

CHAPTER

16



College Programs and Services

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TRANSITION FROM K-12 TO COLLEGE

High school students with disabilities who plan to go to college should start planning early. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), discussions about student's transition from high school must begin no later than age 14 and should begin being implemented no later than age 16. Students who plan to attend college and their parents need to understand that in order to receive accommodations for disabilities at the college or university level, they must provide current documentation of their disability. In most cases, Disability Supports Service (DSS) providers need to have an adult-level assessment that was conducted on the student after 16 years of age. Be sure to request an updated assessment for college-bound students before they graduate and specifically ask for retesting; otherwise you could end up paying for a private assessment out of pocket. Although some colleges and universities provide assessments for their students at a reduced rate, most do not, and a private assessment can cost upward of \$2,000. Many high school counselors and special education teachers are under the impression that it is better to transition students out of special education before they go to college. Nothing could be further from the truth! If students are determined ineligible for services in high school, then why would they qualify in college? Even if a student chooses not to seek accommodations in college, it is better to have the option if the need should arise. You may also be advised, at the high school level, that students with disabilities do not need to take the SAT or ACT or that if they take, it they cannot receive accommodations, such as extra time. Also not true! High schools do not have the authority to adjust the admission standards at colleges and universities. If the schools you plan to attend requires the SAT or ACT, you must take it and score high enough to meet the index of that school. Students who require accommodations on the SAT or ACT need to contact the testing agency to request

nonstandard accommodations for disability and must provide documentation. Students who are unable to meet the admission criteria for more selective institutions can begin their college career at a number of community colleges or private schools with lower indexes. Once you have earned an AA transfer degree, you can enter most universities as a junior. Some schools even take no degree holding students once they have earned approximately 1 year's worth of credits; usually a minimum GPA of 2.0 is also required. As parents, we tend to want to do everything for our children. This transition period is a good time to have them start making the necessary contact and arrangements while we are still close by to add assistance.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PROGRAMS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF SHOPPING

All colleges and universities are required to provide DSS under the Americans with Disability Act, but the level of commitment by the administration may vary from one school to the next. It is important for prospective students and their parents to shop around and choose the school that best suits their needs. Many DSS programs are largely self-contained and provide accommodations in-house with little interaction with faculty; others follow a more collaborative model, relying more on faculty and other departments to assist in providing accommodations. Other schools are adopting the concept of universal access by educating faculty and staff about creating an environment that truly removes barriers and reduces the need for accommodation because the programs are accessible to all students regardless of disability. When touring schools, visit the DSS office and meet with the director or the person in charge of accommodations. Ask questions:

- How many students do you serve?
- How many staff work in the DSS office?
- How accommodating are the faculty?
- How are specific accommodation provided—that is, extra time on tests, how much time is allowed, where are tests taken, and so on?

Keep in mind that the largest program is not always the best match for the student. Many DSS programs are one-person operations and they provide exceptional service; others may have multiple staff members and resources but lack the working relationship with faculty, staff, and students needed to be effective. Each student is an individual and not all programs fit all students. Be aware of your needs and seek a program that best meets those needs. No matter how committed to student success a program is, the responsibility for success falls on the student. Most DSS programs are able to accomplish amazing success, but no one can read minds or see into the future. It is up

to the student to make DSS aware of problem situations as early as possible, so they can assist. Students who try to ignore situations and avoid asking for help usually find themselves facing academic or financial probation or suspension. Often these situations can be avoided by contacting DSS early in the term when problems first appear. Just as in transition planning, it is important to have students take the lead role when college shopping, as they will need to continue to assume this responsibility as they progress through school and throughout life.

DOCUMENTATION

Currently there is no documentation standard that all schools must follow. Some colleges require less information in their documentation than others. The guidelines listed here should provide you with the necessary components to meet the documentation requirements at the majority of institutions. The documentation requirements provided are for Eastern Washington University, as adopted from guidelines and recommendations from the Washington Association on Postsecondary Education and Disability and the Association of Higher Education and Disability.

