

WOR-WIC
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**Disability Services
Handbook**



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Quick Facts

Who?

For students with disabilities and their families, please contact our Academic and Disabilities Counselor to request accommodations, information about accommodations, or other resources:

Karen Mohler, Academic & Disabilities Counselor

kmohler@worwic.edu

410-334-2899

Where?

Reasonable accommodations provided at Wor-Wic Community College, in the classroom and online. The Disability Services Office is in Maner Technology Center (MTC) Room 103.

What?

Reasonable accommodations and other resources for students with disabilities.

Why?

To prevent discrimination and ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to Wor-Wic's exceptional programs, services, and activities.

When?

Reasonable accommodations and other resources for students with disabilities can be arranged within a flexible, customizable timeframe by contacting Wor-Wic's Academic and Disabilities Counselor.

How?

Please refer to the Steps to Receiving Reasonable Accommodations section of this handbook.

Overview

Wor-Wic Community College provides reasonable accommodations for individuals with documented disabilities, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. *The college does not diagnose or treat disabilities but does provide reasonable accommodations to ensure that students with documented disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate in Wor-Wic's programs.* Students requesting these reasonable accommodations must submit medical and/ or educational documentation during the intake meeting with the Academic and Disabilities Counselor. Text, voice, and computer modem users can call Wor-Wic toll free through the Maryland Relay Service by calling 1-800-552-7724 or 410-767-6960 (Voice/TTY) or 1-443-453-5970 (Video Phone). To request an accommodation or for more information, call the Academic and Disabilities Counselor at 410-334-2899.

Welcome

Dear Student,

Welcome to Wor-Wic Community College! We hope that services available through the Disability Services Office will prove to be a valuable resource in helping you achieve your academic goals.

Our office coordinates services for students with a documented disability. It is our goal to help our students achieve success while attending Wor-Wic Community College. Our office provides individual support to students with disabilities.

We understand that each student is unique, and we want to support our students with reasonable accommodations. This handbook is designed to assist you in understanding your rights and responsibilities as a student, as well as help you understand the institution's legal obligations for students accessing reasonable accommodations on our campus.

We wish you the best of luck at Wor-Wic Community College and beyond, and we look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Karen Mohler
Academic & Disabilities Counselor
kmohler@worwic.edu

Types of Reasonable Accommodations

Based on an evaluation of your needs, you may be eligible for the following reasonable accommodations:

- **Special testing:** You may be given more time or allowed to test in a different location, most often the testing center.
- **Voice recording device:** You may voice record classroom lectures. Video recording is not allowed.
- **Kurzweil software:** Printed material can be read out loud to you by a computer program for testing.
- **Assistive technology for visual impairments: Computer programs that enlarge print.**
- **Sign language interpretation**
- **Other reasonable accommodations**

Reasonable accommodations do not include personal care attendants, private tutors, or waiving of required coursework.

Additional Resources

Hours vary by semester. Please refer to the college website.

- **Tutoring Center:** Brunkhorst Hall 320 (BH 320)
- **Math Lab:** Brunkhorst Hall 225 (BH 225)
- **Reading & Writing Center:** Brunkhorst Hall 227 (BH 227)

Steps to Receiving Reasonable Accommodations

Note: The Disability Services Office works with currently enrolled students. If you are a future student, please come back to these steps once you have enrolled in coursework.

STEP 1

Schedule an intake meeting with the Academic and Disabilities Counselor. This is done by visiting <https://worwic.elluciancrmadvise.com/StudentSelfService> and selecting "Requesting Accommodations for a Disability". Our Academic and Disabilities Counselor will reach out to students to schedule the meeting.

STEP 2

Gather documents detailing the disability and bring them to the intake meeting.

- Medical and/ or psychological
- Current
- And must substantiate the need for an accommodation

*An IEP or 504 is sufficient.

*Once we receive any type of documents, we cannot rerelease them to the student for any reason.

STEP 3

Intake meeting. During the meeting, students will complete necessary forms to receive reasonable accommodations. The Academic and Disabilities Counselor will also answer all questions. Only the student should attend this intake meeting.

ADDITIONAL STEPS

Further steps are discussed during the intake meeting and will vary from student-to-student.

Talking to Instructors

Wor-Wic Community College students are responsible for speaking with instructors about reasonable accommodations.

