other students.	<p>Student must self-identify disability and request services from postsecondary institution.</p> <p>Student required to provide recent documentation of disability and documentation must clearly support desired accommodations.</p> <p>Student not labeled or served separately from others.</p> <p>Other students and faculty will not know about student's disability unless student elects to reveal such</p>

	information. Faculty only notified about required accommodations.
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