



TRANSITION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

**A Caregiver Guide
to Navigating Your
Child's Path to
Adulthood:
Transition to
College Resources**



www.firstwnc.org



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Preparing in High School



Understand Your Rights and Responsibilities: Families will want to be familiar with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to understand the services and accommodations they're entitled to during high school and how these may change in college. Once students turn 18, parents will need to be aware of FERPA regulations that the college must abide by.

Understanding FERPA:
https://thinkcollege.net/sites/default/files/files/resources/IB_31_FERPA_R.pdf

An Overview of the Differences Between High School and College:
https://thinkcollege.net/sites/default/files/files/resources/HTTC_03_Understanding_Difference_HS_and_College_R.pdf



Develop Self-Advocacy Skills: Learn to communicate your needs effectively. Participate actively in Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings and practice discussing your accommodations.

- **Know Your Rights | CFNC:** <https://www.cfnc.org/plan-your-future/plan-for-college/students-with-disabilities/know-your-rights/>

Engage in Transition Planning: Starting at age 14, work with your school's transition team to set post-secondary goals and outline the steps to achieve them. Consider having youth participate in IEP meetings starting in middle school.

- **Transition Planning Checklist | Disability Rights North Carolina:**
<https://disabilityrightsncc.org/resources/transition-planning-checklist/>

Finding the Right School



Assess Support Services: Research colleges to determine the availability and quality of disability services. Look for institutions with robust support systems tailored to your specific needs.

- **Disability Services - NC Community Colleges:**
<https://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/students/student-services/student-support/disability-services/>
- Click on the college or university you are interested in on this map and check out their Disability Services on their website: <https://www.northcarolina.edu/>
- Thinking beyond NC? This is a database of almost every school in the US's disability services information: <https://nccsd.ici.umn.edu/cedar-database>
- And, a list of the best colleges and universities for students with disabilities: <https://www.ivywise.com/ivywise-knowledgebase/colleges-with-programs-for-students-with-special-needs/>
- Finally, a list of colleges and universities that offer special support programs for students with disabilities: <https://www.topcollegeconsultants.com/autism-in-college/>

Consider Specialized Programs: Some colleges offer programs specifically designed for students with intellectual disabilities. To explore this option, check out this website: <https://thinkcollege.net/college-search>

Visit Campuses: Schedule visits to potential colleges to meet with disability services staff, assess campus accessibility, and gauge the overall environment. Before you go, download and print this list of questions to ask during your visit. This will help you to compare programs and choose the one that is best for you:
https://thinkcollege.net/sites/default/files/files/resources/HTTC1_UPDATE_2023_R.pdf





Applying to Schools

- **Standardized Testing Accommodations:** Ensure you apply for necessary accommodations for tests like the SAT or ACT well in advance. If you have an IEP or 504 plan, often you can qualify for accommodations on the SAT and ACT. The process takes several weeks, so be sure to do this ahead of time.
 - <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/how-to-apply-for-sat-and-act-accommodations>
- **Application Disclosure:** Decide whether to disclose your disability during the application process. While not mandatory, sharing this information can highlight your resilience and the unique perspectives you bring.
 - <https://www.cfnc.org/plan-your-future/plan-for-college/students-with-disabilities/>
 - <https://thinkcollege.net/resource/transition-planning/411-disability-disclosure>
- **Highlight Strengths:** Use personal statements to emphasize your achievements, adaptability, and how you've overcome challenges related to your disability.
 - <https://www.cfnc.org/news/creating-a-personal-statement-for-college-that-stands-out/>



Watch
THE
Video

Paying for College



Complete the FAFSA: Filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is crucial for accessing federal and state financial aid.

- **FAFSA Application:** <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>



Explore State Scholarships: North Carolina offers scholarships and grants for students with disabilities. Utilize the College Foundation of North Carolina's scholarship search tool to identify opportunities. <https://www.cfnc.org/pay-for-college/scholarship-search/>



Investigate National Scholarships: Organizations like Scholarship America provide scholarships for students with disabilities.

