

College Bound

Postsecondary Education IS an Option for Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities



The intended audience for this document includes students with disabilities, their family members, and educators working with youth to transition from high school to adult life. The language is directed to students as the primary decisions makers about their own lives, with the understanding that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities might need assistance to effectively use the information. There is a companion document titled: **Reasons and Steps to Help YOU Think College** designed to facilitate access to the key points for youth with disabilities.

Going to college after high school is an aspiration for many students. College provides opportunities for educational, social, and career development at a different level than is afforded in the high school setting. Educators and family members of youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) do not typically include college, or postsecondary education, as an option, and students with I/DD often don't realize they can go to college after high school.

National and state trends are shifting toward the provision of additional college options for students with disabilities. Research shows that students with I/DD can be successful in postsecondary education given the supports they need and that employment outcomes are better for those who have taken at least some college level coursework (Smith, Grigal, & Sulewski, 2012). College opportunities for students with I/DD are expanding in Wisconsin too.









The Technical College System, University of Wisconsin System, and some private colleges currently offer some postsecondary education choices around the state for students with I/DD. Through collaboration among Institutes of Higher Education (IHE's), the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and Local Education Authorities (LEA's) or school districts, the Department of Health Services (DHS), and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), the number of choices is on the rise. The Think College Wisconsin Initiative (started in 2011) also shares information about college options with students who have disabilities and their families. The WI Board for People with Developmental Disabilities, in conjunction with the Waisman Center and Edgewood College, support Think College WI's efforts to expand college options for youth with I/DD in the state. Activities have been designed to engage the stakeholders listed above, as well as students and their family members, in conversations and actions that will lead to more doors to colleges being open to students with I/DD in Wisconsin.

The demand for more inclusive college options is high in Wisconsin. Currently, adult learners who are finished with public school services have two options: Cutting Edge at Edgewood College and Concordia University's Bethesda College. Cutting Edge is an inclusive program that includes access to college courses with students without disabilities and some campus housing. Concordia University's Bethesda College began in 2014 and also includes housing. For individuals still receiving services from their local school district, a number of concurrent enrollment programs exist across the state, including UW-Baraboo, Nicolet College, Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, Madison College, and UW-Manitowoc. These programs are partnerships between local school districts and colleges.

What does all this mean for you? If you are a high school student with I/DD, it means that you can go to college. If you are a family member or part of a student's team, it means college is a possibility and that students benefit from and contribute positively to the college environment.

Below is a list of benefits for to consider.

The Top 10 reasons for YOU to THINK COLLEGE:

-  Postsecondary education options exist in a variety of ways and settings (in person/ distance education/types of programs) to accommodate your needs and preferences.
-  Since college is open to a broad spectrum of students, many of your classmates and peers will seek postsecondary education in one form or another – college can be for anyone!
-  College represents a typical next step after high school and gives you a chance to become more independent as you learn and plan for your future.
-  College provides you with the chance to meet and get to know people you might not meet otherwise – a place to make new lifelong friends.
-  College is a time to explore interests with others who share similar interests – this can be in a variety of subjects.
-  College gives you exposure to academic content beyond the high school level, access to experts in their fields, and opportunities for deeper learning/more critical thinking.
-  College campuses have multiple work experience and community service opportunities for you to gain general employment skills while you continue your education.
-  By going to college, you might find out about career options that you never knew existed.



Going to college for any amount of time will help you get a meaningful job that pays the bills - which is the ultimate goal of college for most students.



College offers you opportunities to join clubs, play sports, and socialize with peers when you are not in classes or studying – in other words, college is fun!

Now that you know college is an option and you have had a chance to think about good reasons to go to college, it is time to begin planning for it. There are a number of steps to take, starting now. The rest of this document can help you—whether you are an individual with I/DD, a family member, a teacher, or a service provider—plan for college and employment.