- The Disability Services Office values student confidentiality. Instructors are made aware of reasonable accommodations when students provide them the Memorandum of Accommodations provided by our office. The nature of a student's disability and/or diagnoses is not disclosed unless the student grants us permission.
- It is important for students to talk with their instructors. Students should contact instructors during the **first two weeks** of the semester to discuss reasonable accommodations.
- **Special testing:** If a student is requesting special testing, it is their responsibility to ask instructors for these reasonable accommodations at least one class prior to testing.

PLEASE NOTE

- Wor-Wic Community College is not permitted to speak with instructors on behalf of students. If there is an issue that needs to be discussed with an instructor and a student needs assistance with that discussion, the student should contact the Academic and Disabilities Counselor.
- Should a student decline approved reasonable accommodations of extended time and testing site, the instructor will note this, and the student may take a quiz or exam without reasonable accommodations. *A student may not come back after taking the initial exam and request to retake the quiz or exam with the reasonable accommodations.*

Safety and Security

The college strives to provide students and employees with a learning and working environment that is safe and secure, free from substance abuse, sex offenses and other crimes. Policies and procedures are developed to meet this goal and to comply with federal, state, and local laws that govern the conduct of students and employees at college facilities or at college-sponsored events. Specific policies and procedures related to safety and security are provided in Appendix E of the college catalog.

An annual security report, which contains policies and procedures regarding campus security, alcohol and drug use, safety and crime prevention tips, crime reporting procedures and crime statistics, is available to all students and employees and prospective students and employees. A copy of the report can be obtained by contacting the public safety department at 410-334-2937.

Message for Students and Faculty Members

College classes cannot be interrupted to communicate with students or faculty members, except in the event of a medical emergency.

A message received at the college information desk is defined as a medical emergency when it is received by telephone or in-person from a verifiable licensed physician, nurse, police officer or other emergency medical personnel. All such communications are immediately transferred to the dean of enrollment management and student services or a college public safety officer. In these situations, the class or laboratory is interrupted by an appropriate official of the college, who contacts and assists the student or faculty member, or follows any specific instructions provided.

Other urgent (non-medical emergency) communications require specific information from the individual providing the information before arranging for a college public safety officer to post the message with the name of the student or faculty member to whom the message is directed, in an area clearly visible on the window of the door of the appropriate classroom or laboratory. Any unclaimed messages are discarded as soon as the room has been vacated.

Discrimination and Harassment

Discrimination and harassment can seriously damage the integrity of an educational institution, destroy the institution's positive work and educational atmosphere and cause psychological and physiological damage to the victims. The college condemns such activity and is strongly committed to promoting a work and academic environment free from discrimination and harassment and to addressing and resolving complaints in a timely fashion.

Wor-Wic Community College does not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, color, religion, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, genetic information, gender identity, disability, income level, limited English proficiency or any other characteristic protected by law

in the admission and treatment of students, access to educational programs and activities, and the terms and conditions of employment.

This policy applies to all students, employees, visitors and third party vendors who are hired by the college. This policy covers any prohibited conduct that occurs on campus or off-campus when conducting college business or is circulated at or from the college, during college operating hours or using college equipment, via email, phone, voice mail, text messages, tweets, blog posts, social networking sites or other means.

Definitions, supportive measures, and investigation and disciplinary procedures related to sexual misconduct are available on the college website, as well as in the college catalog (for students) and the policies and procedures manual (for employees).

Discrimination and harassment questions and complaints should be submitted to Wor-Wic's Title VI and IX coordinators and discrimination investigators.

Student complaints:

Dr. Deirdra G. Johnson
Dean of Enrollment Management and
Student Services
Wor-Wic Community College
MTC 103D
32000 Campus Drive
Salisbury, MD 21804
410-334-2902
djohnson@worwic.edu

Employee complaints:

Karen Berkheimer
Executive director of human resources
Wor-Wic Community College
BH 107
32000 Campus Drive
Salisbury, MD 21804
410-334-2915
kberkheimer@worwic.edu

Student Records

Any currently-enrolled or former student, as well as anyone the student wishes to accompany him or her, may review his or her own student record in a private meeting with the registrar or the dean of continuing education and workforce development. However, students do not have access to confidential materials such as the recommendations of high school principals or counselors. Also, unless authorized by their parents, students do not have access to confidential financial statements made by their parents to support financial aid requests.

