



Disability Disclosure in College and the Law

What the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) says about Disability Disclosure:

- Under the ADA, both public and private colleges are required to protect students with disabilities from discrimination and give equal access to their programs
- Both public and private colleges must provide equal access to postsecondary education for students with disabilities. However, faculty and staff are not required to provide accommodations to students who have chosen not to disclose their disability
 - Example: Jaime needs extra time to take his exams. He will need to disclose his disability to the Office of Disability Services. If he does not disclose his disability, his professor doesn't have to give him extra time.

What Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act says about Disability Disclosure:

- Section 504 is a law that protects the rights of individuals with disabilities from discrimination in a public program that receives money from the government
- In college programs, Section 504 also allows for a “qualified individual” to receive accommodations and supports to make the program accessible
- A “qualified individual” is any student who meets the same admission requirements as students without disabilities and has a physical or mental impairment which significantly limits one or more major life activities
 - Example: Elisha earned a 3.0 GPA in high school and scored a 20 on her ACT. She meets the admission requirements for the college she wants to attend. Elisha has a disability that requires her to need extra time to complete assignments and tests, so she will need to disclose her disability in order to be approved to receive accommodations in college.
- A student with a disability is responsible for deciding what aspects of their disability they want to keep private
- The student may need to fully disclose their disability to the Office of Disability Services, but the student is not required to share all details about their disability with their professor

It is most helpful to provide information about:

- How the disability impacts your learning
- The environment, services, and supports you need in order to access and succeed in your classes



Main Ideas About Disability Disclosure

- Colleges are not required to give them same level of services as high school
- Colleges provide accommodations, but they are not required to provide you with the same services or accommodations as you had in high school
 - Example: In high school, Mason went to a small group for extra reading practice three times a week. When he got to college, Disability Services told him that he would qualify for extra time and a text-to-speech accommodation, but they do not provide small group instruction.
- Students must have knowledge about their disability and be able to advocate for accommodations that are needed
- If students choose to disclose their disability, they should contact their college's Disability Services Office
 - Different schools may use different names for this office, for example: Student Services, Student Access Services, etc.
- Students must disclose their disability to the Disability Services Office in order to obtain accommodations, but they do not have to disclose any details to their professors
- Students are financially responsible for providing current testing or up-to-date documentation that shows that the student has a disability
 - Example: Jessie had a report and medical diagnosis that explains that she has a learning disability. It is 5 years old, so her college requests updated information. This means that Jessie has to pay for the testing and in order to qualify for accommodations at her college.
- It is recommended to disclose your disability as soon as possible
- Waiting to disclose your disability until you realize you need accommodations could make it challenging to get them arranged and ready to access when needed