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Disability Services

Student & Parent Guide

Concordia College

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Disability Services

Student & Parent Guide

College life poses different challenges for students with disabilities. When students enroll in college, they are considered responsible adults by faculty and staff. The expectations are that they will assume responsibilities for meeting their classroom requirements. This added responsibility is coupled with a change in environment. Whereas high school was a very structured environment with a set schedule, college schedules can vary dramatically. For the first time, students may have considerable time between classes and frequently do not use this time wisely. Students must enforce their own attendance policies and prepare to realize personal consequences if they choose not to attend class. Once a student turns 18 years old they are legally an adult, responsible for their own actions and decisions.

We hope this handbook will help answer your questions about disability services at the post-secondary level.

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IDEA vs. Section 504/ADA

Section 504 and the ADA, which apply to post-secondary education, are very different from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which covers grades pre-K – 12. This means that some adjustment of the perspectives of students, parents and instructors are necessary when making the transition from high school to college.

IDEA	Section 504/ADA
Every child is entitled to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the “least restrictive environment” possible.	Students compete for admission and must be “otherwise qualified” to enter college, without consideration of disability . Students participate in the general curriculum of the college. No continuum of placement exists.
Focused on creation of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that will help the student participate in the general curriculum as much as possible.	Few colleges have “plans” for students with disabilities. Most outline accommodations without regard to goals or progress.
Requires yearly meeting of general education teachers, special education teachers, and auxiliary service personnel to discuss progress and set goals.	The student is responsible for meeting with disability services and with instructors to discuss needs and concerns.
Often involves significant modification of the curriculum and of assessments (e.g., students may learn only the major concepts of a unit, may be able to take shortened tests, or be exempt from certain assignments).	Instructors are NOT required nor encouraged to fundamentally alter the content or goals of their courses, though they may be required to make changes that do not affect essential content or goals.
Classroom teachers receive a copy of the IEP so they are supposed to have a thorough understanding of the disability and the plan.	Instructors receive a brief summary of the disability in an accommodation letter but are not given access to specific diagnostic data unless provided by the student.
There is often pressure on special education and general education teachers to do whatever is necessary to help students move on to the next grade level.	Students with disabilities should be graded by the same standards as other students, regardless of the means through which their responses are provided (on tape, orally, typed rather than handwritten, etc.).
<u>Law of Entitlement</u> Guarantees SUCCESS	<u>Civil Rights Law</u> Guarantees ACCESS

Transition from High School to College

IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are very different, leading to miscommunication between high school and college staff that have studied only statutes applying to their institution.

High School	Post-Secondary
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973	Americans with Disabilities Act
Differences	
<i>In high school the school has responsibilities which include the following:</i>	<i>The post-secondary role changes as follows:</i>
Identify students with disabilities.	Protect a student's right to privacy and confidentiality.
Provide assessment of learning disabilities.	Provide access to programs and services for persons with disabilities.
Classify disabilities according to specified diagnostic categories.	Inform students of office location and procedures for requesting accommodations.
Involve parents/guardians in placement decisions.	Accept and evaluate verifying documentation.
Provide certain non-academic services.	Determine that a mental or physical impairment causes a substantial limitation of a major life activity based on the information in the intake, on student-provided verifying documents.
Place students in programs where they can benefit.	Determine for students who are otherwise qualified for participation in the program or service, with or without accommodations, whether a reasonable accommodation is possible.
Structure a large part of the student's weekly schedule.	Make reasonable accommodations for students who meet the qualifying criteria.
Modify educational programs.	Provide reasonable access to program and service choices equal to those available to the general public.
Prepare Individualized Education Plans (IEP's).	Suggest reasonable adjustments in teaching methods which do not alter the essential content of a course or program.
Provide a free and appropriate education.	Assure that off-campus and contracted program facilities also comply with Section 504 (Subpart E) and ADA.
Provide appropriate services by the school nurse or health services.	Inform students of their rights and responsibilities.
<i>Other differences may exist for post-secondary institutions that provide housing programs, health services, psychological counseling services, and extensive international programs.</i>	

Differences Between High School and College

There are many differences between how disability services are provided at the K – 12 level and at the post-secondary level. While it is not practical to list them all, there are some key points to know. The changes reflect the fact that the college student is no longer a minor and is now responsible for making decisions as to his or her education.

High School	College
Parents are responsible for making sure the school is accommodating their student appropriately.	The parent is no longer responsible for making sure their student is accommodated. This is now the student's responsibility both to initiate and to make the appropriate office aware if they are not being accommodated.
Schools will make academic adjustments based on IEP or 504 Plans.	Documentation of the disability is your student's responsibility. The student is required to provide and pay for documentation of their disability. IEP and 504 Plans will not be accepted as the sole means of documentation.
High school can change academic requirements for your student.	Colleges are not required to reduce or waive essential course requirements.
High School is a guided process and students are told what to do and how to behave.	College is a student responsibility and students are held responsible for the consequences of their decisions.
High School Academic Adjustments	College Accommodations
High school allows shortened assignments.	In college shortened assignments are not a reasonable accommodation.
High school allows the use of notes, formulas or word banks on exams.	The use of these items is not considered a reasonable accommodation in college.
High school explains questions using different words.	Explaining questions using different words is not reasonable in college.
High school can request a copy of the teacher's notes.	Requesting a copy of the teacher's notes is not a reasonable accommodation. The notes are many times considered intellectual property of the professor.
<p>Note: Colleges are not obligated to provide the exact same accommodations as were given at any point from K – 12. Even if an accommodation is listed on a 504 plan or other documents, the Disability Services office may determine that it is not reasonable at the college level.</p>	

General Guidelines for Disability Documentation

Concordia College uses documentation of disability to 1) establish whether an individual is a person with a disability and 2) provide a rationale for identifying and implementing reasonable accommodations.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 define disability as "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities." Major life activities include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working, sitting, standing, lifting, reaching, sleeping, and mental/emotional processes such as thinking, concentrating, and interacting with others. The ADA also protects individuals from discrimination if they have a record of such impairments or if they are regarded as having such impairments.

