



Considerations for Students with Physical Disabilities & Health Conditions Transitioning to College

As a person who worked with college students with physical disabilities and health conditions in a Disability Support Office for a number of years, there were a few things that came up a lot and can be easily addressed. Here are 3 things to consider to assist with your transition:

1. **If you had accommodations in the past, request them in college (even if you think you won't need them):** For some students, this is a “no-brainer”. For other students, this can be a real hurdle. For example, your high school teachers may have given you bathroom breaks during your exams due to Crohn’s Disease, but your college professors don’t have to. You may have been able to use a standing desk in high school due to your slipped disc, but you won’t necessarily get that in college, unless you ask for accommodations. Every college has a process that the student must complete before the student can receive accommodations. Typically you need to contact the Disability Support Office.
2. **You can request housing accommodations:** If you have a condition that requires specific housing to meet your needs, you can request what you need! Let’s say you need a private bathroom because of diabetes or Crohn’s Disease, or if you need an ADA accessible room (wheelchair accessible, strobe lights for Deaf and hard of hearing) you need to let the college know well in advance of you getting there. For incoming freshman, deadlines are usually in early June. If you are already a student, go and ask the housing office or the disability support office what the process is for requesting a specific type of housing based on medical need.
3. **Be prepared for emergency evacuations:** This is something that most people don’t think about, but it happens a lot in college! Someone burns toast in the common room kitchen and the whole dorm has to empty out at 2am. If you are a wheelchair user, have a conversation with the disability support services folks and the campus safety people about your specific plan for emergency evacuation. If you have medications or other supplies that you need, pack a small bag or fanny pack and hang it by the door. You don’t know how long you will have to be outside, so you better be prepared.

In college the student is required to request accommodations (not your mom and dad!). It’s important to remember that you are not alone in requesting accommodations. That’s why colleges have entire offices set up to support you. If you, your parents, or other people who support students with disabilities in their transition to college have questions, contact me: annie@accessiblecollege.com