Questions regarding the accuracy or appropriateness of materials in a student's records should be referred to the registrar (registrar@worwic.edu) or the dean of continuing education and workforce development (rbaker@worwic.edu). A student who believes information in his or her record is inaccurate, misleading or in violation of his or her right to privacy may make a written request that his or her record be amended. If the student's request to amend his or her record is not justified, in the judgment of the registrar or dean of continuing education and workforce development, the registrar or dean informs the student of this in writing, and advises the student that he or she can appeal to the vice president for enrollment management and student services (for credit students) or the vice president for academic affairs (for continuing education students). The decision of the vice president is provided to the student in writing, along with a statement indicating that the student can request a hearing by the president of the college. If the president decides the record is not to be amended, the student is informed of his or her right to place a statement in the file indicating that the student's record has been contested. This statement remains in the student's file and is disclosed to anyone to whom the contested file is disclosed. The student is also informed of his or her right to file a complaint under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act by writing to the Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave, SW, Washington, DC, 20202-8520.

Disability Grievance Policy

This disability grievances policy meets the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This policy applies to all students, employees, visitors and third-party vendors hired by the college that wish to file a grievance alleging discrimination specifically on the basis of disability in the admission and treatment of students, access to educational programs and activities, services provided by the college and the terms and conditions of employment. Reasonable accommodations can be denied if it causes undue hardship to the college. The college reserves the right to redirect a grievance to the proper grievance procedure or to any other appropriate review procedure when applicable.

Grievances should be submitted as soon as possible but no later than 60 calendar days after the alleged violation to Wor-Wic's ADA coordinators and investigators.

Grievances by students, visitors, or third-party vendors:

Michael Webber
Director of Student Success
Wor-Wic Community College
MTC 103A
32000 Campus Drive
Salisbury, MD 21804
410-334-2993
mwebber@worwic.edu

Grievances by employees or prospective employees:

Karen Berkheimer
Executive director of human resources
Wor-Wic Community College
BH 107
32000 Campus Drive
Salisbury, MD 21804
410-334-2915
kberkheimer@worwic.edu

Informal Grievance Procedures

Members of the college community who have a grievance can first attempt to resolve the grievance informally. All grievants should first attempt to discuss the matter orally or in writing with the individual most directly responsible. If no resolution results, or the grievant feels that direct contact is inappropriate under the circumstances, grievants can contact the appropriate ADA coordinator. If the grievant is grieving determinations or actions of the academic and disabilities counselor, the grievant can contact the dean of enrollment management and student services. If the grievant is grieving determinations or actions of the human resources administrator, the grievant can contact the executive director of human resources.

If a satisfactory resolution is not achieved within 30 days, the ADA coordinator, dean of enrollment management and student services or executive director of human resources informs the grievant of his or her right to file a formal grievance.

Formal Grievance Procedures

If no satisfactory resolution is reached after informal attempts to resolve the grievance are made, or if the individual chooses to bypass the informal grievance process, he or she can

submit a written grievance. Investigations of grievances are conducted to ensure adequacy, reliability and impartiality. If the grievant attempts to resolve the matter informally and that attempt has failed, or the grievant decides to end the informal process for any other reason, the grievant has 10 days from the time they receive notice from the ADA coordinator stating that informal attempts have failed in order to file a formal grievance. A listing of all meetings and/or written attempts to resolve the issue informally must be included with the formal grievance. The grievance must be in writing and contain information about the alleged discrimination. The college does not review a grievance that is untimely or fails to contain all required information. To facilitate a clear and prompt resolution, once initiated, a grievance cannot be expanded beyond the issues presented in the individual's initial grievance. The written grievance must include the following:

1. Location, date, full description of the grievance, and any relevant facts;
2. A summary of the steps the grievant has already taken in his or her attempt to resolve the grievance, including the names of people involved;
3. A statement of the requested resolution and the grievant's rationale for the requested accommodations for each perceived violation;
4. Any supporting documentation; and
5. Name, address, contact information and signature of the person initiating the grievance.

Alternative means of filing grievances, such as personal interviews or a tape recording of the grievance, are made available for persons with disabilities upon request.

