

# Transition Activities for Postsecondary Education

Preparing for **postsecondary education** is an important but challenging task. Postsecondary education includes:

- College
- University
- Vocational school
- Transition programs

A key thing to remember is that youth and young adults should reach out to **Disability Support Services or DSS** at their chosen school or program. Youth and young adults must self-refer to these services to get personalized help and accommodations.

The following activities should be considered and practiced by youth and young adults with disabilities and special healthcare needs who are getting ready to attend postsecondary education.

## Decide what you want to study

Deciding what you want to study, which is the subject you will focus on, is very important as it helps you pick the program and what type of school you will apply to. The following activities can help you decide:

- Think about your interests
- Think about what type of job/career you would like
- Find a list of studies (can be called 'majors') and learn more about the ones that interest or excite you
- Find out what type of school or program offers the studies you are interested in (*Does the community college have a program? Do you need to attend a vocational school to learn more about your career of interest?*)
- Learn what type of classes are needed for the studies and career that interest you

## Research different types of institutions (schools, vocational programs, transition programs)

Who offers postsecondary education and could they be a right fit for you?

- Look online or have someone help you research schools or programs that offer your choice of study
- Check the school or program's website or give them a call to see if they offer support services you need for your disability or special healthcare need
- Make a pros and cons list to see which school or program would best fit your wants and needs

## Prepare academically

Make sure you are doing well on your schoolwork and it matches the needs of the school or program you want to apply to.

- Make sure you are taking and passing any high school classes that the postsecondary school or program needs you to take in order to be accepted
- Make sure your grades are high enough to meet the required grade average for the postsecondary school or program of your choice

## Take standardized tests

Most colleges and universities need you to take a standardized test, like the SAT or ACT, before you apply.

- Learn what test(s) are required by the school you are interested in
- Learn what score is needed to get into the school you are interested in
- Find out what accommodations you may be able to use on the test
- Prepare to take the test (find practice questions online)
- Register for the standardized test (ask your Transition Coordinator when your high school or a high school nearby is hosting the standardized test)
- Know you can take the test multiple times if you want or need to improve your score

## Gather important documents

There are many documents you may need when applying to a postsecondary program.

- Get a copy of your high school transcript
- Ask adults for letters of recommendation (this could be your favorite teacher, an adult you worked for, an adult you did volunteer work for, etc). Check your postsecondary program's required number of letters of recommendation to see how many you need. Make sure you give these adults plenty of time to write this letter for you. Know that some adults may say no, so think of more adults to ask.
- Get evidence of any volunteer or community experience (this could be a signed record of the hours you volunteered from the adult who organized the volunteering experience).
- Get copies of disability documentation (like your IEP, 504 plan, medical records, or eligibility determination)



## Time to apply!

Once you have done the activities above, now you can apply to the college, university, vocational school, or transition program of your choice.

- Work on filling out the application for the school or program of your choice (this can normally be found on their website)
- Pay attention to application deadlines and add that date to your calendar or reminder app
- Pay the cost of the application in order for it to go through, if the school or program requires payment. If you are unable to pay this fee, contact the school or program to see if financial assistance can be provided.

## Apply for financial aid

Unlike high school, it costs to attend postsecondary education. Financial aid can be provided to many students to bring these costs down. These activities should be completed if you need to apply for financial aid:

- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- Look for scholarships and grants you can apply for
- Talk to your school's guidance counselor to help look for local scholarships
- Research what information is needed to apply for the scholarships. Do you need to write an essay? Do you need to provide examples of classwork? Do you need to provide evidence of your disability?
- Make sure a trusted adult or peer can read over any scholarship essays you write.

## Visit schools/programs

Go on visits to the postsecondary institutions you are interested in to see if you like the campus and could see yourself engaging with the activities and people there.

- Schedule campus tours (a student guide will show you around and can answer some of your questions)
- Talk to students, professors, Disability Support Services (DSS) counselors, and admissions counselors if you have any questions

## Choose the school or program you will attend

Check your mail or email to learn which schools or programs you were accepted to. You can only choose one, so if you got into multiple, decide which would be best for you.

- Compare any financial aid offers you received. Will one school be more affordable?
- Compare the programs to see which is the best fit for the career or job you want. Does one school offer more specific classes related to the job you want? Does one program allow you to receive a needed certification in the field of work you want to do?

## Plan for accommodations

Postsecondary education schools and programs offer accommodations to students with disabilities through what's called the Disability Support Services (DSS) office. Accommodations can help you do your very best in the postsecondary school or program. How can you get these accommodations?

- After choosing a school or program, make an appointment with their DSS office
- Ask what documentation you need to show proof of your disability
- Talk to the DSS counselor about what accommodations they provide and what would best for you
- Learn from the DSS counselor how to request your accommodations from class professors and teachers

## Self-advocacy skills

Speaking up for yourself and asking for help is so important in postsecondary education and in many areas of adult life. How can you practice self-advocacy skills?

- Ask for help when you need it
- Learn how to explain your disability and the accommodations you need because of it
- Practice asking for your accommodations
- Learn your rights under disability laws
- Learn how to use email and teachers' office hours to ask questions

## Time management and organizational skills

Keeping on track with class assignments, due dates, and class schedules is very important and will help you be successful in postsecondary education. Every student has to learn to manage their time and stay organized. Here are some things that could help:

- Create a schedule for your classes and time to set aside for studying and homework
- Find tools to use like the calendar and reminder apps on your phone
- Add assignments and days they are due to your calendar
- Use folders on your computer to organize your notes and assignments
- Set aside time daily to study
- Arrive to all classes on time
- Attend all classes unless you are sick or another excused absence

**Adapted from:** [College Ready, Here We Come! A Checklist for Identifying Skills Needed to Be Ready for Postsecondary Education](#)

**Other resource:** [MDTransitions.org](http://MDTransitions.org)