

Post-Secondary Education

What is post-secondary education and training?

“Post” means “after” and “secondary school” is high school. Therefore, post-secondary education and training is the continuation of education after high school. In the past, young people with disabilities were often told that post-secondary education and training programs weren’t for them. But that is changing. There are laws you should know about that are meant to help people with disabilities get the education and training they need after high school.

What are the laws that have to do with post-secondary education and training?

They are Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These are important laws that support the rights of people with disabilities to participate in post-secondary education and training programs. Basically, Section 504 states that post-secondary institutions cannot deny a person access to their programs because he/she has a disability. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) says that people with disabilities must be able to use all public programs and services. The ADA also says that programs must make information about their programs accessible.

Steps to Link with Disability Services at College

It is a good idea to research, visit, and compare colleges, vocational schools and apprenticeships before committing to one. Remember to utilize resources at your school when researching potential schools. These could be guidance counselors, transition counselors, vocational rehabilitation counselor, resource teachers and other students. After comparing services at the schools you are interested in pursuing, be sure to make a visit to the school. You will need to set up an appointment with both the Students with Disabilities Services Department along with the Admissions Department at the schools you are interested in visiting. These visits should take place during your junior year in high school and no later than the first semester of your senior year. In addition, you will be required to take either/or the SAT or ACT for admission to post secondary colleges/university programs. Through your high school guidance department you should apply for extended time (with proper documentation) on the PSAT and SAT. Typically, you will take the PSAT during your sophomore year of high school and the SAT/ACT during your junior year. Be sure to make an appointment to fill out the proper form with your high school guidance counselor at least six weeks in advance of the scheduled date for the exam.

Because the ADA guarantees accessibility of programs, all schools will offer services but may charge an added fee for some or even all of those services. An important difference between the services and supports you receive in high school (the things described in your IEP) and the supports that post-secondary schools are required to provide, is that you must apply and be found eligible for the supports in post-secondary schools. It is your responsibility to research and know about what is offered so that you can ask for assistance if you feel that you need it as you continue your education. In some cases, if you have applied for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services and been accepted, some fees may be paid by VR. The website www.insource.org has listings of Indiana colleges and universities with the special needs programs/services available. Additionally, you will find contact names, phone numbers, and email addresses of these departments to obtain additional information regarding services that are offered.

Once you have applied and received your letter of acceptance, here are the steps in receiving assistance at your college or vocational school.

- Contact the Disability Services department at your school and set an appointment well before the beginning of the first semester you will be attending.
- Take current copies (professional documentation) of psychological testing, IEP, and written information of your disability from your doctors. (must be within the past three years)
- **Be sure you can advocate for yourself** to obtain your educational and life goals. This includes understanding your learning strengths, and academic accommodation, support needs, and knowing your rights and responsibilities.
- The accommodations discussed in this section **do not** give students with disabilities an advantage over other students in the same grade. The accommodations **do** even the playing field, making students equal in all academic opportunities.