



Guide for Parents of Students with Disabilities

As a parent of a student with a disability, you probably have questions and concerns about your student's future college experience. This guide was written with you in mind to answer questions, address concerns, describe the new roles your student will play in the accommodation process, and explain how post-secondary disability services differ from high school services and supports. It introduces some of the legal and philosophical changes that occur for students with disabilities upon graduation from high school and entrance into Madison College.

Introduction

Once students turn 18 years old, they are legally adults, responsible for their own actions and decisions. As they leave high school to enter college, fundamental changes occur with respect to their education as people with disabilities. Students attending public schools have, for the most part, a legal entitlement to an education, regardless of a disability. They must also receive their education in a least restrictive environment as possible. In college, students have a civil right to have access to their education. The fundamental principle at work is the assumption of integration and that students, not the institutions, are responsible for themselves.

Transitioning to Higher Education

Understand that your role has changed. Parents are often accustomed to advocating for their child in the secondary Special Education setting. At the collegiate level, this responsibility becomes one of self-advocacy. You are support and information for your student, but the responsibility is now theirs. Assist your student to develop self-advocacy skills. Your student should begin preparing for life after high school by learning about their disability, how the disability affects them academically, what coping skills have proven to be effective in the past, and what their strengths and weaknesses are.

Often, first year students are unprepared for the amount of responsibility that they will face in college. In college, students are expected to meet deadlines, be prepared for class and tests, and manage their study time outside of class. Good time management, organizational, and study skills will be important to the preparation for college learning.

You can help by encouraging your student to problem-solve and address the situations independently, while you offer support and additional help, only if needed. Encourage your student to take responsibility for

academic concerns and limitations and it will also make it easier for the student to convey their requests for accommodations to instructors or anyone from whom they may seek assistance. They should send their own e-mails or make their own phone calls/appointments with appropriate people who can assist them.

The following document will help you see the primary differences in student rights and responsibilities between secondary and post-secondary education.

Applicable Laws

High School

IDEA - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973

IDEA – focuses on academic success

Required Documentation:

- Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and/or 504 Plan
- School provides evaluation at no cost to student or family.
- Documentation focuses on determining whether student is eligible for services based on specific disability categories in IDEA.

College

ADA - Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Title 11, Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973

ADA – focuses on equal access

Required Documentation:

- High school IEP and 504 may not be sufficient. Specific medical documentation may be required.
- Student must get evaluation at own expense.
- Documentation must provide information on specific functional limitations and demonstrate the need for specific accommodations.

Self-Advocacy

High School

- Student is identified by the school and is supported by parents and teachers.
- Primary responsibility for arranging accommodations belongs to the school.
- Teachers approach you if they believe you need assistance.

College

- Student must self-identify to the Disability Resource Services Department.
- Primary responsibility for requesting accommodations belongs to the student.
- Instructors are usually open and helpful, but expect you to ask for help.

Parent's Role

High School

- Parent has access to student records and can participate in the accommodation process.
- Parent is student advocate.

College

- Parent does not have access to student records without student's written consent including attendance at appointments with Disability Resource Specialist.
- Student is self-advocate

Instruction

High School

Teachers may modify curriculum and/or alter curriculum pace of assignments.

College

Instructors are not required to modify instruction or fundamentally alter class objectives or assignments. They are required to provide reasonable accommodations to address access barriers.

Grades and Tests

High School

- IEP or 504 Plan may include modifications to test format and/or grading.
- Testing is frequent and covers small amounts of material.
- Teachers often take time to remind you of assignments and due dates.

College

- Grading and test format changes are not available. Accommodations which may be given can include extended time, distraction reduced environment, etc., when supported by current applicable documentation. This list is not all-inclusive. Additional accommodations should be discussed with the Disability Resources Specialist.
- Testing is usually infrequent and may be cumulative, covering large amounts of material.
- Tests retakes are seldom an option. Rescheduling tests is not typically allowed unless there are extenuating circumstances.
- Instructors expect you to read, save, and consult the course syllabus (outline). The syllabus spells out exactly what is expected of you, assignment due dates, and how you will be graded.

Studying

High School

- Tutoring and study support may be a service provided as part of an IEP or 504 Plan.
- Your time and assignments are structured by others.
- You may study outside of class as little as 0 to 2 hours a week.

College

- Tutoring DOES NOT fall under mandated college disability services. Students with disabilities must seek out the tutoring resources that are available to all students.
- You manage your own time and complete assignments independently.
- You typically need to study at least 2 to 3 hours outside of class for each hour of class.

