

I. Preparing for College

Parents and students preparing to attend college are often surprised to learn that they are no longer eligible to receive services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Instead, students in post-secondary programs (colleges, universities, trade schools, etc.) are protected from discrimination under Section 504. In terms of special education and related services, Section 504 is more limited than IDEA in meeting an individual student's needs.

Admissions

Students with disabilities may be entitled to changes in standardized testing conditions on entrance exams

- Federal law requires that testing accommodations be provided as long as the changes to do not fundamentally alter the exam or create undue hardship on the institution
- Examples of testing accommodations:
 - Braille;
 - Large print;
 - Fewer items on each page;
 - Tape recorded responses;
 - Responses on the test booklet;
 - Frequent breaks;
 - Extended testing time;
 - Testing over several sessions;
 - Small group setting;
 - Private room;
 - Preferential seating; and
 - The use of a sign language interpreter for spoken directions.

A student with a disability is not required to disclose his or her disability to the college or university when applying.

- Generally, an institution is prohibited from asking a student about disability status before an admission decision is made.
- An institution may not deny admission on the basis of disability if the applicant meets the requirements for admission.

Requesting modifications and academic adjustments

If a student with a disability needs a modification or academic adjustment, the student must disclose her or her disability and request the specific modification or academic adjustment.

- Students should notify both the disability office at the institution and his or her instructors of the disability and the modifications or adjustments necessary
- Students should notify the institution before classes start or early in the semester

Students will be required to provide documentation of his or her disability and functional limitations.

- Students should ask the institution what documentation it requires
- Documentation required will likely be an evaluation by a professional (physician, psychologist, etc.)
- The institution may request the following information about the student:
 - Diagnosis of disability
 - Date of diagnosis
 - Credentials or qualifications of the diagnostician
 - How the diagnosis was reached
 - Impact of the disability on major life activities
 - Impact of the disability on academic performance
 - Recommendations for academic modifications or adjustments
- Generally, a recent IEP or 504 plan will not be sufficient documentation for the post-secondary institution

The post-secondary institution is not required to pay for evaluations to document a student's disability.

- The college or university will likely require evaluations that are recent (within the last year).
- If a student is evaluated during the last year of high school, ensure that adult norms are used so the evaluation will be sufficient for the post-secondary documentation of the disability.
- West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services may provide an evaluation at no cost for eligible students.

Students should make requests for academic adjustments or modifications in writing and to the appropriate school personnel and retain a copy for his or her records. It is important to keep any correspondence from the school regarding the request.

Obtaining Modifications and Academic Adjustments

A post-secondary institution is not required to provide every academic adjustment a student requests.

- Institutions are not required to provide an academic adjustment that would alter or waive academic requirements.
- Institutions are not required to provide an academic adjustment that would substantially alter a program or activity or result in undue hardship on the institution
- For example, an institution may allow an extended time for a student to take a test, but is not required to waive the test or change the content or difficulty of the test.

Institutions are required to give primary consideration to the auxiliary aid or service the student requests.

- However, an institution is allowed to provide alternative auxiliary aids or services if they are effective.
- For example, a student with a disability can request a note taker for class lectures. If providing the note taker would create an undue financial burden on the institution and a tape recorder is an effective alternative to the note taker, the institution is permitted to provide the student with a tape recorder instead of a note-taker.

Institutions are required to pay for the necessary auxiliary aids and services.

- Institutions may not require students to pay for part or all the costs of auxiliary aids and services
- Institutions may not charge students with disabilities more in tuition or fees to cover the cost of such auxiliary aids and services.

If a modification or academic adjustment is not working or not meeting a student's individual needs, it is the student's responsibility to notify the school as soon as possible.

- The school and the student should work together to resolve the problem or identify other modifications or academic adjustments to facilitate learning and success.

Student Life

Students who need to be assigned to accessible housing and other facilities should make the request early.

- Some dorm rooms may be more accessible than others.

Service animals trained to provide a personal service should be allowed on campus.

- Emotional support animals are not as likely to be allowed, but the institution may permit them.

Students with specific dietary needs should notify the institution as soon as possible.