

Post-Secondary Education and Training

The Big Ideas:

Post-secondary education and training
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
Americans with Disabilities Act
Reasonable accommodations
Two year colleges
Four year colleges and universities
Vocational schools

What is post-secondary education and training?

“Post” means after and “secondary” school is high school. So post-secondary education and training is where you go to keep learning after high school.

You don’t stop learning new skills when you graduate. Post-secondary education and training has to do with what you learn – and where you go to do that learning – after you leave high school. For many people, going on for more education is a good way to get the life they want. That’s because for some jobs you need to have taken college classes, or have a college degree, or you need to have already learned certain skills. Post-secondary education and training programs can teach you what you need to know to start a new career. They can also be a good way to meet new people, and try out new things you’re interested in.

In the past, young people with disabilities were often told that post-secondary education and training programs weren’t for them. But that’s changing. There are some important laws you should know about that are meant to help people with disabilities get the education and training they need after high school.

What are the laws have to do with post-secondary education and training?

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), are important laws that support the rights of people with disabilities to participate in post-secondary education and training programs.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act makes it clear that post-secondary programs cannot keep anyone out of their programs *just because* they have a disability. Section 504 basically says that if you have a disability *and* you have done what you have to do to get into that program (for example, have finished high school, have taken the courses you were supposed to take, got high enough grades, etc.), the program must give you the supports you need so that you can participate in the program along with the other students.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) says that people with disabilities must be able to use all public programs and services. This means that people with disabilities must be able to get into buildings and classrooms (that's what ramps, handicapped bathrooms, reserved spaces in parking lots, etc. are for). The ADA also says that programs must make information about their programs accessible. For example, if a program uses the internet for communication, students with adaptive technology must be able to use that web-site.

What are some accommodations that might be available for post-secondary education and training?

Reasonable accommodations are the supports that a post-secondary education and training program provide qualified students with disabilities so that they can participate in the program.

Under Section 504 and the ADA, post-secondary programs have to provide "reasonable accommodations." This means they have to provide supports so that students with disabilities who are qualified to be in the program (that means students who have done what they need to do to be accepted into the program, and can do the work that is required) have the same chance as everyone else to learn from the program. It does not mean that the program has to change its academic standards (what courses, grades, etc. are required). Some reasonable accommodations might include:

- Changes to the way the classroom is set up
- More time to take tests
- Sign-language interpreters, note-takers, and readers
- Assistive technology services

Post-secondary programs are not required to provide personal devices such as wheelchairs, hearing aids or glasses, or personal services such as assistance with eating, toileting, dressing, etc.

Who do I talk with about my support needs at the college?

Four year colleges, as well as community colleges, are required to have an office that handles services for students with disabilities. They are called by different names like the Disability Services Office, Office of Differing Ability Services, etc. The important difference between the services and supports you receive in high school (the things described in your IEP) and the supports that post-secondary schools are required to provide, is that **you must apply and be found eligible for the supports in post-secondary schools.**

Another important difference is that you must be able to advocate for the supports you need to be successful. There won't be a case manager or teacher who is taking care of all that for you; it will be up to you to let the post-secondary school know what you need. The things you have been learning about yourself throughout this workbook and the information you have been collecting in your portfolio will help you advocate effectively for yourself.

Being an effective self-advocate in post-secondary programs means:

- Knowing yourself and understanding your disability
- Knowing your rights and responsibilities
- Knowing where to go to get help
- Taking action

Whether you decide to go to a four year college or a community college, if you want to receive supports you will have to register with the office that handles services for students with disabilities. That office will ask that you provide professional documentation (usually written information from doctors and schools) of your disability.

Activity:

- Either on your own, or with your classmates, identify items that could be considered professional documentation of your disability.

1.	_____

2.	_____

3.	_____

4.	_____

5.	_____

6.	_____

7.	_____

8.	_____

What will the college do with the professional documentation?