Think College Early

It is important to begin planning ahead for this opportunity by or before age 14. Thinking about college during middle school years and high school freshman year means talking to teachers and guidance counselors about requirements for getting into college or a postsecondary institution of interest to you. You should also seek information directly from higher education institutions about their admissions requirements. Often colleges require you to take certain courses or certain exams before you can apply. The middle school and early high school years are also a good time to start saving money to pay for classes if you haven't done so before this time. However, if you are nearing graduation and have not done much planning for college, you can still find ways to attend and much of the information in this document will help you. Make sure to check out Think College Island, www.thinkcollege.net/think-college-island, a website about college for middle school students.



Take General Education Classes in High School

Inclusion in general education classes and taking them for regular credit or with modified grading is an important part of planning for college. While you are in high school, you usually have to meet certain graduation requirements to earn a high school diploma. Often, the more general education classes you can take the better. If it is an option for you, working toward a general education diploma is also helpful when applying for college.



Set a Goal for Going to College

Through your IEP, you will create a course of study for high school and develop your Postsecondary Transition Plan. Everyone with an IEP gets to decide on an education goal for after high school. Going to college can be your goal. As you set your future goals, keep in mind a few things:

1

Be a part of your IEP! Share your opinions and your interests so that your IEP reflects your goals and what you want to work on. Ask that college be part of your transition plan. It's also important for you to learn and develop strong self-advocacy skills while still in high school. If your school offers classes in this area, take advantage of them! This is very important in college. In high school, adults work hard to advocate for you, but in college, you'll need to advocate for yourself. Learn how to run your own IEP meeting and take ownership of your education.

2

Take high school classes of interest. Look at your high school's course description guide to see what classes are offered in your area(s) of interest. You can work with your high school case manager or special education teacher to develop a plan that includes these classes. You should ask that the classes you want to take be listed as your course of study in your postsecondary transition plan (PTP). If some of the classes you want in high school are not typically open to students with disabilities, you and your team might need to advocate for you to take them. Colleges cannot modify their courses for any student, so any regular education classes you can take that challenge you and help you grow will be a great benefit and help keep your college options open.

3

Learn about college admissions requirements. Many colleges have admissions requirements, so it will be important to know what they are; however, more and more colleges are offering alternative admissions and finding ways to admit students with I/DD who may not meet their admissions criteria. This might mean auditing classes or applying as a special student. So, even if you are not able to earn a general education diploma, there are still higher education options available to you. Taking modified general education classes in high school can be very helpful.

4

Build strong study skills. College is fun, but it's a lot of work. College students need to manage their time well, be organized, and get their coursework done. While in high school, work on your study skills. Use a planner to keep track of your assignments, keep papers from classes organized in folders or a binder, and get your homework done each night. In high school a lot of the learning happens in the classroom, but in college, a lot of the learning happens through the homework. It takes discipline and motivation to do well in college---work on becoming a strong student while in high school.

Learn to use assistive technology. Your high school may use assistive technology to help students learn information taught in classes. Colleges and college students use a lot of assistive technology as well. Assistive technology today often involves the same devices used by students without disabilities such as calculators, iPods, iPads, smart phones, voice recorders, laptops and notebook computers. There are programs and applications (apps) like Dragon, Kurzweil, and Proloquo2Go that can aid with communication, reading, and writing. In addition, there are assistive technology devices designed specifically for individuals with disabilities including AlphaSmarts, communication devices, and smartpens just to name a few. Exploring the different types of assistive technology your high school offers by asking your case manager or special education teacher what is available can help you in your high school classes now and with future college courses.