Documentation should show impact of the disability at age 16 years or older and should include:

1. A statement of diagnosis of the learning disability in the nomenclature used by the *DSM-IV-TR* or successive editions.
2. Tests administered to determine this diagnosis. Learning disability assessment must be specific, comprehensive, and include:
 - a. Aptitude: The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale III (WAIS III) with subtests scores in preferred. The Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery Revised: Test of Cognitive Ability is acceptable. The Leiter International Performance Scale or the Comprehensive test of Non-Verbal Intelligence (C-TONI) is accepted when cultural bias or hearing loss is a concern.
 - b. Achievement: Current level of functioning in reading, mathematics, and written language are required. Acceptable instruments include the Woodcock-Johnson Psych-Educational Battery-Revised: test of achievement; Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK); or specific achievement tests such as the Test of Written Language-2 (TOWL-2), Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised, or the Stanford Diagnostic Mathematics Test. Please note: The Wide Range Achievement Test Revised is NOT a comprehensive measure of achievement and, therefore, is not suitable.
 - c. Information Processing: Specific areas of information processing (e.g., short and long term memory; sequential memory; auditory and visual perception/processing; processing speed) must be assessed. Use of subtests from the WAIS-R or the Woodcock-Johnson Test of Cognitive Ability are acceptable.

NOTE: The above are not intended to be exhaustive lists or to restrict assessment in other pertinent and helpful areas such as vocational interest and aptitudes.

- d. Raw Data and Interpretation.
 - e. Specific recommendations based on interpreted tests. These recommendations can be based on or taken from a copy of school I.E.P. but must identify specific learning disability and reflect the individual's present level of functioning in intelligence, achievement, and processing.
 - f. Tests need to be current. In most cases an adult level assessment that was administered after 16 years of age is required and in some cases institutions may require an assessment after 18 years of age.
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Suggestions for reasonable accommodations with supporting evidence can be included. The final determination for providing appropriate and reasonable accommodations rests with the college or university the student plans to attend. The DSS office reserves the right to obtain clarification regarding the documentation if necessary.

It is important to discuss with your school districts special education coordinator the importance of retesting as part of the transition planning process before the student graduates. Contact the DSS office at all schools you plan to apply to and request copies of their documentation policies. You should provide them to your district education specialist, as part of the retesting process.

DOCUMENTATION POLICIES FOR ATTENTION DISABILITIES

1. Documentation must be prepared by a professional who has comprehensive training in differential diagnosis and direct experience working with adolescents and adults with ADHD. Such professionals may include clinical psychologists, neuropsychologist, psychiatrists, and other relevantly trained medical doctors.
2. Documentation should be current; the provision of all reasonable accommodations and services is based on the assessment of the current impact of the disability on academic performance. This means that the diagnostic evaluation should show the current level of function and impact of the disability.
3. Documentation must be comprehensive and should address the next areas:
 - a. *Evidence of early impairment.* Due to the fact that ADHD is, by definition in the fourth edition of the first *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR)*, exhibited in childhood and manifests itself in more than one setting, a comprehensive assessment should include a clinical summary of objective historical information garnered from sources such as transcripts, report cards, teacher comments, tutoring evaluations, past psychoeducational testing, and third-party interviews when available.

- b. *Evidence of current impairment.* Diagnostic assessment should consist of more than a self-report. Information from third-party sources is critical in the diagnosis of ADHD. Information from a variety of sources should include history of presenting attentional symptoms, developmental history, family history for presence of ADHD, relevant medical and medication history, relevant psychosocial history, any relevant interventions, academic history, review of prior psychoeducational test reports, relevant employment history, and relevant history of prior therapy.

Alternative diagnoses or explanations should be ruled out, including medical, psychiatric disorders, and educational or cultural factors affecting the individual that may result in behavior mimicking ADHD, should be explored.

Testing must be relevant. Test scores or subtest scores alone should not be used as a sole measure for the diagnostic decision regarding ADHD. Selected subtest scores from measures of intellectual ability, memory functions tests, attention or tracking tests, or continuous performance tests do not in and of themselves establish the presence or absence of ADHD. Checklists and/or surveys can serve to supplement the diagnostic profile, but by themselves are not adequate for the diagnosis of ADHD.

If applicable, present a specific diagnosis of ADHD based on the *DSM-IV-TR* diagnostic criteria. The diagnostician should use direct language in the diagnosis of ADHD, avoiding the use of such terms as “suggests” “is indicative of” or “attention problems.”

Provide a comprehensive interpretive summary synthesizing the evaluator’s judgment for the diagnosis. The reports should include:

- All quantitative information in standard scores and or percentiles.
- All relevant developmental, familial medical, medication, psychosocial, behavioral, and academic information.
- A clear identification of the substantial limitation of a major life function presented by the ADHD.

Suggestions for reasonable accommodations with supporting evidence can be included. The final determination for providing appropriate and reasonable accommodations rests with the college or university the student plans to attend. DSS offices may reserve the right to obtain clarification regarding the documentation, if necessary.