The professional documentation is what you will use to show the college how your support needs are related to your disability. In other words, the documentation will explain what your disability is, and why the supports you are requesting are necessary for you to participate in the program. Some disability services offices will conduct their own assessments to help identify your support needs, but remember, **it's your responsibility to know and request the supports you need.**

Activity:

- Either on your own, or with your classmates, think about the supports you may need to be successful in post-secondary education and training. Complete the following table:
 - In the first column, list a support you may need.
 - In the second column, identify the documents that show you need this support (list anywhere from one to three kinds of documentation).
 - In the third and fourth columns, either check off that you already have this documentation in your portfolio, or that you still have to get it for your portfolio.
- **PORTFOLIO:** When you get this documentation, make sure you add it to the section for “Official Information”.

Activity (cont.):

Support I may need	Documents that show I need this support	Already have in my portfolio	Still have to get for my portfolio
1.	1a.		
	1b.		
	1c.		

Activity (cont.):

Support I may need	Documents that show I need this support	Already have in my portfolio	Still have to get for my portfolio
2.	2a.		
	2b.		
	2c.		

What happens after I let the college know what I need, and give them the correct documentation?

Based on the information you give them, the post-secondary program will make a decision about the supports they will provide. They will usually send a letter to your teachers describing these supports. However, **never assume that your teachers know what supports you need.** Always meet with your teachers before classes start to introduce yourself and to share information about your disability and the supports the program has approved.

What are the differences between kinds of post-secondary schools?

- **Two year colleges:** Two year colleges are usually community colleges with open admissions policies (they don't select students based on grades, test scores, etc.). They generally have affordable tuition. They are good places for students who:
 - Need vocational or technical training for specific jobs
 - Want to take selected courses that interest them
 - Want to get a two-year or Associate's degree
 - Want to develop their academic skills and transfer to a four year college
- **Four year colleges and universities:** Most students at four year colleges or universities get a Bachelor's degree. These colleges focus on learning and thinking skills that can be used for many different kinds of work. They don't usually have the specific job skills training that two-year colleges offer. Tuition and other costs are often higher than at two year colleges.

- **Vocational schools:** Vocational schools teach students what they need to know for jobs that require specific skills, such as auto mechanic, medical assistant, electronics technician, beautician, etc. Some schools will help you to find jobs when you are done your training. Private vocational schools can be expensive, so it's a good idea to look into getting the same kind of training at a local community college (which might be cheaper). Instead of going to school, some people learn new job skills by working with someone who can teach them what they need to know.

How do I know which college is the right one for me?

There are many different options for colleges. Here are some things you should think about when looking for the college that is right for you:

- **Course of study:** Can I get the education and skills at this school for the kind of work I want to do?
- **Location:** Will I live at home, or live at the college? If I want to live at home, how will I get to the college?
- **Admission requirements:** Do I have the coursework and grades to be admitted to this school?
- **Cost:** Can I afford to go to this college? Do I qualify for Financial Aid (money to help pay for college)?
- **Campus life:** What are the other students like? What do students do with their free time? What does the campus look like? Does the place *feel* right for me?
- **Disability-related supports:** Are there other students with disabilities attending this school? How easy will it be to have my support needs met?

Who at my high school should I be talking to about colleges?

The guidance counselor at your high school will be an important support as you look for the post-secondary program that is right for you. You should start meeting with your counselor in 9th grade, or as soon after that as possible, so that you are sure to take the classes you need. You also want to make sure you take any tests the colleges you might want to go to require (for example, the SATs). Ask your guidance counselor for information about specific colleges that have the kinds of things you're interested in.

Learning from Leaders

Judith Heumann believes that the U.S. Constitution guarantees equal access and opportunity for all individuals with disabilities. With that belief in mind, she helped develop the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). She also helped develop the law that created Independent Living Centers.

Heumann became sick with polio when she was 18 months old, and as a wheelchair user in the 1950's faced a lot of discrimination. She was not allowed to attend a public school until the 4th grade and, as an adult, she had to take the New York City public schools to court to win the right to work as teacher. Heumann went on to become Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) for the federal government. In this position, she helped oversee programs that serve millions of children and adults with disabilities throughout the country. Heumann also helped to establish the World Institute on Disability, the first research center devoted to disability issues.

