



## Secondary Transition

# Exploring the Options of a Two- or Four-Year College

### Considerations when discussing college options with your family:

Most colleges and universities provide services and/or accommodations for students with disabilities, as mandated by the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). However, some are more comprehensive than others.

When considering a two- or four-year college, it is important for you to self-advocate for needs and live as independently as possible.

### Reasons to attend a 2-year or 4-year college:

- Increase your knowledge and skills by enrolling in an Associate Degree<sup>1</sup> Program, a Certificate Program<sup>2</sup>, or a Bachelor's Degree Program
- Continue earning certificates in an area you may already have certificates in from high school
- Focus your studies in a high-interest area
- Increase opportunities for employment in your high-interest area

### Plan ahead:

Before making your decision, consider using the following checklist to guide you and your family through important questions:

- After you are accepted to a 2- or 4-year college, and 4 to 6 weeks before classes begin, call the Office of Disabilities and set up your **Intake Appointment**. (Call the college's main number and ask for the Office's number.)
- Share your Evaluation Report with the college's Office of Disabilities. This is evidence of your disability (learning, physical, medical, or psychological). Ask what is required and then be sure your evaluation is up-to-date before graduating from high school.
- You will take your most recent evaluation to your Intake Appointment and meet with a disabilities specialist who will read your evaluation and talk with you about accommodations. This is a great time to ask lots of questions – so take a written list of questions with you to the meeting.
- After you get your class schedule, call and set up your **next appointment with the Office of Disabilities to get your "Notification of Accommodations" document** for the semester. Some disabilities specialists will distribute this to your instructors, but some will require you to do it.

<sup>1</sup>An Associate Degree is a 2-year degree. It could be an Associate of Arts (A.A.) in fields such as Business, Education, English, Architecture, Music, Theater, Communication Sciences, and Health Care Studies. It could be an Associate in Science (A.S.) in fields like Biology, Computer Science, or Mathematics. It could be an Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.) if one plans to gain career-specific skills that lead directly to employment. An A.A.S. can also transfer to a bachelor's degree-granting institution in fields such as Accounting, Justice, Building Science, Fire Science, Nursing, Chemical Technology or Automotive Technology.

<sup>2</sup>There are two types of certificated programs. Academic Certificates in fields such as human services, creative writing, and computer-assisted design can convert to an A.A. degree. Proficiency Certificates in fields such as medical billing, paralegal studies, acting, accounting or digital imaging are short-term and prepare one for immediate employment but may be converted to an Academic Certificate or a Degree.

## Questions and Answers:

**Q How can I locate and use the Office of Disabilities?**

**A** Start by calling the school's main number and asking for the direct phone number to their Office of Disabilities.

**Q Do I have to inform a 2- or 4-year college that I have a disability?**

**A** In order to receive accommodations, yes, you must work with the school's Office of Disabilities. If the school is a private school, it is not required to have such an office.

**Q How will I know what accommodations I need?**

**A** When selecting a program or major, review the required courses and coursework for possible accommodations. The Office of Disabilities will be able to help you consider required assignments and accommodations for your disability.

**Q What adjustments must a 2- or 4-year college provide?**

**A** If attending a public college/university, the instructors must abide by a "Notification of Accommodations" letter received from their Office of Disabilities.

**Q Does my IEP go with me to college?**

**A** You can share your IEP with the Office of Disabilities, but it is no longer an active document. Your IEP is not valid anywhere once you graduate from high school.

**Q Will I need assistive technology?**

**A** When you meet with the Office of Disabilities, they will help you work through questions related to assistive technology.

**Q Who is there to help me?**

**A** Colleges are all equipped differently. Some will have translators, transportation, and assistive technology supports. Before you select a college, be sure you are aware of what services the college has in place.

## Resources (Websites): Exploring the Option of a Two- or Four- Year College

- **College and University Support Programs (CUSP)**  
<http://cuspservices.com/>
- **Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education: You're your Rights and Responsibilities**  
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html>
- **College Options for People with Intellectual Disabilities**  
<http://www.thinkcollege.net/?view=featured>
- **College Opportunities in Pennsylvania for People with Intellectual Disabilities**  
<http://dreampartnership.org/mission/>