COORDINATION OF SERVICES

Equally as important as the type of services available to the student is how services are provided and who is responsible to make sure that accommodations are provided. The DSS programs of many institutions are largely self-contained, providing all of the

students' accommodations within the DSS office. For example, they provide testing rooms, paid note takers, and academic advising, just to name a few. Others DSS programs rely on the institution as a whole to meet the needs of students by asking the faculty to take an active part in providing accommodations, such as allowing testing within the department, helping to identify fellow students who can share notes, and having students advised by general undergraduate or departmental advisors. Both types of programs have their strengths. Although more self-contained DSS programs are able to better monitor their students' accommodations and avoid students being unserved, programs that rely on the entire institution tend to place more responsibility on students to communicate with all parties involved and therefore allow students to become more self-sufficient and empowered in the future. Students both with and without disabilities who take a more active role in their education tend to be more successful, both in school and after graduation, than passive students.

TECHNOLOGICAL ACCOMMODATIONS IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

The accommodation process in postsecondary education is becoming increasingly technological for a number of reasons. Over time, these assistive technologies are being used by larger populations, which has generated increased research and development investment by software companies to make these products more user friendly and functional. Another factor that has increased the usage of these applications is that more DSS providers are becoming aware of the effectiveness of these programs. Also, a growing number of states have passed legislation that mandates increased provision of educational media that can be accessed through assistive technology. Many of the accommodations that are granted in postsecondary education are human-based services that will not follow students as they transition into employment. In contrast, technological accommodations are not dependent on human services; therefore, they are more accepted in the employment world. The three types of assistive technology that are commonly utilized to accommodate learning disabilities and ADHD are text-to-speech software, voice recognition software, and mind mapping software. A brief overview of these technologies is given in the next sections.

Text-to-Speech Software

Text-to-speech software, or literacy software, consists of computer programs that process digitized text into computer-synthesized speech. Users of these applications are able to scan text into a computer using a document scanner, and a speech engine can convert the text into its phonetic equivalent. This phonetic equivalent is then voiced through computer speakers or headphones in the form of computer-synthesized speech. In summary, the computer is able to read electronic text to the user. Because of the

amount of reading required in postsecondary education, it is recommended that users spend a considerable amount of time researching different text-to-speech software packages in order to find one that contains features that will benefit them.

Popular features include the ability to select from multiple speech synthesizers, allowing users to choose between different-sounding voices. Popular synthesizers include both male and female voices, different languages, and multiple accents of U.S. English. Some text-to-speech software applications allow students to make adjustments to speech output, such as reading speed and variable speech inflection.

Text-to-speech programs offer differing levels of adjustment to visual settings as well. Some programs allow students to adjust font size to make the text easier to see. While reading, some applications allow for "spotlighting" of text that allows users to easily follow along with the synthesized voice. Many applications allow students to enable spotlighting by word, line, sentence or paragraph. Another very popular visual setting in text-to-speech programs is the ability to change the background color of the text. Students report that customizing the background color allows them to use speech-to-text software for longer periods of time.

Another increasingly popular feature is the ability to output to digital audio files, such as MP3 and WAV files. This feature allows students to convert digitized text into a compatible format that can be played by a digital audio player. Many students are now converting texts into formats that are playable on cell phones that feature digital audio players.

A noncomprehensive list of popular text-to-speech applications includes:

- ClaroRead
- CWU Portable Textbook Reader
- Kurzweil 3000/1000
- NaturalReader
- Read & Write Gold
- ReadPlease
- Read:OutLoud
- TextAloud
- Wynn Wizard/Reader

Voice Recognition Software

Voice recognition software is software that allows students to speak to the computer and the computer records their voice into text. Voice recognition software almost entirely replaces the need to input text into a computer using a keyboard. This can be extremely advantageous for students with LD and ADHD for a number of reasons. Students with LD that affect written expression and spelling experience functional limitations in their ability to word process, and many such students report increased

comfort expressing themselves orally rather than in written format. Students diagnosed with ADHD commonly report that they experience difficulties staying seated and remaining on task during word processing. They also report that their thoughts race, making it difficult to stay on topic while word processing. Voice recognition allows students with ADHD to record their thoughts in less time, therefore enabling them to word process at a pace that is more natural for them.

Voice recognition software requires each user to create a profile that allows the computer to recognize the speaker's voice. This profile is created by reading a predefined set of text to the computer for approximately 15 minutes. Postsecondary educational institutions have a responsibility to provide assistive technologies and offer adequate training to students. When shopping for a school, it is strongly recommended that students who will be using assistive technologies ask the DSS office how it facilitates the training of such applications. It is very common for trainers to work with students for multiple training hours before the students independently use voice recognition software.

