

# College 101:

## Navigating Disability Services in college

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# Objectives

- College Application Process And Disability Services
  - College Visits
  - What to do after you get accepted
  - What Disability Services Office Does
  - Registration Process
  - Documentation Requirements
- Level the Learning Field
  - Accommodations
- Getting Help
  - Self-Advocacy
  - Campus Resources
- University of Illinois Information
  - Beckwith Residential Support Services
  - Wheelchair Athletics



Image from: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-06619-3>

# College Application Process and Disability Services

# College Application Process

- When deciding on a college or university, do your research!
- Students with disabilities must meet admission standards for all students applying.
- Students are not required to disclose disability in application, but can choose to if they desire.



Image from: <http://www.tgconnection.org/polls-and-surveys/>

# Before Accepting University Offer of Admission

- **Visit the school**
  - Go when there is activity on campus
  - Research classroom size / distance between buildings
  - Transportation options
  - Healthcare facilities / Mental Health Services
- **Check out Disability Services Office**
  - Ask about services and supports
  - “Pre-approval” of accommodations is not typically available
  - Accommodations process starts once an offer of admission is accepted

# After Accepting Offer of Admission

- **First: Set up University Account**

- Usually you get information from admissions about this in your acceptance email
- Most processes (housing, disability services, etc..) can't begin until this happens

- **Next: Fill out application for Disability Services**

- Does not need to be first day you accept offer, but end of April/May is typically reasonable
- Incoming student meetings occur during the summer before the fall semester start
- Do not wait to register until the first week of classes – process could take longer than expected
  - Textbook conversion and ASL interpreting requests may take 6-8 weeks of coordination

# Disability Services Office

- Main role is to provide academic accommodations to students with disabilities on campus
- **Visible and Non-Visible disabilities:**
  - Physical, systemic, chronic, Learning, Psychological, ADHD, Autism, Deaf/HOH, Blind/Low Vision
- **This is the only place on campus you need to disclose specifics about your disability!**
  - Students must self-disclose
  - Application will have section for you to submit documentation and describe how your disability impacts you in classroom setting
  - Accommodations are based on the impact of current academic performance
- **Accommodations at post-secondary level are for equal access, rather than success**
  - Some accommodations look different in college

# Registration Process

**Step One:** Fill out application (most likely online)

**Step 2:** Submit documentation that supports disability

**Step 3:** Once necessary documentation is completed, student schedules a meeting with DS office for intake meeting

**Step 4:** If accommodations are appropriate, student needs to send letter of accommodations to instructors during the first week of class or as soon as possible (follow DS policy)



# Documentation Requirements

- Disability Services Office will have requirements on their website
- IEP and 504 Plans are good supplemental forms of documentation, but do not usually have the required information a college needs
- Psychoeducational testing/file reviews done in high school usually has the diagnostic testing needed
- Testing conducted from outside providers could also be submitted
- Current testing usually needed (around 3-5 years)
  - We need to see how disability **currently** impacts academic performance
  - Helpful not only for college, but if student wants to go to Grad School or any Graduate exams

# Accommodations Process in College

# Accommodations

- ADA: “make reasonable modifications in policies, practices or procedures when the modifications are necessary to avoid discrimination on the basis of disability, unless the public entity can demonstrate that making such modification would fundamentally alter the nature of the services, program or activity”
- Basically what this means is that accommodations need to be provided for disabled students in college, but must maintain essential functions and technical standards of the materials or objectives of assignments, exams, classroom participation.

# Accommodations pg 2

- When you go in for meeting with disability service office, student needs to be prepared to discuss how their disability impacts them in the classroom
- Remember: No disability service office should be telling you what you (the student) will be receiving prior to the orientation meeting! It is an interactive process!
- Accommodations are not a buffet. Disability service offices aren't offering a menu to choose from, but rather trying to remove specific barriers to access as a result of disability.

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## COMMON ACCOMMODATIONS

- Peer Note-Taker or Notetaking Software
- Extended testing time
- Distraction Reduced Testing Environments
- Preferential Seating
- ASL Interpreter
- Closed Captioning
- Text Conversion Services
- Speech-to-Text Technology



# Letter of Accommodations

- Legal document - instructors required to provide accommodations listed
- Different from IEP and 504 ---it's **not** a plan, it's only accommodations
- Disability services office can meet with different departments and colleges within the university to clarify any questions about LOAs, the law, and professor and student rights
- Accommodations at the post-secondary level are designed for **equal access**

# Getting Help in College

College  
Resources and  
Advocacy

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# Getting Help in College

- **Mental Health Counseling**
  - Look to see if this is a service offered within the DS office (in addition to campus resources)
  - Investigate counseling center options and procedure **before** you need to use it for the first time
- **Updating Accommodations**
  - Get in touch with DS office as soon as possible
  - Accommodations are **not** retroactive
  - DS Office is there to help – don't try to do it on your own!
  - Not much can be done if a student waits until the last week of the semester



# Advocacy in College

- All students, regardless of disability status, are expected to meet the same requirements of a particular class or program of study
- Students must self-identify to disability services office and request accommodations
- Staff at DS office can help with the entire process – reach out to them as soon as you have a question about implementation of accommodations



Image from: <https://blog.adobe.com/en/publish/2018/04/02/different-breaking-accessibility-universality-inclusion-design.html/>

More  
University of  
Illinois  
Information

# Beckwith Residential Support Services



- Residential Program for U of I students with physical disabilities who require personal assistance for activities of daily living (ADL)
- Model of Service: Life Activities Management Program (LAMP); Personal Assistants (PAs) and Mentorship (high school; current student; alumni; parents)
- State-of-the-art residential and program space that exceeds federal guidelines

# Illinois Wheelchair Athletics

- Men's Wheelchair Basketball
- Women's Wheelchair Basketball
- Wheelchair Track & Road Racing



# For More Information:

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