Student or Third-Party Grievances

- When the grievance by a student, visitor or third-party alleges harassment related to a disability, other discrimination based on disability, retaliation, the failure to provide a reasonable accommodation, denial of an approved accommodation or service, or inaccessibility of a program or other college activity, the grievance should be filed with the [director of student success](#). The director of student success, or designee, assesses the formal grievance and reviews all information necessary during an investigation to render a written determination to the grievant, accused and to any administrator whose authority is needed to carry out the proposed resolution. This includes providing the grievant and accused with an opportunity to submit evidence, including identifying witnesses and documents for the director of student success's consideration as part of the investigation. The director of student success, or designee, issues a letter of determination to the grievant and the accused of their findings within 30 days of the formal grievance. If extenuating circumstances cause a delay, the director of student success notifies the grievant in writing of the delay along with an anticipated timeframe for issuance of the final letter of determination.

- If the grievant or accused disagrees with the determination given by the director of student success, he or she can seek a reconsideration of the determination by the dean of enrollment management and student services. The dean of enrollment management and student services reviews the letter of determination offered by the director of student success and all information necessary to render a written determination. If needed, the grievant can submit any additional information and/or documents as requested. The dean of enrollment management and student services issues a letter of determination within 15 days of receiving the request, supplies the grievant and relevant parties with a copy of the letter of determination, and takes any steps necessary to implement his or her decision, including but not limited to, providing a copy of the letter of determination to the appropriate college officials. The decision of the dean of enrollment management and student services is final.
- If the grievance is against the director of student success, designee or another employee in the counseling office, the grievance should be filed with the dean of enrollment management and student services. The dean of enrollment management and student services, or designee, assesses the formal grievance and reviews all information necessary during an investigation to render a written determination to the grievant, accused and to any administrator whose authority is needed to carry out the proposed resolution. This includes providing the grievant and the accused with an opportunity to submit evidence, including identifying witnesses and documents for the dean of enrollment management and student services's consideration as part of the investigation. The dean of enrollment management and student services, or designee, issues a letter of determination to the grievant and the accused of their findings within 30 days of the formal grievance. If extenuating circumstances cause a delay, the dean of enrollment management and student services notifies the grievant and the accused in writing of the delay along with an anticipated timeframe for issuance of the final letter of determination.
- If the grievant or accused disagrees with the determination given by the dean of enrollment management and student services, he or she can seek a reconsideration of the determination by the vice president for enrollment management and student services. The vice president for enrollment management and student services reviews the letter of determination offered by the dean of enrollment management and student services and all information necessary to render a written determination. If needed, the grievant can submit any additional information and/or documents as requested. The vice president for enrollment management and student services issues a letter of determination within 15 days of receiving the request, supplies the grievant and relevant parties with a copy of the letter of determination, and takes any steps necessary to implement his or her decision, including but not limited to, providing a copy of the letter of determination to the appropriate college officials. The decision of the vice president for enrollment management and student services is final.

Timelines

Specified time limitations refer to the academic year, September through May. If a grievance is presented or the alleged incident occurs during June, July or August, the time calculation is suspended until the beginning of the new academic year in September. In such a situation, the 60-day timeframe begins on the first day of classes for the fall term. In addition, time limitations do not include official college holidays or other closures. The term “days” refers to days when the college is open for business.

Remedies

The college imposes remedies intended to correct the discriminatory effects on the grievant or others and to prevent the recurrence of any prohibited acts.

Wor-Wic does not tolerate discrimination of any kind. If the allegation against an employee is substantiated, the employee is subject to disciplinary action, including possible dismissal. The vice president of the employee, in consultation with human resources, determines the appropriate corrective action(s) to be taken, prepares a written memorandum addressed to the accused that outlines the corrective action(s) to be taken, forwards a copy to the immediate supervisor of the accused and provides a copy to the human resources administrator for placement in the personnel file of the accused. The immediate supervisor is responsible for the implementation and follow-up of the corrective action(s). College policies and procedures regarding dismissal, including any appeals that exist, govern the handling of grievances against employees.

If the allegation against a student is substantiated, the student is subject to disciplinary action, including possible permanent suspension. College policies and procedures regarding student conduct, including any appeals that exist, govern the handling of grievances against students.

If it is found that the employee or student who filed the grievance deliberately filed a false accusation, that individual is subject to disciplinary action in accordance with dismissal policies and procedures (when the grievant was an employee) or student conduct policies and procedures (when the grievant was a student).

External Grievances

The college community is encouraged to attempt resolution of grievances pertaining to disabilities by using this grievance procedure, but an individual has the right to file a grievance directly with the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. Grievants can also file a disability discrimination grievance with the responsible federal or state department or agency, including the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or the Maryland Commission on Human Rights.