- **Scholarship America:** <https://scholarshipamerica.org/>
- **Scholarships for Students with Disabilities:** <https://www.ivywise.com/ivywise-knowledgebase/colleges-with-programs-for-students-with-special-needs/>



ABLE Accounts:

- <https://thinkcollege.net/resource/other-funding-sources-federal-legislation/achieving-a-better-life-experience-able-savings>
- **Other sources of funding:** https://thinkcollege.net/sites/default/files/files/resources/IB53_Paying%20for%20College_R.pdf





Securing Accommodations

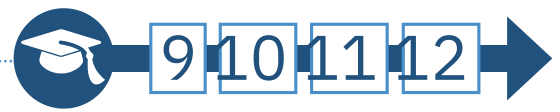
- **Contact Disability Services Early:** Once admitted, reach out to the college's disability services office to discuss and arrange necessary accommodations.
 - Links for to Disability Services for most colleges and universities in the US can be found here: <https://www.cedardatabase.org/>
- **Provide Current Documentation:** Colleges typically require recent documentation of your disability. Ensure evaluations are up-to-date and meet the institution's criteria. Each school is a little different in their requirements. Check the CEDAR database link to find your school's requirements on their Disability Services page: <https://nccsd.ici.umn.edu/cedar-database> .
- **Develop Self-Advocacy:** Be prepared to articulate your needs and work collaboratively with faculty and staff to implement accommodations. Students can begin attending IEP meetings as early as middle school to learn this skill. Learn about other students with disabilities who are advocating for themselves!
 - <https://thinkcollege.net/resources/rethinking-college>
 - <https://openingdoorstocollege.com/>
 - <https://youtu.be/LnfVYS3b4nE>

Accessing Support Services



- **Academic Support:** Many colleges offer tutoring, writing centers, and academic coaching tailored for students with disabilities. (peer matching)
 - <https://www.washington.edu/doit/>
 - Check the individual college's disability services through the CEDAR Project: <https://nccsd.ici.umn.edu/cedar-database>
- **Assistive Technology:** Explore available technologies that can aid your learning, such as speech-to-text software or audiobooks. Check out these websites for helpful information on assistive technology:
<https://www.washington.edu/doit/>
and
<https://thinkcollege.net/resource/technology/tools-to-help-manage-daily-life-for-college-students-with-intellectual> and
https://covid19.communityinclusion.org/pdf/T039_COVID_F.pdf

College Planning Timeline



Getting ready for college takes a lot of planning. Use this timeline during grades 9 to 12 to get started on the process.

EVERY YEAR IN HIGH SCHOOL

BUILD YOUR COLLEGE READINESS SKILLS.

Take general education classes to make your academic skills stronger. These classes can also help you to explore your career interests. Understand your disability and your learning style so you can share this information with your college advisor and disability services specialist. Practice using accommodations in high school, so you'll be ready in college.

DEVELOP A PERSON-CENTERED PLAN.

Ask family, friends, and other people to help you figure out your goals for after high school.

EXPLORE AND COMMIT TO EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES.

High school is a great time to try different extracurricular activities, like clubs, to see which ones are most interesting to you. This is also a great chance to make new friends.

FIND SUMMER VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES/JOBS/INTERNSHIPS.

Summer is a wonderful time to earn extra money and explore different career fields. Check with your transition specialist for information about Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and work opportunities in your area.

MEET REGULARLY WITH YOUR IEP TEAM AND GUIDANCE COUNSELOR.

Make sure your goals and disability needs are included in your Individualized Education Program, or IEP, and your Transition Planning Form. It's important to speak up about your desire to go to college so your team has time to help you prepare.

JUNIOR YEAR

LEARN MORE ABOUT COLLEGE.

Start by talking with your family, IEP team, guidance counselor, and classmates. Research colleges online, and make a list of schools that match your career and personal goals. Use Think College's College Search to find options.