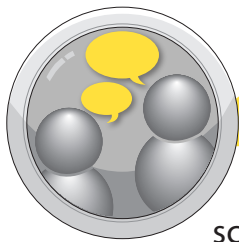
Stretch Your Independence

Going to college is about a lot more than just taking classes and studying. For many students, going to college also means that you are doing things for yourself and by yourself. Your parents or guardian and teachers won't be there to wake you up for class, encourage you to do your homework, or help you figure out how to deal with a tough social situation with a roommate, classmate, or friend. Depending on whether you live in campus housing, you may be doing your own laundry and deciding how much TV to watch or video games to play and when to go to bed. In order to be safe and successful in the college environment, you need to think about setting limits for yourself and knowing how to have fun safely. You and your family may need to have conversations (even if they are uncomfortable) about topics like drugs and alcohol, sex, exercise, and healthy eating.



Get Involved in Extra-Curricular Activities

Being involved in extra-curricular activities is an important part of being a high school student. Colleges like to see that students were involved in activities outside of classes. There are usually many kinds of clubs and activities in high school. These can range from sports-related options to drama and music to service clubs to running the school store and more. You will meet new people and have the chance to develop friendships. You can gain valuable work skills through extracurricular activities while exploring your interests. Many times, these clubs and activities can also give you the chance to apply for scholarships that will help pay for college. Find opportunities to become a member of a team or take on leadership positions.



Get to Know Your School Counselor

As mentioned above, it is important to make a plan for your course of study in high school with the goal of attending college. Every high school has at least one school counselor (sometimes called a guidance or career counselor) to work with students on planning for the future. Although you might have a case manager and other teachers assisting you, your high school guidance or career counselor is also very helpful. Your counselor can work with you and your case manager/teachers to develop a four-year course of study with classes that will help prepare you to go to college. Encourage your counselor to stay current on trends in higher education for students with intellectual disabilities. Suggest www.thinkcollege.net as an important source of information. Invite your school counselor to your IEP meetings.

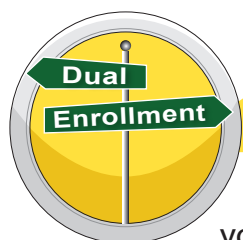


Explore Career Options While in High School

To make the most of college, it is best to have a list of jobs you would like to do after you finish. The majority of college students plan to work after graduation. Attending college courses will help you think about a career, and these courses will help to prepare you better for a job. However, you should get started exploring careers and trying out different kinds of jobs while you are still in high school. It is important to “try out” some of jobs you are interested in to help you narrow down a good fit for you! Many high school and college students change their career choices. It’s okay to change your career choices and areas of study as you gain new experiences. There are lots of ways you can investigate your interests:

- ▶ Go on Job Shadows at a variety of businesses
- ▶ Try Summer Jobs and work part-time during the school year
- ▶ Seek Internships at businesses that interest you
- ▶ Volunteer at places that interest you
- ▶ Take Career Interest Inventories
- ▶ Create a Person-Centered Plan for your future
- ▶ Visit Colleges and/or Postsecondary Schools that provide Technical and Vocational Training for careers that are of interest to you
- ▶ Participate in Job Fairs
- ▶ Look into Work Credits, Work Experiences, Work-Based Learning or Co-ops through your high school

Once you have had a chance to explore and experience different jobs and careers, you will be able to narrow down your interests. Then you can decide on a course of study that fits what you want to do. You may want to visit your local Job Center for assistance and possibly apply for services with your local area Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) to create an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). DVR can help you get to the job you want. Regardless of where you choose to attend college or how individualized your path might be, education after high school will help you have more career options.



Consider Dual Enrollment

If you are an 18-21 year old receiving transition services through your school district, you might be able to take courses at your local college. Being enrolled in both your public school and local college is referred to as Dual Enrollment. If dually enrolled, you could receive support from your public school while taking one or more courses at a college. This is an excellent strategy to begin exploring course topics, college life, jobs on campus, and transportation while having access to support.

If you plan to take college courses as a dually enrolled student, it will be beneficial to you to visit the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at the college before you start courses. The Disability Resource Center will determine what accommodations you are eligible to receive in your courses. Your high school will still be responsible for providing you with the supports and accommodations you need to be successful, but the DRC documentation outlines which accommodations you can use and still receive course credit. You will also need to show this documentation to your instructors when asking to receive these accommodations.