The Accommodation Process

Madison College provides academic accommodations to students who provide documented evidence of a disability that substantially limits a major life activity (e.g. learning, hearing, seeing, etc.). Accommodations are designed to ensure equal access to academic programming and services. Accommodations must be reasonable and cannot alter the essential requirements of a course or program that a student is expected to meet.

In order to receive academic accommodations, your student must self-identify as a student with a disability by providing documentation. Documentation verifying a disability should be sent to the Disability Resource Services office. After the documentation is received an appointment with a Disability Resource Specialist will meet with a specialist to determine the *reasonable* accommodations.

As a parent, your role throughout this process is one that is primarily supportive rather than directive. Your student will be expected to respond to questions and discuss needs during the interview process. It is best if parents, guardians, and other adult participants allow the young adult to answer questions independently when possible.

Accommodation plan:

At the meeting with the specialist an accommodation plan will be issued. It is the student's responsibility to present the accommodation plan to their instructors and to meet with the instructor during office hours. The student should be prepared to discuss with their instructor the impact of their disability and how the requested accommodations interface essential course requirements.

Parents, Please Keep in Mind

- The entire accommodation process must be student-initiated. It is not the post-secondary institution's responsibility to initiate the accommodation process for the student.
- While you as a parent may want to advocate for your student and assist in the accommodation process, confidentiality laws prohibit Madison College personnel from discussing your student's information with anyone, including parents, without written consent from the student.
- Accommodations such as note taking services and testing accommodations require the student to follow certain procedures. If these procedures are not followed, a student could risk losing the support of these accommodations.
- If a student experiences any difficulties with their accommodations or if the status of their disability changes, it is their responsibility to inform Disability Resource Services ASAP. If our office does not hear from a student, it will be assumed that all is well.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Madison College's responsibility to students who are disabled?

- To provide equal access to programs or services in accordance to federal and state laws.
- To determine if the student is eligible for services.
- To maintain confidentiality of disability related information.
- To provide an appropriate procedure for students to disclose accommodation information to faculty and/or staff.
- To allow for reasonable accommodations, adjustments or services on a case by case basis as long as these accommodations do not alter core requirements, classes or programs.

Is my child automatically registered with Disability Resource Services if we sent their last IEP to Madison College?

No. Each student must contact DRS to begin the process of verifying their need for accommodations.

Disability Services requires current documentation from a qualified physician or other licensed professional in a field related to the disability. Since each disability is unique, guidelines for what constitutes appropriate documentation for a particular disability are available.

Will my student have a case manager?

Not like a high school case manager. A Disability Resource Specialist will be assigned based on location. In college, unlike high school, the student is responsible to initiate contact with their Disability Resource Specialist.

College students with disabilities are responsible for managing their own education, understanding their functional limitations and requesting necessary accommodations. A Disability Resource Specialist will help students navigate their time in college.

Why can't you disclose any information to me about services my student is receiving?

Disability Resource Services is committed to ensuring all information regarding a student remains confidential as required by "The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act" (FERPA). Student files maintained by DRS are accessed only by authorized office staff.

When your child was in elementary and high school, the Family Education Rights and privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) gave you and your child rights to access and control your child's educational records. Now that your child is in college, these same laws transfer ownership of the records directly to them.

According to FERPA, college students are considered responsible adults and are allowed to determine who will receive information about them. While parents understandably have an interest in their student's academic progress, they are not automatically granted access to a student's records without written consent of the student. Parents are encouraged to consult with their student if academic information is needed.

An Authorization to Release Confidential Information is signed by the student during the initial intake for disability services. This release only covers Disability Resource Services related activities. Parent involvement in any disability resource meeting with the student must be at the student's invitation.

Where can I learn more about FERPA?

The U.S. Department of Education is responsible for overseeing FERPA. Review the [Department's website](#) for additional information.

Does the Disability Resource Authorization to Release of Confidential Information form grant me verbal access to my student's instructors?

The Authorization to Release Confidential Information does not cover faculty. Faculty is not required nor do they provide information to parents on such issues as attendance, grades, assignments, etc.

What is meant by a reasonable accommodation?

Reasonable accommodations are designed in order to level the playing field for qualified individuals with disabilities. As much as possible, accommodations help minimize the functional limitations of an individual in a given task. These adjustments permit students with disabilities the opportunity to learn by removing barriers that do not compromise academic standards.