

# GOING TO COLLEGE

## A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES



Written by: Patty Porter, M.S.

Kennedy Krieger Institute  
Baltimore, MD  
October, 2011

A joint project of:

- Specialized Health Needs Interagency Collaboration (SHNIC)
- Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)
- The International Center for Spinal Cord Injury (ICSCI) at Kennedy Krieger Institute

## INTRODUCTION

Do you now have a disability from an injury or illness? If you are planning on going to college, there are some things that you need to know to make it an enjoyable and successful experience. Your disability may change how you approach the process of choosing and applying to colleges. The key to most of this process is to START PLANNING EARLY! It is strongly recommended that students with disabilities begin their transition process in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. However, depending on your circumstances, you may not have that opportunity.

- You may already have a plan that now, suddenly, may need to change.
- You may need to defer starting college because there are more pressing needs in your life right now.
- You may need more time to be physically ready to start college.
- You may need to attend a college closer to your home than you originally planned.
- You may need housing, transportation, scheduling, class and/or test accommodations.

All of this may seem overwhelming, but this resource guide will make the process more manageable by providing you with the basic information you need to start your college search and/or obtain needed accommodations. There are many books, guides and pamphlets available on the topic of students with disabilities transitioning to college. Some are written by professionals working in the field, while others are written by government

agencies or local Departments of Education. Many of these are available on the internet. This guide will review top transition websites that can provide you with ALL of the information that you will need, much of it in a step-by-step format.

## ACCOMMODATIONS IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

You will discover during your college search that the services available to students with disabilities vary greatly. However, there are laws mandating the minimum that some colleges and universities must provide for students with disabilities. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504 required that colleges and universities receiving federal funds provide accommodations to students with disabilities to allow them to access postsecondary education. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 expanded this to include private colleges and universities. Not only are they required to provide full physical access, but also program access, both in a timely manner. Full physical access includes not only academic areas, but also to social, recreational, residential and other public areas. The ADA does not list specific required accommodations. Determining accommodations is an interactive process based on a student's documentation. Accommodations that are specifically requested do not have to be provided if other suitable accommodations are available. They also do not have to be the best possible, as long as they are effective. Colleges and universities are not required to provide accommodations for personal use, such as wheelchairs or private tutoring.

## FULL SERVICE COLLEGES

A 'full service' college or university is one that provides extensive services, assistance and resources for students with disabilities. The disability specialists that provided some of the details contained here are very friendly, helpful, knowledgeable and committed to helping students with disabilities have a successful college experience.

### University of California-Berkeley

\*A lot of national and international disability groups are headquartered in Berkeley

- Personal care attendants (PCA)
  - Maintain a list of PCAs, who are often students
  - Access to PCA 24 hours
  - Out of state students
    - Use 2 attendant care companies formed by 2 previous students
      - ✓ They deal with student's Division of Rehab. Services (DORS) regarding funding
      - ✓ \*DORS usually provides funding until Medicaid kicks in
  - Berkeley has emergency personal care services
- All dorms have accessible rooms
- There is a class in Independent Living Skills that earns credits

### Contact information

- Disabled Students Program (510) 642-0518
  - Danny Kodmur (access coordinator, disabled residents' program)

- (513) 643-6456
  - [dkodmur@berkeley.edu](mailto:dkodmur@berkeley.edu)
- Kevin Shields (coordinator of dorm based program)
  - (510) 642-8898
  - [kevinshields@berkeley.edu](mailto:kevinshields@berkeley.edu)
  - Disabled Students' Resident Program [dsp.berkeley.edu](http://dsp.berkeley.edu)
- More information available at [www.dsp.berkeley.edu/](http://www.dsp.berkeley.edu/)

## University of Illinois Urbana/Champaign

- Located 2 hours south of Chicago
- Provides comprehensive support for students with disabilities
- Wheelchair sports program
- Beckwith Program
  - Transitional disability management training program
    - ✓ Enables students to assume control themselves
    - ✓ Encourages and helps develop independence
    - ✓ Located in Nugent Hall, the fully accessible dorm for students with disabilities
- Personal assistants
  - The cost of personal assistants is paid by the student and is in addition to tuition, room and board and other university fees (Vocational Rehabilitation may provide some funding)
  - Have 80-100 personal assistants, most are peers or current students
  - They are screened, trained and have a background check
  - They do not live in the rooms with the students
  - There are 5 live-in Physician Assistants in the dorm
  - Floaters cover shifts if someone is sick
  - Students are taught how to hire and fire personal assistants
- A comprehensive transportation system
- Priority snow removal for Nugent Hall and buildings where students with disabilities have classes
- Can provide student with information on national programs for scholarships for students with disabilities

### Contact information:

- Suzanne Sears (handles academic accommodations) (217) 333-4602
- Paige Lewis (disability management at Nugent Hall) (217) 333-3315
- Kathryn Johnson (oversees personal assistants) (217) 333-3314

- More information available at [www.disability.uiuc.edu](http://www.disability.uiuc.edu)

