

Your Student's New Role: Self-Advocacy in College

Educational rights covered by the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) do not apply to postsecondary education. Instead, two other federal laws, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, require the university to provide reasonable accommodations for students with an identified disability.

In high school, a team of educators and parents work together to ensure the student's success. When a student enters college, this role changes significantly. The student is now responsible for seeking assistance for accommodations and for advocating for themselves. *The student is considered an adult and must advocate for themselves to initiate communications with professors to understand how accommodations will support in each individual class.*

Differences in Policies and Procedures for High School vs. Post-Secondary	
High School	Post-Secondary
The school is responsible for identifying if a student has a disability.	The student self-reports the disability to the university.
The school provides reports and testing to determine eligibility, including the parent(s).	The student provides supporting documentation regarding their disability to the Student Accessibility Office.
The school team develops an Individualized Education Program (IEP) based on student's needs.	Reasonable accommodations are determined based on student's documented needs and an interactive intake process with the Student Accessibility Office.
The school by law provides a free and appropriate public education (FAPE), and an Individualized Education Program (IEP) including modified programs and appropriate related services.	Postsecondary institutions adhere to the guidelines of the ADA and Section 504, which ensure equal access and opportunity by offering reasonable accommodations to access coursework.
The school implements services, monitors progress and evaluates the progress of the student.	The university provides reasonable accommodations for students.

Differences in Course Expectations for High School vs. Post-Secondary	
High School	Post-Secondary
Students are expected to attend school and attendance is monitored.	Students are expected to follow the university and instruction's attendance policy as stated in the syllabus.
Teachers will usually approach students who have academic challenges.	Students are responsible for asking the professor for help.
Teachers will remind students of assignment due dates.	Students are expected to adhere to the syllabus to keep track of all due dates for projects, assignments and test dates.
Modifications/Accommodations that change course outcomes may be offered based on the IEP.	The university is not required to change or lower the necessary requirements to the core components of a course or major.