Retaliation

No individual who files a grievance or cooperates with a college investigation can be subject to retaliation, including any adverse employment or educational consequence. An individual who

believes that he or she was retaliated against as a result of filing a grievance or cooperating with a college investigation can file an additional grievance. An employee who retaliates against anyone who has filed a grievance is subject to disciplinary action, including possible dismissal. A student who retaliates against anyone who has filed a grievance is subject to disciplinary action, including possible permanent suspension.

Records

The ADA coordinators or vice presidents maintain the files and records of all grievances for which they are responsible under this grievance policy.

Letter to Parents of Students with Disabilities

Dear Parents,

I have been working in the area of students with disabilities at the college level for more than 30 years, but that is not why I am writing to you today. I am writing as a parent, and thus as someone who shares all your current anxieties. My daughter, who graduated from high school in early June, will be going away to college this fall. She has Cerebral Palsy, uses a wheelchair, and has limited speech capabilities, so you can be assured that I have been very involved in the educational programming and planning she has received during her years in the public school system. I wanted to be involved, but I also needed to be involved since, by law, the school could not do anything for, to, or with my daughter regarding her disability without my permission. I sat through countless IEP meetings over the years, I was insistent on certain issues of academic support when I needed to be, and I agonized over everything from teacher selection to her successful social integration with classmates. And now, as I prepare to pack her up and take her off to college in the fall, I recognize that this role has ended for me - and the word "anxious" doesn't even begin to describe my feelings.

If you are worried that your child with a disability will have a difficult time making a successful transition to college without your involvement... then you are probably right to be worried. Very few children with disabilities can succeed at the college level. On the other hand, students with disabilities survive and thrive on college campuses across the country. If you still think of your son or daughter as your "child," and they still are comfortable in accepting that role, it is time to take a careful look at where you have come from and what lies before you. As parents, it is time for us to step back and allow/encourage/gently nudge our SWD's (Students with Disabilities) to assume significant independent responsibility for their own lives, both academically and personally.

As you and your SWD prepare to visit campus for that initial meeting with a disability service provider at the college, you would do well to think about what can be accomplished at this initial meeting, what needs to be said - and who is going to say it!!! As I approach that same milestone with my daughter, I find myself a little panicky, realizing that there are things about her disability and how it impacts on her functioning that I know and that the disability services provider needs to know, and that I may not have many chances to say. There is no doubt that I can explain those things more fully than my daughter can explain them (or even understands them!). And it doesn't matter. Much as I hate it, I know that SHE has to be the one to convey all this crucial information (not me!), for a number of reasons.

First, colleges and universities provide services and support to SWD under very different laws than those that governed services in the K-12 system. As a parent, I have no rights under Section 504/ADA in speaking for my SWD who is in college. (If you aren't sure what "Section

504/ADA" means in this context, perhaps the disability service provider you meet with will have gathered some information that helps explain the differences between settings, both legally and practically. Two of my favorite websites for learning more are at:

<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html> and <http://www.heath.gwu.edu/>).

The services and support available to SWD are sometimes very different than what was provided in high school, and the college is under no obligation to continue the services given in high school or to adhere to the recommendations of an outside diagnostician. The college will make its own determination of what services and support to offer, based on the documentation of disability and their interview with your SWD. There are no IEP's in college, there is no place to sign off with my parental approval. Indeed, the college doesn't legally have to care whether I am satisfied or not. My daughter is responsible for her own destiny now.

More importantly, while this may be your last chance to convey all that important information on to the college, it is your SWD's first chance to convey that information all by himself/herself. Don't spoil that opportunity, and don't interfere. Remember, while you and your SWD are learning more about the campus, the resources, and the people who will be there to help when needed, the disability service provider is learning more about your son/daughter, as well. You want their first impression to be one that is positive and reassuring. The service provider is anxious to find out whether your SWD is mature enough to handle the responsibilities and independence of college life. Here are some specific suggestions for helping your SWD to shine in this newly focused spotlight:

