

Transition Tips for Parents of Students with Special Needs

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Encourage your child to attend his or her Pupil Evaluation or 504 meetings. Make sure your son or daughter understands the Pupil Evaluation/504 process and is an active participant in the discussions, particularly when transition plans are being developed.

- Review your child's documentation with him or her. Colleges frequently have specific guidelines for documenting different types of disabilities. Make sure your child's documentation meets these guidelines.
- Assist your child in understanding what his or her disability is and how it impacts on learning. Parents and students should have a strong working knowledge of the nature of the disability. Students must be able to articulate the information in the college setting.
- Encourage your child to advocate for himself or herself. It's time for you to step back and let your son or daughter speak up for his or her own needs.
- Start the admissions process early. Some of the anxiety will be diminished if the process is unhurried and well researched.
- Make contact with the college's disability support office prior to graduation. The office will be a great resource. Starting the disability registration and accommodation process early allows any problems with documentation to be resolved in a timely manner. It also helps to ensure that complex accommodation requests, such as print materials in alternative formats, can be arranged before classes begin.
- Support your child's desire for independence while encouraging the use of any necessary accommodations. Some students with disabilities do not want "special" services and would prefer to try on their own. Some students, having felt stigmatized by "special education" in high school, may resist registering for disability services at college.
- Use your influence wisely. If your child experiences academic difficulty, your first instinct may be to call the college. Students should be encouraged to avail themselves of the supports and services readily available on most campuses, such as learning assistance, tutoring, and counseling. Colleges want students to succeed, and students need to initiate contact with the available services. Talk with your child about any difficulties and encourage him or her to problem solve solutions and resources.
- Understand that this is a significant transition for you as a parent as well as for your child. Talk to other parents of students with disabilities. Be good to yourself. Pat yourself on the back and be proud of the work and success of your child's high school graduation.

Source: College Counseling Sourcebook, 4th Edition