

Preparing for College and Postsecondary Education.  
Accessing Accommodations and Disability Services.  
What you need to know.

### Rights & Responsibilities:

As a post-secondary student with a disability, you will be expected to advocate for yourself. To be effective, you need to be informed about your rights and responsibilities, as well as understand the responsibilities that post-secondary schools have toward you. Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act protects elementary, secondary, and post-secondary students with disabilities from discrimination. The Office of Civil Rights enforces these laws.

Nevertheless, several of the requirements that apply through high school are different from those that apply at post-secondary schools (hereafter referred to as college). Unlike elementary and secondary schools, colleges are not required to identify you as having a disability or to determine your needs. However, colleges are required to provide appropriate academic adjustments as necessary to ensure that it does not discriminate on the basis of disability.

What must I do to get what I need?

You must inform your college that you have a disability and need an academic adjustment (often referred to as accommodations and disability services). It is best to request accommodations prior to the beginning of class but can be requested at any time. If the accommodation approved is not working, let the college know as soon as possible. You and your college should work together to resolve the problem.

Most colleges require you to follow specific procedures. You are responsible for knowing and following them. You can usually locate information about these procedures and where to go for assistance on the college webpage, or ask admission personnel.

Most colleges have a department and staff commonly called Disability Services. Staff help students identify, coordinate and access appropriate accommodations. Self-determination and advocacy are encouraged; and the staff should assist you with developing these skills when needed. To determine appropriate accommodations, your request is reviewed in light of the essential requirements for each program. The college is not required to lower essential requirements.

Colleges can require you to provide documentation showing that you have a disability needing an accommodation. Most colleges set reasonable standards for documentation but some require more than others. A new evaluation may be needed to meet requirements. Colleges are not required to conduct or pay for an evaluation, so you may have to pay. If you are eligible for state vocational rehabilitation services, you may qualify for an evaluation, at no cost to you.

Some examples of accommodations are:

- Arranging for priority registration.
- Substituting one course for another.
- Providing assistive technology (AT).
- Note takers.
- Recording devices.
- Extended time for testing.
- Testing in a quiet environment.

When working with staff and communicating your needs, it is important to identify all of your symptoms. Every traumatic brain injury (TBI) is unique, but there are some common symptoms which may describe those you experience. They are listed here:

- Persistent headache or neck pain.
- Loss of balance.
- Feeling tired all the time and lacking energy.
- Ringing in the ears.
- Loss of sense of smell and taste.
- Sensory overload.
- Slowness in thinking, acting, speaking, or reading.
- Short term memory loss.
- Getting lost or easily confused.
- Having more trouble than usual with the following:
  - Paying attention or concentrating.
  - Organizing daily tasks.
  - Making decisions.

Symptoms that may appear to be mental health conditions such as:

- Sudden mood changes.
- Difficulty managing relationships.
- Chronic anxiety.
- Depression or apathy.

After accommodations are approved, the student and the professor are notified. You may need to approach the professor to make arrangements for your approved accommodations. This is your opportunity to relate to the professor that even though you need accommodations, your expectations are the same, namely that academic standards will not be lowered. If you need some suggestions on how to begin this dialogue, see the template on the back page.

Even though staff and faculty want you to succeed, difficulties may still arise. Inform Disability Services as soon as possible. Ask for a copy of the college's grievance procedures. If you are dissatisfied with the school's outcome, contact the Office of Civil Rights for information about your rights.

You are not required to disclose your disability to your professor. If you choose to disclose, this is an opportunity to educate about TBI and to establish a better understanding.

Below is a sample letter you can send to your college professor or instructor:

Dear Professor or Instructor:

My name is (put your name here), a student in your class. I am a person with a disability, a traumatic brain injury (TBI). As other students may have a physical disability, mine is invisible or hidden. Because each injury damages different parts of the brain, every TBI is unique. TBIs cause a wide range of functional short and long-term changes effecting thinking, sensation, language, or emotions. Some of my functional limitations include (list limitations if you want to).

I have informed Disability Services of my disability and the college has approved the academic accommodations I need. I was directed to discuss them with you.

My primary objectives are to learn from you, to work hard to fulfill expectations necessary to complete this course, and to only be extended the accommodations for my disability necessary to be successful.

Please let me know when we can meet. Thank you for helping me succeed in your class.

Sincerely,  
Your signature.

End of sample letter.

This publication is provided by the Brain Injury Alliance Idaho.  
Associate Member of the United States Brain Injury Alliance.  
Find us on the web at <http://www.biaid.org/>.  
Call us at 208-367-2747.  
E-mail us at [info@biaid.org/](mailto:info@biaid.org/).

The information in this publication is not a substitute for legal advice and if needed, we recommend that you consult with a private attorney.

Some information in this publication is taken from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights publication entitled Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education, Know Your Rights and Responsibilities.

The funding for the development of this publication is partly from the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA).

For additional information or assistance contact:

Northwest ADA Center, Idaho.

On the web at: <http://www.nwadacenter.org/idaho>.

ADA TA Hotline, voice & text call 208-841-9422

Email: [dananwadacenteridaho@gmail.com](mailto:dananwadacenteridaho@gmail.com)

Northwest ADA Center.

Toll Free: 1-800-949-4232.

Video Phone: 425-233-8913.

Relay: 7-1-1.

Email: [nwadactr@uw.edu](mailto:nwadactr@uw.edu).

Idaho Assistive Technology Project.

Toll-free: 1-800-432-8324.

On the web at: <http://www.idahoat.org/Home.aspx>.

Email: [idahoat@uidaho.edu](mailto:idahoat@uidaho.edu).

Idaho Vocational Rehabilitation.

On the web at: <http://vr.idaho.gov/>.

DisAbility Rights Idaho.

On the web at: <http://disabilityrightsidaho.org/>.

Toll Free: 1-866-262-3462.

Email: [info@disabilityrightsidaho.org](mailto:info@disabilityrightsidaho.org).

Office of Civil Rights (OCR).

For more information about the civil rights of students with disabilities in education, contact OCR at:

Phone: 1-800-421-3481.

TDD: 1- 877-521-2172.

Email: [ocr@ed.gov](mailto:ocr@ed.gov).

Web site: [www.ed.gov/ocr](http://www.ed.gov/ocr).

Information on filing a complaint located at:

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/howto.html>.