- **DON'T** be insulted if you are not invited to sit in on the initial meeting between your SWD and the disability services folks. Some institutions have found that it is helpful for them to speak directly (and alone!) to the student in order to get a feel for how knowledgeable and confident s/he is in sharing information about past services, what works and doesn't work, and what accommodations they hope to have at the college level. You will get a chance to ask your questions, but recognize that it may come later, rather than sooner.
- If you are invited to sit in on the meeting with the disability services folks, **DO** acknowledge your SWD as the authority on their disability-related needs by making it clear that you believe they have all the answers! Try focusing your visual attention on your son/daughter instead of trying to make eye contact with the interviewer. If you look to your SWD, so will the professional.
- **DON'T** begin any sentence with "S/He needs to have..." Instead, you can try, "In high school, s/he had..." or "The person who tested him/her suggested..." but it would actually be better if you said nothing at all! Try to talk as little as possible in the meeting. This is not your meeting. Remember, you are there as an observer, not as a participant.
- **DO** take some time prepping your son/daughter in advance on the issues that you think need to be discussed - the things that you would say if you had the chance. Make a list

of the topics you would bring up, explain why you think each is important, and make sure your SWD has the list in hand when s/he goes into the interview. Rehearse with your son/daughter, if they will let you. If they are typical teens and aren't comfortable sitting through that kind of rehearsal, settle for making them sit and listen while you demonstrate how you would approach certain subjects. For example, "I think you should tell them about how the teachers arranged for extra time for you on tests when you were in high school. I'd probably say, 'In high school, I was allowed extra time for tests in English because it takes me a long time to put my thoughts in writing, but I never needed it in Math.'" Your SWD may not acknowledge the strategies you share, but you may be surprised to hear those words come out of his/her mouth at the interview!

- **DON'T** interrupt. If you disagree with something the disability service provider says, or if your SWD says something that you know is incorrect, or if you see your SWD agreeing with/to something when you know they have no idea what they are agreeing to - **DON'T INTERRUPT!** Let the interview play out. Give the disability service provider a chance to draw your SWD out further, give your SWD an opportunity to clarify matters, or simply wait to see if the confusion/disagreement remains. It is important to know just how independent and accurate students are in describing their needs. You will get your chance.
- **DO** prompt your son/daughter to speak up and share those important points as the interview progresses. Instead of explaining to the disability service provider why Johnny needs a calculator in math classes, turn to Johnny and say, "Why don't you explain to Ms. _____ why it is important for you to have a calculator for math and science classes? Is it because you have trouble lining up the columns, or because you have trouble remembering basic math facts or???" Give an open ended question that encourages your SWD to flesh out the response. At the same time, you are hinting to the interviewer that there is an issue here to be discussed (See? I told you that you would get your chance!)

Why not take notes as the interview progresses? When your son/daughter has exhausted the list of topics to discuss, and the disability service provider has shared all the information they thought was important, it is YOUR turn to talk. Go ahead and ask your questions. The most important thing to remember now is that you do not want to undermine your son/daughter's credibility. If you have more information to share on a given subject, try starting the sentence with, "As Susie told you, she has used..." and then add whatever you need to on top of information already given. If you think your SWD gave incorrect information, tread carefully. You might say, "I was surprised to hear Jane say _____. I would have said _____, because..." You'll get your point across without directly contradicting what your son/daughter said. Your goal is to assure both the SWD and the disability service provider that you are supportive of their budding understanding, and simply want to share another viewpoint.

An old adage maintains:

There are only two things a parent can give to a child ... One is roots. The other is wings.

It is time for our kids to solo. That is a scary thought for us, as parents, and it is sure to be scary for them, too. That's OK. This is what we have all been working towards for a long time. Remember, your son/daughter will call, email, or text if they need you. They know what you can do for them, but now it is time for them to go it alone. Take a deep breath, cross your fingers, wish them well - and walk away. All will be well!

Best of luck,

Jane Jarrow

Proud (and Terrified) Mom

JaneJarrow@aol.com

FAQ's for Preparing for Postsecondary Education

U.S. Department of Education

Office for Civil Rights

Washington, D.C. 20202

More and more high school students with disabilities are planning to continue their education in postsecondary schools, including vocational and career schools, two- and four- year colleges, and universities. As a student with a disability, you need to be well informed about your rights and responsibilities as well as the responsibilities postsecondary schools have toward you. Being well-informed will help ensure that you have a full opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the postsecondary education experience without confusion or delay.

The information in this pamphlet, provided by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in the U.S. Department of Education, explains the rights and responsibilities of students with disabilities who are preparing to attend postsecondary schools. This pamphlet also explains the obligations of a postsecondary school to provide academic adjustments, including auxiliary aids and services, to ensure that the school does not discriminate on the basis of disability.

OCR enforces Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973* (Section 504) and Title II of the *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990* (Title II), which prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability. Practically every school district and postsecondary school in the United States is subject to one or both of these laws, which have similar requirements.

