



COLLEGE CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

This document will introduce you to some of the basic information and considerations for students with disabilities when applying to and attending college, including legal protections and tips for success.

For questions about college or other disability related services contact The Arc of King County Information and Resource team at 206-829-7053 or ask@arcofkingcounty.org

What legal responsibilities do colleges have?

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, colleges cannot discriminate against a student because of disability. This means colleges are required to ensure students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to access all education, programs, and other supports available to non-disabled students. Colleges must provide Reasonable Accommodations as needed to ensure students with disabilities have the supports needed to equally engage.

It is important to understand the types of support students with disabilities can and cannot receive in college, and how that differs from high school. Most importantly, students in college DO NOT have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) like they may have had in high school. In college, students with disabilities CAN have 504 Plans that provide reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access to education.

What are Reasonable Accommodations?

Reasonable Accommodations are adjustments or supports with tasks, the environment, or the way things are usually done so that students with disabilities have equal opportunity to participate. Colleges are not required to adjust the essential program or course requirements to accommodate students. For example, they can provide an accommodation for longer time for tests but cannot change the test content or required scores for passing.

Examples of Reasonable Accommodations:

- ✓ Note-taker/scribe.
- ✓ Sign-Language Interpreter
- ✓ Extended time for testing
- ✓ Substituting foreign language classes with specific cultural or other courses.
- ✓ Reducing course load and extending time on degree requirements.
- ✓ Auxiliary aids and services (e-textbooks, software, etc.)
- ✓ Housing accommodations (adjusting rooms/furniture, accessible to buildings, etc.).

Examples of Accommodations Colleges are NOT Required to Provide:

- ✓ Personal devices (wheelchairs, hearing aid, glasses, etc.).
- ✓ Assistance for personal care needs.
- ✓ Modifying academic or program standards.
- ✓ Burdensome, administrative, or financial support.

What should I be thinking about in the college search and application process?

Remember, not all colleges are alike. As with any college student, finding the right “fit” is important to ensuring a successful college experience. Some colleges are more inclusive and supportive of students with disabilities than others, even though all colleges must abide by ADA and Section 504 laws. Some colleges have programs and services designed to support the unique learning and social needs of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), while others do not. While a college cannot deny you admission because of your disability, they can determine how much or how little support they will provide. For a summary of college programs designed to support students with I/DD in King County, see our online Resource Guide at www.arcofkingcounty.org. Below are some tips and considerations as you begin thinking about college.

Things to Consider when Deciding on a College:

- ✓ Is the college physically accessible to you?
- ✓ Will the school provide you appropriate accommodations/services that meet your needs?
- ✓ What type of college will best fit your needs (large, small, public, private, religious, etc.)?
- ✓ Would I benefit from starting at a local Community College then transferring to a 4-year program?
- ✓ Will you live at home, on campus, or somewhere else?
- ✓ How will tuition and other expenses be paid?
- ✓ How will you handle your transportation?
- ✓ How will you handle personal care assistance?

Tips when Applying for College:

- ✓ Know what your rights are as a student.
- ✓ Know what you want and need.
- ✓ Know where to get support.
- ✓ Visit the schools.
- ✓ Contact the School’s Disability Resources/Service Office or visit their website to see what accommodations/services they have already.
- ✓ Make sure that you explore all the schools that are available to you.
- ✓ As soon as you are accepted, contact the Disability Resources/Services Office and submit an application. Expect to have an intake meeting to discuss your accommodation needs.
- ✓ Prepare your questions and concerns before your intake meeting with the Disability Resources/Services Office.
- ✓ Advocate for your needs.
- ✓ Consider participating in the DO-IT program? For more information, visit: <https://www.washington.edu/doi/>.
- ✓ Check out available scholarships for people with disabilities.

What can I do if I’m not getting the support or accommodations I need?

- ✓ Talk to your coordinator at the Disability Resources/Services and explain how your needs aren’t met.
- ✓ Contact Complain/Resolution Resource Offices about your concerns.
- ✓ Contact your local Office of Civil Rights. King County Civil Rights – 206-263-2446
- ✓ Contact organizations like us.