Formal evaluation procedures, clinical narratives, and the individual's self-report will be used to determine appropriate and reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. The approved accommodations and strategies must logically relate to the functional limitations described in the documentation.

Concordia College Disability Services has incorporated the Association of Higher Education and Disability's (AHEAD) (2004) seven essential elements of quality documentation into their criteria for documentation.

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Disability Documentation Should Include:

1. A **clear diagnostic statement** that describes how the condition was diagnosed, information on the functional impact, and details on the progression or prognosis of the condition. Dates of the original and current diagnostic evaluations need to be included.
2. A **description of the diagnostic** methodology, criteria, evaluation methods, procedures, tests used, dates administered, clinical narrative, observations, and specific results that are congruent with the particular disability.

***Documentation for learning disabilities must include test scores and interpretation of aptitude, achievement, and, when possible, information processing. Tests used should be current and appropriate for assessing adolescents and adults.*

3. A **description of the current functional limitations and how those limitations affect the student in a major life activity.** A "functional limitation" is defined as an adverse effect on a major life activity caused by the disability. Functional limitations should be described in terms of how severely the activity is affected by the disability; the frequency with which the activity is affected and how pervasive the disability is in the performance of the major life activity.

4. A **description of current and past accommodations, services and/or medications and their effectiveness** in relation to the functional impact of the disability. Information about any significant side effects from current treatment or medication and its effect on physical, perceptual, behavioral, and cognitive performance is helpful.

5. A **description of the expected progression or stability of the disability** including the expected changes over time, information on the cyclical or episodic nature of the disability and any known suspected environmental triggers.

6. **Credentials of the evaluator/provider** are relevant to the diagnosed disability. The professional should be licensed or otherwise properly credentialed, have appropriate and comprehensive training, relevant experience, and have no personal relationship with the individual being evaluated or diagnosed.

* Although not required, professionals are invited to make **recommendations for accommodations, adaptive devices, assistive services, compensatory strategies, and/or support services** that are logically related to the functional limitation. College disability services offices, however, are not under any obligation to provide or adopt recommendations made by outside entities.

Documents that Disability Services Will Not Accept:

1. Handwritten letters from licensed professionals
2. Entries from patient medical charts
3. Information written on prescription pads
4. Information that is illegible
5. Self-evaluations
6. Information from non-professionals
7. Research articles
8. Documentation provided by a member of the student's family

Additional Information

Student Responsibilities

- At the college level students must request services. Students must self-identify to the Disability Services (DS) office as having a disability and present appropriate documentation. Students must meet with the Director of Disability Services at the beginning of each semester that they wish to receive accommodations.
- College students must notify their faculty directly as to their accommodation needs. DS will not, as a general rule, contact instructors for students. DS will provide the faculty member with an accommodation letter, but it's the student's responsibility to meet with his or her instructors and discuss the stated accommodations.
- Students are responsible for notifying DS about any problems they encounter with the provision of accommodation.

How Parents Can Help

The following are some important ways parents can help:

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- Encourage your son or daughter to take advantage of available services. While services cannot be forced upon a student, it is in the student's best interest to know what services he or she is eligible for.
- Encourage your son or daughter to meet with the DS provider at the start of each semester. Even if a student doesn't want services or accommodations, it is helpful for the student to discuss this with the provider. It also helps us be aware of how each student is doing and makes it easier to offer assistance should the student change their mind during the course of a semester.
- Encourage your son or daughter to meet with the DS provider at least once more during the semester to check in and let us know if they need any additional services or assistance. Some good times are a few weeks before mid-term exams and evaluations, and a few weeks before finals and end-of-the-semester evaluations. Students are, of course, welcome any time. Some students choose to meet with the DS provider on a regular basis.
- Encourage your son or daughter to familiarize themselves with the contents of the DS webpage: <https://www.concordiacollege.edu/directories/offices-services/counseling-center-and-disability-services/disability/>
- Encourage your son or daughter to speak up for him or herself and to be his or her own best advocate.
- Encourage your son or daughter to meet regularly with his or her instructors to get feedback as to their progress in class, and to check in with their advisors as well.

Communication

While students may sign a release of information with Disability Services, the DS provider still communicates primarily with the student. In the past, parents may have communicated on the student's behalf in high school. College is a different environment in which each student needs to grow and develop their self-advocacy skills. We recommend that you discuss college life with your student if you are interested in knowing about his/her experiences. If you contact DS and would like to discuss concerns about your child, you are welcome to do so, but arrangements must be made with the DS provider for the student to be present in order to discuss any specific information regarding the student. The DS provider will be happy to speak with parents and answer any basic questions but will not share specific information about the student unless the student is present or has specifically requested the information be shared.

Services

- Time Management Skills
- Interpreting services for students with hearing impairments
- Note-taking services for eligible students
- Study skills
- Faculty education
- Alternate format of text (audio/large print)
- Readers
- Assistive technology/software (library)
- Adaptive equipment (tables, chairs, etc.)
- Housing accommodations
- Meal plan modification

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Categories of Accommodated Disabilities

- Learning Disabilities
- Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder
- Physical Disabilities: Hearing, Medical, Vision, Orthopedic, etc.
- Psychological/Emotional
- Pervasive Developmental Disorder

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Mailing Address

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Contact Information

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Hours of Operation

Academic Year: 8 am – 5 pm, Monday through Friday
Closed during holidays and recesses

Summer (mid-May – mid-August): Closed; messages checked periodically