

Utilizing Accommodations in College

Communicating accommodation needs is different in high school versus college. In high school, students often rely on their parents to communicate support needs to teachers, administrators, and school counselors. In college, you are responsible for communicating with your instructors. The following information will help you learn how to use accommodations in college. This process may vary depending on the college you attend.

Register for Services and Supports

The first step is to register for services and supports through the person or office in charge of accommodations at the college. This office is often called the Disability Support Services (DSS) office but it may vary from college to college. DSS will determine if you are eligible for supports.

Submit Accommodation Request Form to DSS

Once you have registered and been found eligible for services and supports, the next step is to submit an accommodation request form to DSS. Submit this request several weeks before the start of a new semester. If you wait until the last minute, you may not have accommodations in place for the new semester. Keep in mind, you must request an up-to-date copy of your accommodation letter each semester.

This accommodation letter notifies your instructors that you are registered with DSS and you are entitled to the accommodations identified. It is important to know that your specific disability diagnosis will NOT be listed on this letter. Any information related to your disability is considered confidential and is kept at DSS.

Communicate Your Accommodation Needs

You are the person responsible for communicating your accommodation needs with each instructor. The DSS office will not contact your instructors to share your accommodation needs. It will be up to you to disclose this information to receive accommodations. Remember, an instructor is not required to make any accommodations without an accommodations letter!

Use Your Accommodations in Class

Collaborate with DSS and your instructors to receive your approved accommodations. For example, you may have the accommodation for extra time on tests. If so, talk to your instructor before the test and discuss how and when you can use this extra time.

Speak up and advocate for yourself. Contact the DSS office if you are not receiving the accommodations that you and your instructor have agreed upon. Your list of accommodations is not set in stone. You may feel you need different or additional accommodations. If so, meet with a DSS counselor to discuss your needs.

What You Can Do Now in High School

Become comfortable with your disability

Did you know that only 35% of students with disabilities choose to disclose their disability in college? (Newman & Madaus, 2014). A lack of acceptance of your disability can create barriers in college. One key to success is understanding your strengths and abilities and accepting your challenges and needs.

Gather and review your disability documentation

This documentation may include your IEP, standardized tests, or medical assessments. Ask your high school case manager for the most recent copies and read through the summary and any recommendations. Talk with your family and case manager to identify your academic strengths. Discuss the accommodations, compensatory strategies, or technology that can support you.

Practice self-advocacy

Ask your high school teacher for the accommodations that you need. Take charge and take part in your IEP meeting. Discuss your educational experiences and your strengths, disability, barriers, and use of accommodations. This will prepare you for advocating for these supports in a college or work environment. Prepare to assume more responsibility and advocate for yourself now!

Conclusion

When you transition to college, you will be responsible for requesting accommodations. Remember to communicate your accommodation needs with your instructors each semester. Using your accommodations will help to put you on the path to academic success in college.