



PARENTS MUST TRANSITION TOO!

The transition from high school - and the laws that govern the education of students with disabilities - to college - where different laws apply - is often a difficult one for parents. It is not uncommon for parents to experience sadness, fear, loss as their children transition to college and adult life.

Enrolling at a university begins a new life phase of increased self-reliance and independence for *all* students, and students with disabilities are no different. This is a time of **separation** from their parents, assumption of more **autonomy** and coming to terms with their **identity**. All parents, not just parents of students with disabilities, must accept and allow their students to deal with these three BIG developmental issues that they are confronting.

Layered on top of this important stage of their lives, students with disabilities have the additional task of coming to terms with their disabilities as adults. Difficult as it may be, parents must learn to take a back seat and allow their students to manage their disabilities on their own. This is a process that takes place over time, and AccessAbility Services understands that this weaning process is often anxiety-producing for parents who are accustomed to actively directing and managing their student's education and accommodations.

Statutes Governing High Schools:

IDEIA
Section 504 (d) of Rehabilitation Act
Act

Statutes Governing Universities:

ADA (As Amended)
Section 504 (e) of Rehabilitation

IDEIA assured that your student would receive an individualized education, whereas ADA (AA) only assures equal access to higher education. Thus, the differences between high school and college are many: In high school, students with disabilities are entitled to a free and appropriate education, which may result in modifications to schedules, courses, workloads. Students' schedules are very structured and their program is set largely by school administrators, teachers and parents. Teachers know and understand students' disabilities. Students' performances are closely monitored and their programs adjusted accordingly. In short, parents are included in every decision regarding their student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) with which schools are required to comply.

College, on the other hand, is voluntary- and expensive. There is no special education in college (except as a course of study). Colleges do not conduct any

diagnostic evaluations. Students can choose their own courses and degree programs after demonstrating academic eligibility. Parents are not included in the course registration process, nor kept informed of academic progress during a semester. There is no IEP governing their student's education. Colleges do not guarantee success - or even a seat. They do provide *access* - but *only* if the student is otherwise qualified. Professors are not told of or about any students with disabilities in their classrooms; it is a student's decision and responsibility to inform his/her professors. There are no regular meetings with parents, and parents are not entitled to contact professors directly. No modifications of any essential elements of a course are allowed; only reasonable accommodations are required when appropriate. Students' overall schedules are largely unstructured and this is especially true when a student lives in a dorm.

Students with disabilities are expected to self-advocate and take the lead in registering with AccessAbility Services and managing their accommodations. Certainly, parents can accompany their student to the intake meeting to register with AccessAbility Services, but they should allow and encourage their student to do the talking and provide the necessary background and documentation. In advance of registering, parents should encourage their student to become fully familiar with their disability and their documentation, and be able to explain the impact their disability has on their learning.

Parents should stay in touch with their students and provide support and encouragement, but resist the temptation to micromanage their lives. They should be vigilant about signs of stress and/or difficulties and help direct them to help when needed. Be on the lookout for any significant changes in emotions, behaviors, social activities, or academic performance.