



WESTERN IOWA & NEBRASKA ASSOCIATION  
ON HIGHER EDUCATION & DISABILITY

## Transitions Information for Students

Making the transition from high school to college is exciting but it can also be overwhelming. As a student with a disability, there are certain things you'll need to know to get yourself ready. Keep in mind that high schools and colleges approach accommodations for disabilities in different ways. Colleges focus on access, high school focuses on success. This guide provides the basics that will apply to most colleges and universities in Western Iowa and Nebraska, but be sure to contact the school you're going to attend for their specific details.

### ***Important Things to Keep in Mind:***

- ◆ **Your High School IEP/504 Does Not Transfer** – You will need to provide documentation and go through the interactive process to determine eligibility. While other professionals may suggest accommodations, the Disability Services Office makes the final determination.
- ◆ **Learning to Be a Self-Advocate** – Accommodations do not follow you automatically. You must request them and initiate the process. Be prepared to explain your disability, how it affects your learning, and what accommodations you need.
- ◆ **Accommodations May Look Different Than in High School** – Colleges do not offer special education services, para-educators, or modified coursework. Instead, accommodations are designed to remove barriers to access while maintaining the same academic standards. You are responsible for meeting the same academic and behavioral expectations as all students.
- ◆ **Professors Will Be Informed of Your Accommodations, Not Your Diagnosis** – Your disability information is private and protected. Faculty will only receive information about approved accommodations, not your medical history or diagnosis.
- ◆ **Accommodations Are Not Retroactive** – You must request accommodations before you need them. If you struggle without accommodations and later request them, they will not apply to past coursework, tests, or assignments.
- ◆ **Dual Credit & Early College Students Must Use College Accommodations** – If you are taking dual credit or early college courses, you must use the college's accommodation process, as these courses follow higher education accommodation standards.
- ◆ **Not All Academic Challenges Are Disabilities** – Struggling with time management, organization, or study skills does not automatically qualify for accommodations. Many of these challenges can be addressed through campus resources like tutoring, faculty office hours, the writing center, and academic coaching.

### **The Process**

Check with your school for specifics, but this is the general process:

1. Fill out an application. Many schools will have this setup online.
2. Have your documentation ready. This could be your IEP/504 plan from high school or a note from your doctor, psychiatrist, or therapist.
3. Meet with a disability specialist. You'll be asked to schedule a time to talk to someone about what your specific challenges are as they relate to being a student with a disability.
4. Copies of your accommodation letter will be shared with you and your faculty. Check with your Disability Services Office on how this happens at your school.



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## **Skills for Success**

- ◆ Be able to name your disability and talk about it with the Disability Services Office. The more information you can provide about how your disability impacts you as a student, the better they'll be able to help make sure you have appropriate accommodations.
- ◆ Find ways to deal with stress and anxiety. Eating nutritious meals and getting physical activity can help.
- ◆ Work on time management skills and make sure you turn in your assignments on time. If you need recommendations for how to do this, ask your Disability Services Office for suggestions.
- ◆ Notetaking and organization can be other key skills to develop.
- ◆ Establish routines to get to classes on time, do your homework, and study.
- ◆ Check your email, especially your school email, at least once every day. Many schools will only send official messages to your school account.
- ◆ Be willing to ask for help when you need it. Many schools have academic resource centers, tutors, and a host of other resources to help students do their best. If you aren't sure how to find those, just ask!

## ***Your Responsibilities***

In college, you're in charge of your learning and your success. Keep these things in mind:

- ◆ Keep a copy of any documentation you have from high school, like your IEP or 504 plan. Any notes you have from a psychiatrist, therapist or doctor may be helpful, too. It's your responsibility to have this information!
- ◆ College students are adult learners, so the college will work directly with you, not your parents.
- ◆ If you want to establish an accommodation plan, you need to contact the Disability Service Office and set up a meeting. The college or university will not contact you first.
- ◆ You can sign a Release of Information to allow the school to share information with your parents if you'd like, but the school will still work directly with you.

## ***Other Services You Might Need***

Every campus will have different services, depending on what their campus offers. If you're thinking about living in a dorm and want to get an Emotional Support Animal, for example, you need to find out what specific information your school will need before you can take your animal to campus. You can also ask about things like wheel chair accessible rooms, having a room on the first floor, and other physical needs you might have.

If you have a disability such as Celiac disease and need to have a special meal plan, that's something else to ask the Disability Services Office at the school you're attending.

## **How to get additional support**

Remember that the Disability Services Office is there to help you. If you have questions about your plan, how to talk to your faculty about specific accommodations you have, how to get connected to tutoring services, academic mentoring, or any of the other many ways you can get extra support as a college student you just have to ask. Some Disability Services Offices will provide some of those services and others will point you in the right direction of where to find them. Your job is to ask for what you need.