Consider Wisconsin Youth or Course Options

Course & Youth Options in Wisconsin allow students from public school districts to take courses at some colleges. **Youth Options** was designed for students in grades 11 & 12 who want to get an early start toward their career education by earning college credit while still in high school. Usually, the college courses under this option need to be subjects that the high school does not offer. Students may also be able to get access to college through Youth Options if they have taken all available high school classes in a particular department. The school district pays for tuition and books. However, unlike concurrent enrollment, the student must take the course for credit, and if the student fails the course or does not complete it, the student and/or family must reimburse the school district for the costs incurred. **Course Options** is a program available to K-12th grade students, based on offerings at particular colleges and accessed through an application process. Some school districts use the Course and Youth Options programs for students with disabilities receiving transition services to help them transition from high school to college. Other districts don't utilize these options very often, so you might need to justify why it would be helpful for your future. For more information about Course Options and Youth Options, see the related documents listed in the appendix.

Explore Colleges

There is probably at least one private college, a technical college, or a 2-year or 4-year university near you. Look at what courses they offer and at the other opportunities available on campus. Go on college tours to get a feel for the environment and to learn more about the school. Make sure you make an appointment to meet with disability services on campus to learn what accommodations and supports may be available. Check out the library, cafeteria, and academic departments of interest to you. Learn about the application process and find out if the school has an alternative admissions option. If you find that you may not be able to meet the requirements for traditional or alternative admissions for a degree or certificate program, there are still ways to access college classes. Consider enrolling in a class without applying for admission to the college (often called adult student status or special student status), auditing a class, taking continuing education courses, or taking online classes.

Colleges offer different types of programs. Common types of programs include degree programs, non-degree options, certificate programs, and technical diplomas. The following link includes a list of 4-year colleges in Wisconsin: www.uwsa.edu/ideass/widgets/blurbs/disability-offices/



Degree programs are usually focused on one area of study, called a major, such as English or education or biology. Students in these majors have to take courses for credit. There are required courses and some optional ones too. Once the courses are finished with a passing grade, the student earns a degree, such as an Associate's degree (for programs that take two years to finish) or a Bachelor's degree (for programs that take four years to finish). Students have to apply and be accepted into the program.



Non-degree options are for people interested in taking one or more classes to gain specific job skills (for example, computer classes to learn how to use Microsoft Word) or to explore an area of interest, such as photography or cake decorating. You may receive a grade, but if you decide to try to earn a degree, these courses usually will not count towards the degree. Students do not need to apply to be part of a particular program; instead, they simply enroll in the course of interest. There usually are no entrance requirements.



Certificate programs are offered at many colleges. Certificates focus on a field or trade (such as cosmetology or plumbing) and build skills through related coursework. Certificates usually take less than two years to earn if the student takes the full load of courses each semester. Examples of certificates include fitness, computer software, internet development, and hospitality. Students have to apply and be accepted into the program.



Vocational/Technical diploma programs provide hands-on training and some coursework to prepare for a specific occupation. These diplomas may take between one to two years to complete. Some examples include: auto mechanic, electrician, welder, dental assistant, machine tool operator, and agriculture equipment technician. Students have to apply and be accepted into the program.



Take a Course for Credit

When taking a course for credit, you may receive accommodations and still earn full credit. This is because accommodations are changes to the environment such as taking a test in a separate room or getting preferential seating in order to “even the playing field” so that the student has a fair chance to learn the course content despite a disability. However, the course content and expectations cannot be modified or changed from what the rest of the students have to learn and demonstrate. In order to earn a passing grade in a for-credit course, a student has to learn and show that they have mastered all of the material. High schools are allowed to provide both accommodations and modifications. That is a primary difference between taking courses for credit in high school and college. Talk to your case manager and special education teacher about the types of accommodations and modifications you are getting so that you understand which ones may or may not be available in college if you take courses for credit.