Although Section 504 and Title II apply to both school districts and postsecondary schools, the responsibilities of postsecondary schools differ significantly from those of school districts.

Moreover, you will have responsibilities as a postsecondary student that you do not have as a high school student. OCR strongly encourages you to know your responsibilities and those of postsecondary schools under Section 504 and Title II. Doing so will improve your opportunity to succeed as you enter postsecondary education.

You may be familiar with another federal law that applies to the education of students with disabilities—the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). That law is administered by the Office of Special Education Programs in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services in the U.S. Department of Education. The IDEA and its individualized education program (IEP) provisions do not apply to postsecondary schools. This pamphlet does not discuss the IDEA or state and local laws that may apply.

The following questions and answers provide more specific information to help you succeed.

As a student with a disability leaving high school and entering postsecondary education, will I see differences in my rights and how they are addressed?

Yes. Section 504 and Title II protect elementary, secondary, and postsecondary students from discrimination. Nevertheless, several of the requirements that apply through high school are different from the requirements that apply beyond high school. For instance, Section 504 requires a school district to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to each child with a disability in the district's jurisdiction. Whatever the disability, a school district must identify an individual's educational needs and provide any regular or special education and related aids and services necessary to meet those needs as well as it is meeting the needs of students without disabilities.

Unlike your high school, however, your postsecondary school is not required to provide FAPE. Rather, your postsecondary school is required to provide appropriate academic adjustments as necessary to ensure that it does not discriminate on the basis of disability. In addition, if your postsecondary school provides housing to nondisabled students, it must provide comparable, convenient, and accessible housing to students with disabilities at the same cost.

Other important differences that you need to know, even before you arrive at your postsecondary school, are addressed in the remaining questions.

May a postsecondary school deny my admission because I have a disability?

No. If you meet the essential requirements for admission, a postsecondary school may not deny your admission simply because you have a disability.

Do I have to inform a postsecondary school that I have a disability?

No. But if you want the school to provide an academic adjustment, you must identify yourself as having a disability. Likewise, you should let the school know about your disability if you want to ensure that you are assigned to accessible facilities. In any event, your disclosure of a disability is always voluntary.

What academic adjustments must a postsecondary school provide?

The appropriate academic adjustment must be determined based on your disability and individual needs. Academic adjustments may include auxiliary aids and services, as well as modifications to academic requirements as necessary to ensure equal educational opportunity. Examples of adjustments are: arranging for priority registration; reducing a course load; substituting one course for another; providing note takers, recording devices, sign language interpreters, extended time for testing, and, if telephones are provided in dorm rooms, a TTY in your dorm room; and equipping school computers with screen-reading, voice recognition, or other adaptive software or hardware.

In providing an academic adjustment, your postsecondary school is not required to lower or substantially modify essential requirements. For example, although your school may be

required to provide extended testing time, it is not required to change the substantive content of the test. In addition, your postsecondary school does not have to make adjustments that would fundamentally alter the nature of a service, program, or activity, or that would result in an undue financial or administrative burden. Finally, your postsecondary school does not have to provide personal attendants, individually prescribed devices, readers for personal use or study, or other devices or services of a personal nature, such as tutoring and typing.

If I want an academic adjustment, what must I do?

You must inform the school that you have a disability and need an academic adjustment. Unlike your school district, your postsecondary school is not required to identify you as having a disability or to assess your needs. Your postsecondary school may require you to follow reasonable procedures to request an academic adjustment. You are responsible for knowing and following those procedures. In their publications providing general information, postsecondary schools usually include information on the procedures and contacts for requesting an academic adjustment. Such publications include recruitment materials, catalogs, and student handbooks, and are often available on school websites. Many schools also have staff whose purpose is to assist students with disabilities. If you are unable to locate the procedures, ask a school official, such as an admissions officer or counselor.

When should I request an academic adjustment?

Although you may request an academic adjustment from your postsecondary school at any time, you should request it as early as possible. Some academic adjustments may take more time to provide than others. You should follow your school's procedures to ensure that the school has enough time to review your request and provide an appropriate academic adjustment.

Do I have to prove that I have a disability to obtain an academic adjustment?

Generally, yes. Your school will probably require you to provide documentation showing that you have a current disability and need an academic adjustment.

What documentation should I provide?