Questions to think about:

1. What do you think it means to have "equal opportunities?"
2. Go to <http://www.ada.gov/> to learn more about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
3. Why do you think it's important to have laws like the American with Disabilities Act?

Jerry's Story:

Jerry is 19 years old and a recent high school graduate. Jerry has a learning disability. In high school, Jerry got special help with note taking. He also got extra time for taking tests. Now he is attending his local community college. He met with the Disability Services Office and they agreed that he should have the same types of supports he had in high school.

Jerry is taking four classes. He hasn't made any arrangement for help with note taking, and is finding it hard to listen to his teachers and take careful notes at the same time. When his mother reminds him to talk to his teachers about this, Jerry says, "No way! They'll think I'm stupid."

Jerry took a test in his history class. He knew the material, but didn't ask for the extra time he needed. He failed the test. Now he feels really frustrated.

Activity:

- Either on your own, or with your classmates, think about Jerry's story and answer the following questions:

What kinds of supports helped Jerry in high school? _____

Jerry has already met with the Disability Services Office at the college and it was decided that he should have the same types of supports he had in high school. Why isn't he getting those supports?

What should Jerry do to solve this problem? Is it something he can do by himself, or does he need some help? If he needs some help, who might be able to help him? _____

Let's Review:

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are two laws that prevent discrimination against students with disabilities and give those students equal access to post-secondary programs.
- Accommodations are supports that give students with disabilities the same chance as everyone else to benefit from education or training. Some examples of accommodations include: installing a wheelchair ramp, getting more time to take a test, using adaptive technology, having a note taker, etc. Reasonable accommodations do *not* mean that post-secondary education programs have to change their academic standards.
- Four year colleges and universities and community colleges are required to have an office that coordinates services for students with disabilities. You must apply to the Disability Services Office and be found eligible in order to receive the supports you need.
- Effective self-advocacy is an important skill in post-secondary programs.
- Once you have been found eligible, meet with your teachers to make sure they understand what supports you need to be successful.
- You have many options for post-secondary education, including two and four year colleges and vocational schools.

Additional Activities:

- Go to www.careeronestop.org and click on the CareerInfo Net webpage. You can use this website to explore different careers. Look at some of the Career Videos on this page. If you find a Career that looks interesting, find out what kind of education and/or training you would need to be successful in this career.
- Make an appointment with your guidance counselor to talk about your options for post-secondary education and training.
- Talk to people about what kind of post-secondary education or training they needed to get and keep their jobs.
- Attend a career fair and see what kinds of jobs are available and what kind of education or training employers are looking for.
- Talk to a recent high school graduate who is attending college. Ask him about the admissions process, what his courses are like, and what he thinks about college life.
- Arrange to visit a college campus and meet with someone in the Disability Services Office. Ask about what sort of professional documentation is required.
 - **PORTFOLIO: When you get this documentation, make sure to put it in the section for “Official Information.”**

Using What You've Learned

1. Take out the worksheet, “What Kind of Support Would Be Most Helpful?” Write down a post-secondary education and training goal you’d like to work on or a problem you’d like to solve.
2. Write down one or more things you have to do to reach that goal or solve that problem.
3. Are these things you can do on your own, or do you think you need some help?
4. If there’s something you can do on your own, fill out the worksheet called, “My To Do List.”
5. If there’s something you need help with, write down who or what might be most helpful to you on the “What Kind of Support Would Be Most Helpful?” worksheet.
6. Depending on which kind of support you decide to try first, fill out the worksheet for getting natural, community or formal supports. Also, don’t forget to think about what kind of assistive technology and environmental adaptations might be helpful.
7. Once you’ve gotten the supports you need, fill out the worksheet for “Evaluating and Managing My Supports.”
8. Remember to thank the people who support you!
9. If a problem comes up that you cannot seem to find a solution to, go back to the “What Kind of Support Would Be Most Helpful?” worksheet to see if there is someone or something else that would be more helpful.