MAKE VISITS TO COLLEGE CAMPUSES NEAR YOU.

Go to open houses, take campus tours, and meet with disability services staff. These staff people can tell you about accommodations, and how they're different in college from what you've had in high school.

SENIOR YEAR (FALL)

PUT TOGETHER ALL APPLICATION MATERIALS.

Make sure you and your guidance counselor have all the materials you need for college admission. If you don't know what these materials are, ask your guidance counselor. If they've never heard of this, share this timeline with them.

HAVE UPDATED EVALUATIONS BEFORE STARTING COLLEGE.

Be strategic about when your last 3-year evaluation will occur, prior to college. One way to be strategic is to plan for this evaluation with your IEP team. You may need to complete some evaluations, or tests, to make sure you have the most current information for disability services staff. These evaluations will help them make sure you get the accommodations you need.

SENIOR YEAR (SPRING)

SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION.

Most colleges have due dates between January 1 and March 1 of each year. Check the websites of the colleges you're interested in to see what their exact deadline is.

SET UP AN APPOINTMENT WITH YOUR COLLEGE ADVISOR.

Share a current copy of your person-centered plan. It will help your college advisor get to know your interests, preferences, strengths, and needs.

SET UP AN INTAKE MEETING WITH YOUR COLLEGE'S DISABILITY SERVICES.

Work with your IEP team to get a current copy of your documentation of disability to share at your meeting. This will help you get the accommodations you need.

REGISTER FOR CLASSES.

Most colleges offer registration to new students beginning in April. Set up a meeting with your college advisor to get the classes you want at the times you need.

LEARN HOW TO USE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION.

Contact your local transit authority to enroll in a travel training program. Your transition specialist can help you set this up.

ATTEND NEW STUDENT ORIENTATION.

Most colleges offer orientation for their new students between June and August. Don't miss this chance to get to know your new school and classmates!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Think College Transition Project
Institute for Community Inclusion
University of Massachusetts Boston
ty.hanson@umb.edu

 **ThinkCollege**
TRANSITION
PROJECT
www.thinkcollege.net/tc



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..UNDERSTAND LAWS, RIGHTS, AND RESPONSIBILITIES.....

- ☐ Do the student and family understand how the applicable laws change from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act after a student receives their high school diploma*?
- ☐ Does the student understand the impact of their disability and the accommodations and supports they need to be successful?
- ☐ Is the family aware of Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations related to communicating with colleges and other postsecondary programs?
- ☐ Does the family understand the transfer of rights that will take place at the Age of Majority and options for their continued involvement on the IEP team?

...Resources

- » The ADA, Section 504 & Postsecondary Education
- » Communicating with Your Student's College under Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- » Understanding the Difference Between High School and College
- » Prepare Your Child for Age of Majority and Transfer of Rights

..SUPPORT SELF-ADVOCACY, SELF-DETERMINATION, AND DECISION-MAKING.....

- ☐ Does the student have opportunities to make choices about elective classes, sports, and social activities?
- ☐ Is the student being supported to take an increasingly active role in IEP meetings?
- ☐ Does the student demonstrate skills to be an informed decision-maker? Does the family support the student in finding the relevant information to make choices? Does the family honor decisions that are made by the student?
- ☐ Does the student have knowledge of their disability and self-advocacy skills to request accommodations and voice their needs?
- ☐ Have the student and family been given information and training about self-determination? Has the student set goals for their future to “take charge” of their own life?
- ☐ Has the family considered the need for supported decision-making, guardianship, or other alternatives?

...Resources

- » How You Can Help Your Child Learn to Be a Good Self-Advocate
- » Self-Determination Consider the Alternatives: Decision-Making Options for Young Adults
»with Intellectual Disabilities

..ADDRESS ACADEMIC, FUNCTIONAL, AND SOCIAL SKILLS.....

