



WESTERN IOWA & NEBRASKA ASSOCIATION  
ON HIGHER EDUCATION & DISABILITY

## Transitions Information for Educators

*There are key distinctions between the services provided to students with disabilities in K-12 education and the accommodations available in the higher education environment. As an educator, you can help high school students recognize these differences prior to their transition to college, ensuring they are better prepared for the post-secondary experience. This document is intended to offer K-12 educators an overview of how accommodations are typically accessed in higher education.*

*Please note that this is not intended as legal advice. For specific policies and procedures at individual institutions, please contact their disability services office.*

- ◆ In K-12, accommodation is typically arranged through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 Plan, which are managed by the school system. These plans are legally binding, and the **school** is responsible for ensuring that accommodation is provided. In higher education, however, the process is **student-driven**. While Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) still apply, students are responsible for seeking out and requesting accommodations through their college's disability services office. Accommodation is determined based on individual needs and are determined through an interactive process.
- ◆ As an educator, you can help prepare students for transitioning to the college environment. College students with disabilities must be able to advocate for themselves and understand their legal rights. Encourage students to develop self-advocacy skills, such as effectively communicating their needs and seeking support when necessary.
- ◆ As an educator, you can help students understand the importance of disclosing their disability to the college and requesting accommodation in a timely manner. Students will need to reach out to the disability services office and submit appropriate documentation to begin the accommodation process.
- ◆ The transition from high school to college involves greater personal responsibility. As an educator, you can help students understand that accommodations will no longer be automatically provided, and they must take the initiative to ensure they have the support they need.
- ◆ As an educator, you can help students to understand that college accommodation may be different than those available in high school.
- ◆ As an educator, it is essential to understand that students enrolled in dual credit courses while still in high school must follow the college's process to request and utilize accommodations for these courses. Since dual credit courses are part of the college experience, students will need to engage directly with the college's disability services office to ensure they receive the necessary accommodation.



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### **The Process**

- ◆ Colleges are required to designate an individual or a department responsible for determining reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities. This department may be called Disability Services, Access Resources or something similar.
- ◆ Students are responsible for initiating the process of requesting academic accommodations and may be required to complete an application to begin the accommodation request process.
- ◆ Many schools require students to provide information about their disability. This documentation may include educational or medical records, reports and assessments created by health care providers, school psychologists, teachers or the educational system. Requirements for this information, often called documentation, vary by school.
- ◆ Students will meet with a staff member to talk about the way their disability impacts them in the educational or housing setting and to identify appropriate accommodations.
- ◆ Accommodations are provided to mitigate institutional barriers and provide equitable access to the educational environment.
- ◆ Students will work with staff to notify their faculty of their approved accommodations each term.
- ◆ Students are expected to bring concerns to the attention of the disability office in a timely manner.
- ◆ Disability offices consult with both students and faculty as issues arise.

### ***Skills for Success***

Continue to support high school students in developing self-advocacy and independence skills that will empower them to succeed in post-secondary environments.

Refer students and parents to the respective post-secondary institution for detailed information regarding the specific accommodation processes at each institution.

### **How to get additional support**

WINAHEAD is made up of representatives from thirty institutions. Our members are professionals employed by two-and four-year colleges and universities who work directly with students with disabilities to ensure equal access to higher education. WIN indicates the geographic area we represent: Western Iowa and Nebraska. For more information on available resources, please visit the WINAHEAD website:

<https://winahead.org/>

[winahead1@gmail.com](mailto:winahead1@gmail.com)