



Differences Between High School and Postsecondary Accommodations

There are several differences between receiving accommodations during high school and during postsecondary education. The following outlines important information to know about these differences and the documentation students must provide to receive accommodations at a postsecondary level.

What are the differences between high school and postsecondary accommodations that the student should plan for?

- The reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 apply to high school students, but the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA), and Section 504 apply to students in higher education. Neither IDEA nor IEPs (mandated by IDEA) are applicable as students transition to college. Even Section 504 has many different provisions for colleges than are in place for K-12 schools. K-12 schools are legally required to guarantee all students successfully obtain a Free Appropriate Public Education, while higher education schools are only legally required to provide students with access to the program.
- In high school, students receive accommodations simply through eligibility for IEP or Section 504 services. In postsecondary settings, students must disclose their disability to the office of disability services in order to be eligible to receive accommodations.
- If the approved accommodations will fundamentally alter a course, test, or assignment, the student may not be able to utilize the accommodations even though they are eligible for them. For example, a student may be eligible to take tests in a distraction-free setting. If the student takes a drama course, an assessment could be performing a scene with several classmates. The student would not be able to use the test location accommodation since performing independently would fundamentally alter the assessment.

What documentation do students need to provide during disability disclosure?

- Though the specific documents may differ by institution, the following information applies to most community colleges and colleges of applied technology. If a student has a specific learning disability or intellectual impairment, the community college/TCAT will only accept the student's most recent, complete psycho-educational test report. If a student has any other type of disability (such as a physical disability, emotional disability, health impairment, etc.) a community college/TCAT will accept either a most recent, complete psycho-educational test report or a diagnostic narrative from the student's specialist. A diagnostic narrative is a detailed letter from a doctor or specialist that works with the student that identifies the student's disability and the different ways the student's disability is most likely to impact them



in the classroom. An IEP or other school plan (504) may also be submitted to substantiate the use of specific accommodations but generally will not suffice as a student's primary documentation of disability.

Will students' approved accommodations for college level classes always be different than their IEP accommodations?

- Not necessarily. In fact, the majority of students' college level accommodations are the same ones included in their IEPs or 504 Plans. The only exceptions are accommodations that would fundamentally alter the essential components of a course or field of study, such as modified tests, coursework assignments, or those accommodations that are not "logically" related to the specific academic needs. These types of accommodations are generally not accepted at community colleges or TCATs. In high school, students receive accommodations simply through eligibility for IEP or Section 504 services. In postsecondary settings, students must disclose their disability to the office of disability services in order to be eligible to receive accommodations.

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