- ☐ Does the student use a digital planner or schedule to keep track of homework and activities?
- ☐ Is the student able to manage day-to-day tasks and activities?
- ☐ Does the student initiate tasks and stick with them?
- ☐ Is the student able to use email and social media to communicate with teachers and peers?
- ☐ Does the student demonstrate positive social skills including being able to invite others to social events?

* “diploma” is used generically to indicate the document a state provides when the student completes their public education and is no longer eligible for IDEA-funded special education.

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Resources

- » [The ADA, Section 504 & Postsecondary Education](#)
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- ☐ Does the student have a strong work ethic and motivation? Have they been provided opportunities for paid work?
 - ☐ Does the student have the skills needed to access transportation in the community?
 - ☐ Does the student have personal hygiene routines and medication management skills?
 - ☐ Is the student able to make day-to-day expenditures using a debit card? Does the student have a basic understanding of finances including budgeting for expenses?
-

NOTE: This checklist is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive. There is no “one size fits all” for students with Intellectual and Developmental Disability. The IEP team will want to use a person-centered approach to consider the unique needs of each individual student. In addition to the PACER and Think College resources provided in each section, we would like to acknowledge and thank Karla Wade, Ph.D. for the use of her publications: “20 Powerful Strategies to Prepare Your Child for Inclusive Postsecondary Education” and “Transition Goals and Activities for Inclusive Postsecondary Programs.”



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Barb has been a parent advocate and project coordinator at PACER Center for 17 years, specializing in the areas of secondary transition and inclusion. In addition to working with families, she writes training curriculum and presents workshops to parents and professionals. She serves on Minnesota's State Rehabilitation Council and the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind. Barb has a young adult son with IDD who is successfully learning, living, and working in the community.

For more information, email transition@pacer.org or call the PACER Center at 952-838-9000.

PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment is a partner of Think College. We work together to develop materials to help families and others better understand opportunities in postsecondary education for students with intellectual disabilities. This brief was created by PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment and is based on a review of existing guidance documents and discussions with experts in the field.

PACER CENTER 
CHAMPIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES®

RECOMMENDED CITATION: Ziemke, B. (2020). Tips for IEP Teams to Help Students and Families Prepare for Inclusive Postsecondary Education. Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston.

**Western
Carolina
University UP
Program**



The WCU UP Program provides an inclusive, two-year, on-campus living and learning experience for college-aged persons with intellectual disability. The goal of the program is to facilitate UP students' transition from secondary school to adult life with education, employment, and independent living. The UP program currently enrolls up to 12 students at a time.

**UNC
Greensboro
Beyond
Academics**



Beyond Academics, is a program for students with intellectual disabilities who are interested in furthering their education. Integrative Community Studies is a four-year certificate program – awarded by UNCG's Office of the Provost – that emphasizes self-determination, life planning, and career development. Enrolled students develop a personalized college support plan to optimize their curricular and co-curricular experiences while enrolled in the program of study.

**NC State
University
Elevate**



Elevate is an inclusive postsecondary education program (IPSE) that provides a person-centered campus experience for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) opportunities to 'think and do' in order to enrich academic knowledge, transform career and occupational skills, and advance personal and social development.

***Check out what
NC has to offer!***

**APP STATE
Scholars with
Diverse Abilities
Program (SDAP)**



The Scholars with Diverse Abilities Program (SDAP) prepares college students with intellectual disabilities for personal growth and occupational success with a focus on health and wellness. The goal upon completion of the four year non-degree program is that students obtain competitive, integrated employment and are empowered to live independent, healthy, and fulfilling lives.

**Wingate
University
Julia's
Learning**



Julia's Learning is a living, learning, exploring, and working program which enables persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities to have a Wingate University college experience, leading to independence, autonomy, self-worth and meaningful lifelong employment. Students work toward earning a two-year certificate and will take part in inclusive classes, live on campus and participate in the full sweep of student life.

