

## Parenting a College Student with Disabilities



College presents challenges for all students. If you are the parent of a student with a verified or suspected disability you will likely experience a heightened concern about your student's adjustment to college. **The two most important steps that your student can take are to:**

1. gain a comprehensive understanding of the differences, between high school and college in the rights, responsibilities, procedures and documentation required to seek reasonable and appropriate accommodations; (You will want to be knowledgeable about this too.)
2. connect with the Disability Services staff in the Counseling and Advising Center to begin the self-identification process well in advance of the first semester of enrollment.  
**<http://www.berklee.edu/counseling/specialservices.html>**

Colleges must comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. At the post-secondary level, public law 94-142 and IDEA no longer apply, including the required Individualized Education Plan/Program and 504 Plans. Your student's rights and responsibilities are very different in college than they were in high school. Your student will need to initiate the process of disclosing his or her disability to Disability Services – this responsibility resides with him or her.

Some students decide not to disclose their disabilities because they don't need accommodations. Then there are students who may not want to disclose for other reasons, but these students often surface mid-semester experiencing great levels of personal and academic distress.

### Consider These Parenting Tips:

**Discuss with your student his or her rights and responsibilities** -- and how they differ between high school and college - this will lead to a clearer understanding for your student;

**Know the campus resources and how each can benefit your student** -- then let your student know how smart he or she is to access various offices and/or administrators to gain support, to clarify next steps, to seek assistance, etc.;

**Think together and identify any other supports or resources**, outside of what the college provides, that might serve to bridge or support your student's specific needs;

**Don't think "solve"** -- but if and when your student reaches out to you to be involved, offer to partner to brainstorm solutions, options and possible next steps -- resist fixing the situation;

**Share appreciation and positive feedback** when you notice that your student makes good decisions, communicates effectively, takes initiative, and talks with you about something that is difficult to share;

**Caution your student about the snowball effect** -- better to address a declining situation early rather than try to pick up the pieces afterward -- remind your student of a time when he or she handled a situation before it became more serious -- and the benefits that approach had.

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