



Asbury University Academic Accessibility Resources

Tips for Parents of College Students with Disabilities: How to Facilitate your Child's Adult Independence

Most parents have concerns about their children's adjustment to college life. Parents who have children with disabilities have additional challenges. Many of you have spent countless hours and much energy over the years to make sure that your child's disabilities are accommodated (since nothing can be done regarding disabilities for a child under age 18 without parental permission).

As you prepare to help your child transition to college, one huge transition coming up for you is that your role as caretaker is changing, particularly in regard to requesting academic or physical accommodations for your child. At age 18, a student must communicate these requests himself/herself.

Jane Jarrow, a parent of an adult child with disabilities, submitted an encouraging letter to other parents through the website of the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) www.ahead.org. In the letter, she gives tips to parents who are making the transition from caretakers to encouragers of their college-aged children, specifically related to meetings with university personnel.

Below is our adaptation of her tips:

- Learn as much as you can about the differences between the IEP (K-12) and Section 504/ADA regarding communication of disabilities. [Check out the following websites: <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html> and <http://www.heath.gwu.edu/>]
- Don't be surprised if Academic Accessibility coordinator asks to meet with your child without you. [The coordinator is trying to find out how ready your child is to be a college student.]
- Assist your child in getting ready for a meeting with Academic Accessibility. Go over what you believe should be discussed during the meeting. [You can go as far as making a list of the topics you would bring up, explaining to your child why you think each is important, and making sure your child has the list at the meeting.]
- When you are invited to join a meeting between your child and Academic Accessibility, please refer to your child as the person who knows most about what accommodations he or she needs related to the disability. [Expect your child to answer the questions asked by the disabilities coordinator; look at him or her instead of at the coordinator when questions are asked.]
- Try to say as little as possible during the meeting. You are invited to the meeting in order to observe and support, not to take over. [Avoid telling the coordinator what your child needs or what accommodations your child has had in the past; allow your child to say what he has experienced and what he believes he needs.]
- Don't verbally correct your child or disagree with Academic Accessibility while they are talking! [Quietly jot down notes if you have concerns that your child is giving incomplete or incorrect information or if you disagree with something said. You can tactfully cover these later.]



Asbury University

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- Encourage your child to share points that are important for the coordinator to know. [Example: Say to your child, “You might want to explain to Prof. Downing why it is important for you to have access to a computer for exams.”]
- Prepare to speak by writing specific notes during the meeting. [After your child has given all the information he or she intends to and the coordinator seems to have given all relevant information, you will be asked if you have questions or concerns.]
- Feel free to ask the coordinator your questions, but make sure you continue to refer to your child as the person who knows most about what accommodations he or she needs related to the disability. [Use introductions such as “as Bill mentioned, during high school he took all of his exams in a room away from the regular classroom. I thought you might need to know that he was always the only person taking the exam at the time, with a proctor close by.” If you think your child gave incorrect or misleading information, you need to be careful not to disrespect your child by giving conflicting information. Try saying something like, “I was surprised that Bill said _____. I would have described it as _____ since _____.”]
- Remember that an important way to support your child at Asbury University is to encourage his relationship with Academic Accessibility, so assure your child and the coordinator of your support, even when you need to share a different viewpoint on something.