The idea of voice recognition software seems extremely attractive to most students. The reality is that certain students are extremely effective at using the keyboard for word processing functions. These students struggle to make the transition into utilizing voice recognition software as a primary input method. These students usually find that transitioning to voice recognition software delays the time required to word process.

Voice recognition software has been widely utilized as a technological accommodation for students with disabilities since the mid-1990s. Many users who have not received effective training complain about the accuracy of the recognition process. It is essential that users of voice recognition software receive adequate training.

A noncomprehensive list of popular voice recognition programs includes:

- Dragon Naturally Speaking
- IBM ViaVoice
- MacSpeech
- Microsoft Windows Speech Recognition

Mind/Concept Mapping Software

Mind mapping or concept mapping software is an invaluable organizational tool for students with learning disabilities and ADHD. Mind mapping software allows students to organize their thoughts in a dynamic graphical environment. The most common use of mind mapping software is to organize thoughts prior to writing, but it is also used to organize concepts for other complex processes, such as presentations and debates.

Students with ADHD and LD frequently report experiencing symptoms of writer's block. These students report experiences of sitting in front of a computer and struggling to find appropriate sequencing of their thoughts and also lacking effective prose

to transition from thought to thought. Mind mapping software allows them to start with a main topic and brainstorm many subtopics without having to be concerned with sequencing of the subtopics early in the writing process. After brainstorming, students are able to visually see all of the topics that they are interested in writing about and associate graphics or images with these topics.

The following is a noncomprehensive list of popular mind/concept mapping programs:

- FreeMind
- Inspiration Software
- Microsoft Visio
- MindGenius
- MindMapper
- Semantica

PROVISION OF PRINT MATERIALS IN ALTERNATIVE FORMAT

The Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act are examples of federal legislation that mandate that postsecondary educational institutions accommodate people with disabilities by providing accessible educational materials. Since the passage of these laws, multiple states across the nation have also passed legislation that mandates that postsecondary educational institutions provide students with disabilities with print materials in alternative format. Some of these laws target publishing companies, stating that if a company is producing educational materials for an institution of higher education, it must also produce formats that are accessible for students with disabilities. Unfortunately, many of the alternatively formatted materials that are distributed by publishing companies are not of adequate quality for distribution to students with disabilities. Institutions of higher education are left with the burden of processing such materials into adequate formats that coincide with the functional limitations of the students with disabilities. Not all higher educational institutions are able to process and provide advanced levels of print materials in the alternative format. This should be a key consideration for prospective students to look at when shopping for an institution of higher education especially if students are considering seeking degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

The initial discussion around print materials in alternative format was surrounding the needs of students with visual impairment. This has since changed. Now these conversations are focused primarily on students with print access LD. This is because the number of students with print access LD is far greater than the number of students with visual impairment. The vast majority of alternative formats that are distributed

in postsecondary education is for students with LD; the needs of that population now define the national dialogue regarding print materials in alternative format.

Students with ADHD should cautiously review a prospective school's policy on distribution of print materials in alternative format. Many schools provide this accommodation only to students with print access LD, and ADHD is commonly not classified as a print access disability. Other schools offer less restrictive access to this accommodation. For students with ADHD who struggle to access printed materials, this should be a strong consideration when choosing a postsecondary educational institution.

In best practice, DSS professionals should engage in an interactive process with students who qualify for print materials in alternative format. This interactive process should determine what method the student will use to read the alternative format and thus determine what format is most appropriate for the student. Different text-to-speech programs have varying levels of ability to utilize different file formats. Common formats include DAISY files, Microsoft Word document files, and text-selectable PDF files.

CONNECTEDNESS AND SOCIALIZATION

Research indicates that the more connected students feel to an institution, the more likely they are to be retained, matriculate, and ultimately graduate. Students with disabilities are no different, in that respect. Encourage students to pursue their nonacademic interests as well as their studies. Students should seek membership in campus clubs and organizations and should be encouraged to participate in intramural sports and athletic events, guest speaker events, concerts and students activities. Students who obtain campus employment often find that working at the school develops a number of skills that are not normally addressed in the classroom. In some cases, student employment can lead to jobs after graduation and even long-term careers in higher education.

EMPOWERMENT AND SELF-ADVOCACY

Applying the strength-based perspective to students to help them identify their own strengths and assisting them in developing appropriate strategies for self-advocacy will empower them and help them be more successful after graduation when they enter the workforce. Often the working environment is not as supportive as the educational setting. Students who practice advocating for themselves in school are much more likely to be strong self-advocates in the future.