Schools may set reasonable standards for documentation. Some schools require more documentation than others. They may require you to provide documentation prepared by an appropriate professional, such as a medical doctor, psychologist, or other qualified diagnostician. The required documentation may include one or more of the following: a diagnosis of your current disability, as well as supporting information, such as the date of the diagnosis, how that diagnosis was reached, and the credentials of the diagnosing professional; information on how your disability affects a major life activity; and information on how the disability affects your academic performance. The documentation should provide enough information for you and your school to decide what is an appropriate academic adjustment. An individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 plan, if you have one, may help identify

services that have been effective for you. This is generally not sufficient documentation, however, because of the differences between postsecondary education and high school education. What you need to meet the new demands of postsecondary education may be different from what worked for you in high school. Also, in some cases, the nature of a disability may change.

If the documentation that you have does not meet the postsecondary school's requirements, a school official should tell you in a timely manner what additional documentation you need to provide. You may need a new evaluation in order to provide the required documentation.

Who has to pay for a new evaluation?

Neither your high school nor your postsecondary school is required to conduct or pay for a new evaluation to document your disability and need for an academic adjustment. You may, therefore, have to pay or find funding to pay an appropriate professional for an evaluation. If you are eligible for services through your state vocational rehabilitation agency, you may qualify for an evaluation at no cost to you. You may locate your state vocational rehabilitation agency at <http://rsa.ed.gov> by clicking on "Info about RSA," then "People and Offices," and then "State Agencies/ Contacts."

Once the school has received the necessary documentation from me, what should I expect?

To determine an appropriate academic adjustment, the school will review your request in light of the essential requirements for the relevant program. It is important to remember that the school is not required to lower or waive essential requirements. If you have requested a specific academic adjustment, the school may offer that academic adjustment, or it may offer an effective alternative. The school may also conduct its own evaluation of your disability and needs at its own expense.

You should expect your school to work with you in an interactive process to identify an appropriate academic adjustment. Unlike the experience you may have had in high school, however, do not expect your postsecondary school to invite your parents to participate in the process or to develop an IEP for you.

What if an academic adjustment is not working?

Let the school know as soon as you become aware that the results are not what you expected. It may be too late to correct the problem if you wait until the course or activity is completed. You and your school should work together to resolve the problem.

May a postsecondary school charge me for providing an academic adjustment?

No. Nor may it charge students with disabilities more for participating in its programs or activities than it charges students who do not have disabilities.

What can I do if I believe that the school is discriminating against me?

Practically every postsecondary school must have a person—frequently called the Section 504 Coordinator, ADA Coordinator, or Disability Services Coordinator—who coordinates the school’s compliance with Section 504, Title II, or both laws. You may contact that person for information about how to address your concerns.

The school must also have grievance procedures. These procedures are not the same as the due process procedures with which you may be familiar from high school. But the postsecondary school’s grievance procedures must include steps to ensure that you may raise your concerns fully and fairly, and must provide for the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints.

School publications, such as student handbooks and catalogs, usually describe the steps that you must take to start the grievance process. Often, schools have both formal and informal processes. If you decide to use a grievance process, you should be prepared to present all the reasons that support your request. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the school’s grievance procedures or wish to pursue an alternative to using those procedures, you may file a complaint against the school with OCR or in a court. You may learn more about the OCR complaint process from the brochure *How to File a Discrimination Complaint with the Office for Civil Rights*, which you may obtain by contacting us at the addresses and phone numbers below, or at <http://www.ed.gov/ocr/docs/howto.html>.

If you would like more information about the responsibilities of postsecondary schools to students with disabilities, read the OCR brochure *Auxiliary Aids and Services for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities: Higher Education’s Obligations Under Section 504 and Title II of the ADA*. You may obtain a copy by contacting us at the address and phone numbers below, or at <http://www.ed.gov/ocr/docs/auxaids.html>.

Students with disabilities who know their rights and responsibilities are much better equipped to succeed in postsecondary school. We encourage you to work with the staff at your school because they, too, want you to succeed. Seek the support of family, friends, and fellow students, including those with disabilities. Know your talents and capitalize on them, and believe in yourself as you embrace new challenges in your education.

To receive more information about the civil rights of students with disabilities in education institutions, you may contact us at:

Customer Service Team Office for Civil Rights U.S. Department of Education Washington, D.C.
20202-1100

Phone: 1-800-421-3481

TDD: 1-877-521-2172

Email: ocr@ed.gov

Web address: <http://www.ed.gov/ocr>



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