

## *Transition from H.S. to College*

### *A Guide for Students with Disabilities*

#### Accessibility Services

The mission of Accessibility Services (AS) at Bowling Green State University is to provide equal access and opportunity to qualified students with disabilities. Our goal is to provide opportunities for students with disabilities to fully integrate into the BGSU community. Too often first-year students with disabilities struggle to make a successful transition to college. It's easy to understand why the transition process can be difficult as there are many differences between services in high schools and colleges. The purpose of this guide is to provide information on the transition process and help ease the transition from high school to college for students with disabilities.

#### Legislation

The accommodations in high school are mandated by federal laws called IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Accommodations at the college level are mandated by Section 504, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), and are interpreted by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights and case law.

- ★ **IDEA** is the federally funded special education law that requires that all students in public schools through grade 12 receive a free and appropriate public education, which includes free testing, free support services, and an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for students that qualify for special education services due to specific categorical educational disabilities. IDEA does not apply to post-secondary institutions.
- ★ **Section 504** is the law that requires that all federally funded programs, including education programs such as state universities, provide reasonable accommodations to all otherwise qualified persons who self-identify as having a disability.
- ★ **ADA** is defined in the same terms as Section 504 but expands the mandate to include both public and private education, employment, transportation, and telecommunications. Both Section 504 and the ADA are intended to ensure that persons with disabilities of any type are not discriminated against in such a way as to exclude them from participating in mainstream society.

In post-secondary education, Section 504 and the ADA require access to programs and services, and auxiliary aids and services to ensure effective communication, but do not mandate the provision of a free and appropriate education.

Another important piece of legislation is **FERPA** (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act). FERPA protects the privacy of students' educational records. Records with AS must remain confidential under this law. Students can choose to grant permission for AS to release information regarding disability and accommodations, in a confidential manner, to university employees and to parents or guardians. This legislation does not apply to parents or guardians in secondary education,

but it does apply at the post-secondary level. Without a signed consent form, AS will not discuss a students' confidential information with parents or guardians.

### **Becoming Eligible**

In order to be eligible for accommodations, students must provide AS with documentation of disability from an appropriate professional. The documentation must verify that the disability substantially limits one or more major life activity and address the issue of severity of impact. Eligibility for special education services in high schools is diagnosis and/or team decision driven. Eligibility for reasonable accommodations in post-secondary institutions, while also requiring a diagnosis, is more importantly driven by the severity of impact on a major life activity. The law has defined learning as one of the major life activities.

For students with learning disabilities, documentation must include IQ and achievement test scores and be age-appropriate. If the high school has not conducted testing recently or is unable to retest a student, he/she may need to have an independent psychological evaluation conducted at his/her expense.

Additionally, an IEP or 504 plan from a high school is in no way binding upon any institution or entity outside of the school in which it was developed. In fact, a student with an IEP or 504 plan from high school may not be eligible for accommodations at the college level. Although students may not be eligible for AS, they may be eligible for a variety of other support services on campus.

We recommend that students desiring services contact our office as soon as they know they will be attending the university. There is no deadline to apply for services, but students should be advised that the review process can take several weeks.

### **Advocacy**

In high school, school personnel are required to seek out students with possible disabilities and help them to receive a free and appropriate education. In contrast, colleges are not required or expected to seek out students with disabilities. Students are responsible for making all disclosures and contacts, not parents or guardians. These differences are apparent in the responsibilities of students and institutions at the post-secondary level listed below.

Students at the post-secondary level have a responsibility to:

- Self-identify or disclose their disability to the appropriate office
- Provide verifying documentation of disability that is comprehensive and current, includes a specific diagnosis, provides actual test scores (if relevant), and is conducted by a qualified professional
- Act as independent adults
- Arrange their own weekly schedules
- Arrange for and access personal care attendants and private tutors
- Contact instructors to implement reasonable accommodations for each class

Post-secondary institutions have a responsibility to:

- Protect a student's right to privacy and confidentiality
- Provide access to programs and services which are offered to persons without disabilities

- Inform students of office location and procedures for requesting accommodations
- Evaluate verifying documentation provided by the student
- Determine whether a mental or physical impairment substantially limits a major life activity based on student-provided verifying documents
- Determine whether students are otherwise qualified for participation in the program or service, with or without accommodations, and if so, whether a reasonable accommodation is possible
- Make reasonable accommodations for students who meet the qualifying criteria
- Provide reasonable access to programs and services equal to those available to the general public
- Inform students of their responsibilities

### **Accommodations**

*Academic Accommodations:* We will review each student's documentation on a case-by-case basis. If the student is deemed eligible for academic accommodations, we complete an eligibility letter and e-mail it to the student's BGSU e-mail account regarding which accommodations are necessary. Students are required to meet with their professors to share the letter and discuss accommodations.

*Course Substitutions:* Students who have a documented disability, which precludes them from learning a particular subject such as a foreign language, may petition for a course substitution. Please contact the AS Office to obtain the guidelines for applying for a substitution of the foreign language requirements. This accommodation may not be appropriate if foreign language is an essential requirement of the student's program of study.

*Housing Accommodations:* Students who wish to appeal a housing assignment on the basis of a disability should contact the AS Office to obtain the necessary paperwork. Housing appeal applications and guidelines are available on-line at <https://www.bgsu.edu/accessibility-services/students/residence-life-accommodations-and-appeals.html>. The review process can take up to several weeks from the time that all necessary documentation is received.

### **Curriculum and Services**

As previously mentioned, students should not expect that the services and curriculum modifications provided in high school will automatically be provided at the college level. The college has the right to approve or deny services requested by the student which are not reasonable or which constitute an undue hardship.

Additionally, post-secondary institutions are not required to:

- Reduce or waive any of the essential requirements of a course or program
- Conduct testing and assessment of learning, psychological, or medical disabilities
- Provide personal care attendants
- Provide personal or private tutors
- Prepare "Individual Education Plans" (IEPs)

### **Admissions Procedure**

It is important to know that colleges and universities are not required to modify or waive courses or program requirements, including the admission requirements of the university. Students must meet the minimum requirements of the university, and the admissions office is not permitted to take disability into consideration when determining the student's application status. An "otherwise qualified" student should have completed the necessary prerequisite college preparation courses in high school and should be ready to continue with reasonable support.

While planning a campus visit, please contact the office in advance to schedule an appointment with a coordinator. We will discuss possible accommodations, documentation needed to apply for services, differences between services in high school and college, and other resources available to students with disabilities. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.