## Edinboro University of Pennsylvania

- Personal care attendants
  - Some are state workers
  - Some are students on work study
  - Monitored by an RN

### Contact information

- Office of Students with Disabilities
  - Dr. Bob McConnell (814) 734-4188
- More information available at [www.edinboro.edu/departments/osd/](http://www.edinboro.edu/departments/osd/)

## Wright State University

- Located in Dayton, Ohio
- More information available at [http://www.wright.edu/students/dis\\_services/services.html](http://www.wright.edu/students/dis_services/services.html)

## ONLINE TRANSITION RESOURCES

There are many websites on transitioning to college for students with disabilities. A lot of them only look at a few aspects of the process and many of them are focused on students with learning disabilities. There are not many that directly address the needs of students with physical disabilities. After reviewing many of the online resources, the ones included here are the most comprehensive and current. Most of them are also updated regularly.

<http://www.disabilityfriendlycolleges.com> A Guide for Students with Physical Disabilities

- Outstanding, informative, thorough website
- Contains interactive charts of more than 75 disability friendly colleges and the services available
- Information on Vocational Rehabilitation and how states fund colleges
- Blog access
- Links to articles on:
  - Disability Services in the Ivy League
  - Full Service Colleges (Berkeley, Edinboro, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign & Wright State)
  - Disability Friendly Higher Education Links
  - Disability Services at the Seven Sisters (7 colleges in Northeastern U.S. that were historically women's colleges- Radcliffe and Vassar are now coeducational)
  - Colleges That Go Above and Beyond ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act)

<http://www.heath.gwu.edu/> Heath Resource Center (HRC) at the National Youth Transitions Center

- Online clearinghouse on postsecondary education for individuals with disabilities
- Managed by George Washington University Graduate School of Education and Human Development

- HRC gathers, develops and disseminates information in the form of resource papers, fact sheets, website directories, newsletters and resource material
- Links- extensive; organized into 48 different topic areas; provides information gathered from other websites
- News- updates and announcements of special interest relating to postsecondary education, career and technology education and young adults with disabilities
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQS)- subject areas from emails
- Publications
- Thorough training modules- complete with goals, objectives, key questions and answers, review of topics, assessment/evaluation and wrap up (i.e.-financial aid, legal issues, accommodations, self-advocacy, working with faculty); these will give you the information that you need in every area to make your college search and experience a good one
- Exhaustive “Directory of Transition Websites”
- Contains a repository of all of the PDF and PPT documents in their files

<http://www.going-to-college.org>

- Simple, basic and easy to navigate
- Not all information may be applicable to your situation, but contains a lot of good, solid information
- Some videos
- Good, thorough high school “To Do” lists by year
- Excellent “Comparing Colleges” worksheet
- Excellent planning worksheets
- Main components include Overview, My Place, Campus Life, Planning for College and My Portfolio

“My Portfolio”- excellent, thorough workbook like activities to help you plan, organize and collect key documents to use for college and beyond; provides you with a “portfolio” of your information that you can take with you when you talk with a college adviser or the person in charge of accommodations at the college you want to attend.

<http://www.thinkcollege.net> College Options for People with Intellectual Disabilities

- Initiative of Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at University of Massachusetts Boston



- \*\*\*\*Although you may not have an intellectual disability, there is a lot of good information on this website that also applies to people with physical disabilities\*\*\*\*
- Easy to navigate
- For Students- student experiences; simple, basic information on legal rights; good information on paying for college; links to student blogs
- For Parents- parents' role; difference between high school and college services; transition checklist; additional web resources

### COLLEGE SELECTION: A QUICK TOOL

Transitioning to a college setting can be exciting (and stressful) for both you and your family. During the process of selecting a college, there are some questions that you should ask before you apply. First, do as much research online as possible. Take a virtual tour of the campus and get information on the college's Office of Disability Services. If possible, arrange to visit the campus so you can see it firsthand. Before you visit the campus, make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services. Here is a list of questions to take with you, although they may not all apply to your needs.

1. Are there shuttles that are wheelchair accessible?
  
2. What size are the dorms/rooms?  
Are they accessible?  
  
Are the showers accessible? Roll in?  
  
Do they have automatic doors?
  
3. I require a personal care attendant. Do you help with finding a personal care attendant? If you do, what is the process and cost?
  
4. If I bring my own personal care attendant, can he/she stay in the dorm with me? If so, is there a charge?
  
5. Is there a procedure for bringing personal equipment with me (i.e.-Hoyer lift, hospital bed)?
  
6. Are there or have there been other students with similar needs on campus?

7. Is the health center open 7 days a week, 24 hours a day?
8. What medical facilities are close to the campus?
9. What is the process for me to get needed accommodations?
10. Can I register early for classes so I can put together a schedule that allows me sufficient time between classes for travel, personal care activities, accessing restrooms (in buildings or in my dorm) and coordinating with shuttle schedules?
11. What are the due dates for applications and other forms?