**UNC Wilmington
Inclusive Futures
Program**



The Inclusive Futures Program (IFP) is a comprehensive postsecondary education program for individuals with intellectual disability in Southeast North Carolina. The program is designed to provide an inclusive opportunity for participants to continue their education, increase independence and self-determination, and achieve competitive employment through evidence-based practices and community partnerships.

**UNC Chapel Hill HEELS 2
Transition**

UNC Chapel Hill HEELS UP



HEELS 2 Transition (H2T) offers a range of strengths based programs supporting young adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities toward a self-determined life. HEELS 2 provides learning opportunities both in and out of the classroom. They teach skills in career development, mental health, goal setting, life skills, college academics, and navigating life as an adult. Click here for more information:



HEELS UP is an inclusive higher education program where students with intellectual disabilities transitioning to adulthood access impactful opportunities to pursue personal goals in academics, employment, community engagement, and beyond. Our students benefit from the premier teaching, research, and service conducted throughout the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



Community College Options in NC

AB Tech Community College - [Successful Occupational Achievement Readiness \(SOAR\)](#) Alamance Community College - [Career College](#) Brunswick Community College - [Access to Achievement](#) Cape Fear Community College - [Essentials Program](#)

Catawba Valley Community College - [ABE Academy](#) Central Carolina Community College - [BELL Academy](#) Central Piedmont Community College - [LEAD Program](#) Coastal Carolina Community College - [College and Career Readiness Program](#)

College of the Albemarle - [Transitional Opportunities Program](#) Craven Community College - [Transitions Academy](#) Davidson-Davis Community

Edgecombe Community College - [Adult Basic Education \(ABE\)](#) Fayetteville Technical Community

College - [College and Career Readiness](#)

Guilford Tech Community College - [POWER Pathways](#) Halifax Community College - [Adult Basic Education \(ABE\)](#) Haywood Community College - [Adult Basic Skills](#) James Brunt Community College - [Giving Everyone A Role in Society \(GEARS\)](#)

Johnston Community College - [Access to Achievement](#)

Mayland Community College - [Skills/Work Skills Academy](#)

McDowell Tech Community College -

Nash Community College - [Basic Education \(ABE\)](#)

[Access to Achievement](#)

Pitt Community College - [Academy](#)

Randolph Community College - [Adult Basic Education \(ABE\)](#)

Richmond Community College - [Next Steps](#)

~~Robeson Community College -~~ [Access to Achievement](#)

Rowan-Cabarrus Community College - [Skills, Opportunity, Awareness, Readiness \(S.O.A.R.\)](#)

~~Sampson Community College -~~ [ACE Program](#)

Sandhills Community College - [Access to Achievement](#)

South Piedmont Community College - [Compass Education Program](#)

Stanly Community College - [Access to Achievement](#)

Wake Technical Community

College - [Pathfinder Career Exploration Program](#)

[Information about IPSE options are provided by ECAC, and can be viewed here: https://myemail.constantcontact.com/Transition-Trove---A-New-Quarterly-Newsletter-Packed-with-Resources-to-Prepare-Youth-with-Disabilities-for-Life-Beyond-High-Scho.html?soid=1101956619127&aid=P8456ldzdc0](https://myemail.constantcontact.com/Transition-Trove---A-New-Quarterly-Newsletter-Packed-with-Resources-to-Prepare-Youth-with-Disabilities-for-Life-Beyond-High-Scho.html?soid=1101956619127&aid=P8456ldzdc0)



References

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<https://www.topcollegeconsultants.com/autism-in-college/>

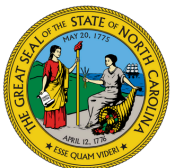
<https://www.ivywise.com/ivywise-knowledgebase/colleges-with-programs-for-students-with-special-needs/>

<https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>

<https://scholarshipamerica.org/>

<https://www.washington.edu/doit/>

Use this QR Code
to access the links.



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**
Division of Mental Health,
Developmental Disabilities and
Substance Use Services

This grant-based program receives funding from
North Carolina HHS Mental Health Block Grant