

Preparing for Columbus State Community College: A Guide for Students with Disabilities

As a student with disabilities, you face unique considerations as you plan for college. To help you address these issues, Disability Services at Columbus State Community College (CSCC) has developed these steps for you to follow.

Step 1: Understand the importance of self-advocacy

Becoming a self-advocate in high school will help you succeed in college. In college, *you* will be responsible for identifying and requesting support services. Parents are not automatically involved with your college education, and most colleges (including CSCC) prefer working directly with the student.

As a “**self-advocate**” you communicate your needs with logical and positive language. To be an effective self-advocate, you must understand your disability, know how it impacts your learning, and become comfortable with describing your disability and academic-related needs to others. Follow these tips for becoming a self-advocate:

Review your case file with your parents and Individual Education Plan (IEP) team to better understand your disability and its effect on your learning. Ask for copies of your IEP and other assessment reports. Ask these questions:

- What is my disability?
- How does it affect how I learn?
- What are my academic strengths?
- How do I learn best?
- What strategies can I use to help me learn?

Consider meeting with the doctor or school psychologist who performed your assessment (testing) for the terms needed to explain your disability.

Take an active part in the discussions at your IEP meetings. Understanding your learning strengths and weaknesses gives you valuable knowledge that can influence your IEP planning and the services you may request in college.

Before each IEP meeting:

- Understand the purpose of the meeting.
- Know who will be there and their role at the meeting.
- Review the report from your last IEP meeting. Understand the goals listed on the report.
- Practice saying how you accomplished the goals.
- Establish new goals and be prepared to state them.

At the IEP meeting:

- Summarize your past goals and accomplishments.
- State your new goals.
- Ask for ideas and feedback from other members.
- Know what support and help you will need to accomplish your goals - and ask for it.
- Ask questions if you don't understand.

Step 2: Explore your career options

- Ask your school counselor or school transition specialist about career interest inventories and a vocational assessment to help you identify your career interests. Ask how your learning needs may influence these career areas.
- Discuss career options with your parents, friends, and people working in jobs that interest you. Look into job shadowing, attend local career fairs, and explore volunteer opportunities in your areas of interest.
- Become involved in extracurricular activities. Volunteer and paid work can teach responsibility, reliability and teamwork. A part-time job is also a good way to earn money for college.

Step 3: Prepare for college entrance and placement exams

- **ACT/SAT entrance exams**
Students typically take the ACT and/or SAT entrance exams in the spring of their junior year and again in the fall of their senior year. Details about requesting accommodations for the ACT and the SAT can be found at the end of this document.
- **ACCUPLACER and ALEKS**
Test-taking accommodations also apply to the ACCUPLACER (Reading, Writing, & Science) and ALEKS (Math) placement tests – a series of short placement exams often required by community colleges, including Columbus State Community College. These exams are designed to help identify your strengths and needs.

Step 4: Apply for admission and financial aid

Ask about deadlines and the process for applying for admission, financial aid and college-based scholarships. Ask about scholarships that may be available for students with disabilities. CSCC Disability Services has a list if you are interested.

Step 5: Request Services

Keep in mind that you will receive services related to a disability only if you contact Disability Services, provide required documentation, and request services.

- **Gather required documentation**

Columbus State Community College requires documentation of a disability to determine eligibility for services. Obtain copies of your **IEP (Individualized Education Plan)**, **ETR (Evaluative Team Report)**, or other appropriate documentation.

- **Update your tests.** Work with your high-school to have your tests updated the last year you receive accommodations. Disability testing after high-school graduation can be expensive.
- **Request a copy of your high school IEP before you graduate.** If you had an IEP in high school, that means you were tested by the school psychologist or a medical doctor.
- **Contact Disability Services at 614-287-2570.** If you do not have an IEP or ETR, ask what you will need to provide to receive appropriate services in a timely manner.

- **Submit your documentation**

You may fax (614-287-6054), email (dsdocumentation@csc.edu), or drop off your documentation in person to the Disability Services office (Eibling Hall, 101).

- **Check your CSCC email often**

After reviewing your documentation, a Disability Services Advocate will email you to let you know it's time to make an appointment for an intake interview.

- **Meet with a Disability Services Advocate**

During this meeting, you and your advocate will discuss how your disability impacts your learning and determine possible accommodations. The law does NOT state that all students with a disability must receive ALL accommodations.

- Although CSCC may not always agree to your request for a specific accommodation, we are required by law to provide an effective accommodation. Determining effective accommodations may involve experimenting and making adjustments.

Step 6: Become familiar with the campus environment

- **Register for campus orientation.** You may request accommodations for campus orientation.
- **Determine where to go and who to contact in case of an emergency.** If you have special needs (especially medical needs) inform appropriate college personnel of any advance preparation that should be in place.
- **Obtain a copy of your class schedule** and visit all buildings where your classes will be held to become familiar with locations and layout.
- **Become familiar with parking facilities and procedures** if you will drive yourself.
- **Consider signing a release of information** so the school has permission to share information with your parents.

Potential accommodations for students with disabilities include:

- Student Advocacy
- Testing Accommodations (scribe, audio, extended time, adjustable height desks, etc.)
- Assistive Technology
- Alternate Media (E-text, Braille, Large print)
- Sign Language Interpreting
- Captioning Services
- Note-Taking Accommodations
- Resources on Disability Issues
- Other Services based on need

Legal Rights and Responsibilities for Students with Disabilities

By understanding your rights and responsibilities, you will know what you need to do, and what the college is required to do, for you to have an equal opportunity for success.

Federal Laws

The following is a description of laws and how they pertain to you as a college student with a disability.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

This civil rights statute is designed to prevent discrimination against persons with disabilities, as amended in 1990. It provides that:

- No **otherwise qualified** individual with disabilities in the United States shall, solely by reason of his/her disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.
- This law requires that postsecondary schools be prepared to make **appropriate accommodations** and **reasonable modifications** to their college's procedures and practices, so that you can fully participate in the same programs and activities that are available to students without disabilities.

The Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is also a civil rights law. It helps to implement and enforce Section 504, and also outlines additional protections. While Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act states that public institutions cannot discriminate on the basis of disability if they receive federal funds, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 states that with or without federal funds, public institutions cannot discriminate on the basis of disability. Private colleges and universities are covered under the ADA, unless they are completely owned and operated by religious organizations.

Concerns Related to Disability Issues

Some individual instructors are not familiar with ADA or Section 504 requirements, or with the purpose of accommodating students with disabilities. Disability Services Advocates can serve as a liaison between you and the instructor, and can advocate for reasonable accommodations.

If you cannot resolve your situation, your Advocate can direct you to the appropriate personnel who will guide you through Columbus State Community College's grievance process.

You also have the right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights for investigation. You must submit the complaint within 180 days of the alleged discrimination. Contact information can be found online.