



## Postsecondary Education for Students with IDD

Since the mid 1970's, U.S. legislation recognized the rights of children with intellectual disabilities and/or developmental disabilities (IDD) to receive an education. Historically, that education ended upon the completion of high school. Today, as communities strive to be inclusive to all people in all parts of life, colleges are opening their doors to individuals who in the past never considered higher education. The following are recommendations from *Think College* ([www.thinkcollege.net](http://www.thinkcollege.net)) to make college a reality.

- ❖ **Start planning early.** Use IEP meetings as early as 8th grade to set goals for high school and beyond. Decisions on courses taken in high school may determine eligibility for postsecondary options. Students should take an active role in goal setting. Transfer responsibility gradually from parent to student through the high school years to foster the independence needed to attend college.
- ❖ **Weigh the benefits of attending college.** All students, with and without disability, benefit from college in the areas of academics, personal skills, independence, self-advocacy, and new friendships. Students with IDD, especially, increase their self-confidence as they see themselves doing the same things their peers experience. All aspects of college life can contribute to the development of skills needed for successful adulthood, especially employment.
- ❖ **Consider what accommodations and supports are needed.** Students are not entitled to the same services in college as they are in high school. Students must demonstrate eligibility for accommodations by documenting a disability. Accommodations include alternative testing, note-taking, interpreting, laboratory/library assistance, reduced course load, assistive listening, and course waivers.
- ❖ **Consider program options.** There are three types of programs found at different colleges. The first type focuses on disability issues along with exposure to regular classes with appropriate supports. The second type is completely inclusive, where students with IDD are mainstreamed with regular classes. The third type has segregated classes designed specifically for students with similar disabilities. Students may also choose to audit classes, take individual classes for credit, enter a certificate program, enter a 2-year degree program, or enter a 4-year degree program.
- ❖ **Research financial aid options.** Most colleges require filing the Federal Financial Aid Application (FAFSA) as a first step. Non-degree-seeking students now qualify for Pell Grants, federal student loans, and work study. Financial aid may also be available through state Vocation Rehabilitation and the Social Security Administration.
- ❖ **Contact colleges early.** The application process is time consuming and complex. It may be wise to contact the Office of Disability Services before the Admissions Office. Visit the campus, sit in on a class, and talk informally to current students. If possible, students should take a college class while still in high school as part of the exploratory process.

### More Resources:

HEATH Resource Center, clearinghouse for postsecondary education for students with disabilities  
[http://www.heath.gwu.edu/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=blogcategory&id=12&Itemid=65](http://www.heath.gwu.edu/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=12&Itemid=65)

DO-IT, on-line tutorials for students and families preparing for college  
<http://www.washington.edu/doi/Brochures/Academics/cprep.html>

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