

How does a student qualify for services in college compared with high school?

Probably the largest difference between high school and college eligibility requirements is that students in high school only need a documented disability. In addition to that documented disability, college students must, without accommodation, meet the requirements for attendance at the university.¹ The student must also be able to articulate how the disability impacts their classroom performance when seeking accommodations — [see this article from Edutopia](#).

What's the difference between accommodations and modification in high school & college?

An accommodation reflects a difference in how a student learns or is tested on material — students are expected to meet the same standards as their peers. Modifications alter expectations of what will be learned — shorter readings, exams over less extensive curriculum. In the high school setting, for instance, that may mean a student with modified curriculum may receive a modified diploma (if for instance, the student has a learning difference which makes a second language or math too challenging to expect.) Colleges stress that accommodations will not “lower academic standards or compromise the integrity of an academic program”² — modifications which lower academic standards are not required of colleges.

With the passage of the ADA in 1990, all publicly funded institutions are required to provide accommodations, and privately funded institutions are subject to a similar non-discrimination requirement.

What does access mean in college v K-12?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) guaranteed a “free and appropriate education” to high school students; however, there is no legal requirement for “free and appropriate” post secondary education.³ Unlike high school, colleges are simply required to guarantee equal access and ban discriminatory practices. The burden is on students to access educational supports, rather than on the college to anticipate student needs.

Who is responsible for ensuring the supports are in place in high school and college?

¹ *Facts on the ADA, Disability, and Accommodations - Information About Disabilities - Disability Support Program & Services (DSPS) - For Students - Legacy*. (2020). Imperial Valley College. Retrieved July 15, 2022, from <https://www.imperial.edu/students/dsps/information-about-disabilities/facts-on-the-ada-disability-and-accommodations/>

² *ibid*

³ Smith, L. (2019, August 30). Helping Students With Disabilities Understand Accommodations in College. Edutopia.Org. Retrieved July 15, 2022, from <https://www.edutopia.org/article/helping-students-disabilities-understand-accommodations-college>

Unlike high school, where parents and faculty members work together to provide a plan and ensure supports are in place, college students, as adults, are responsible for accessing supports. Students will need to advocate for their needs and monitor their own progress toward meeting goals.

Colleges are not required to provide individual tutoring, but college writing and math centers are available. Private, fee based, tutoring can be arranged on most campuses.

The accommodation process typically begins when a student contacts the college's disability services office or an instructor and makes a request for a disability related accommodation.

Why does the student need to be informed regarding his/her/their rights and responsibilities once in college?

Students must initiate the process, and they must be able to articulate the impact of their disability in the academic setting. No longer can parents and school personnel put accommodations in place for students. One positive, however, is that the accommodations process can be much easier in college than in high school.

Students should register with their college's disability services office right away—even a few weeks before classes begin! Registering carries no obligation; however, if accommodations are required, starting with this registration means that a hurdle to accessing needed supports will be removed.

[This article from Edutopia](#) explains how to prepare for this initial meeting: a parent can attend as support!

[Discuss whether having a FERPA form on file with the college](#) is a good fit with your family. A student signing a FERPA release means that the school is allowed to share information, but not required to share. It might be comforting to have the access and accountability; however, it could also be a way for students to abrogate some of the responsibility and independence you've worked so hard to support.

Parents may also find having a HIPAA form on file with the school's medical center will provide access to information if their child needs medical attention. Remember, college students, regardless of age, are considered adults.

A signed [Medical Information Release Form](#) would allow a student to designate someone who could have access to their medical records in an emergency. [Medical Power of Attorney](#) allows students to designate someone to make medical decisions for them if they're unable to make them for themselves—this may be particularly reassuring in the case of anxiety or severe depression, in addition to covering accidental injury.