Modifications are changes to academic or behavioral expectations for a class based on individual abilities and needs. Examples of modifications that might be given to students with disabilities in high school include an assignment that covers less material (fewer spelling words), a shorter assignment (a one-page paper instead of a three-page paper), or a simplified test (two multiple choice options rather than three per item).

Accommodations vs. Modifications: What's the Difference?



Accommodations are strategies used to help people access or understand information and to help them show others what they have learned. Examples of accommodations include course materials in large print, books on tape/CD, getting a copy of the instructor's lecture before the class, extended time on assignments or exams, or having a note-taker. The actual class material is not different and the assignments are not shorter. For example, if everyone is expected to read three textbook chapters and write summaries for each, an accommodation may be for an individual to listen to the three chapters of the textbook through a CD instead of reading them or using voice-recognition software to write the summaries.

Modifications are changes to the coursework and content to simplify or shorten it. Examples of modifications would be a worksheet that has ten questions to complete instead of twenty or a textbook written at a lower reading level. When coursework is modified the individual isn't expected to learn everything that the rest of the students are required to master.



Audit a Course

Auditing a course means that you take the course without earning credit or a grade. People often audit classes when they want to know the information, but do not need the credits toward a degree or are not sure if they are prepared to succeed in terms of a grade in the particular course. This can be a great option for students with intellectual disabilities. To make the most of your learning when auditing a course, you should attend all of the courses and complete as much of the assigned work as you can. It's okay that you won't receive an official grade for the course because you will still learn some of the content of the course. The amount of feedback you get from the professor will be up to him or her and might include the grade range he/she thinks you achieved on assignments and in the class. Some students will take a course twice--the first time for audit and the second time for credit. By taking it twice, they may be in a better position to master the content by having been exposed to the course materials repeatedly. Some colleges charge less to audit a course than to take it for credit. This can be a benefit, but as a result, auditing students are usually only allowed to take the course if there is still room in the class and with consent of the instructor. If you receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), audit fees are waived in the University of Wisconsin College system. This means you can audit a course for free at any of the 2-year or 4-year UW colleges. This does not apply in the Wisconsin Technical College System. For more information about the University of Wisconsin's auditing policies for students on SSDI or SSI, see the appendix.



Enroll in Continuing Education

Most colleges and universities offer continuing education classes for community members. These classes range from personal enrichment (pottery, metal-working, fitness, baking) to career training and are often held in the evenings or on the weekends so working adults can access them. Taking continuing education courses is a great way to explore interests and meet others who share these interests.



Take Adult Education Classes

If you are interested in improving your academic skills like reading, writing, and math, it may be helpful to enroll in ongoing adult education classes. These courses focus on building literacy and math skills to prepare individuals for work or to earn a GED. You may also have a local literacy council that can provide free tutoring in reading.



Look into Online Classes

Most colleges offer some online courses, and there are even a number of colleges and universities that only offer classes online. This makes it possible to take a specific class or earn a certificate or degree online. This is a valuable option for individuals living far from a college campus or for someone who prefers or benefits from using computer technology to access course content. If you consider online options, you will need to make sure that you have regular access to a computer with internet. You will need to be able to use the online class format used by that particular college to locate the assignments and materials.

Although online learning can be a good way to access postsecondary education, it is important to note that you will need to have good time management skills, work well independently without face-to-face meetings with professors and classmates, be able to follow a syllabus and keep track of class deadlines. Taking online courses sometimes requires working in “virtual groups” with other students in the class on projects. Good comprehension, reading, and writing are also typical skills needed. This does not mean that you have to be able to do everything without any help at all, but you should think about the equipment required, things you might need to learn, and the help available to you from home before you register for online/distance courses.



Investigate Classes Offered by Community Centers

Many towns have community education centers open to anyone living in that area. These centers may offer affordable classes or workshops on a variety of topics such as fitness, technology and computer skills, and resume writing. In some places, you may be able to call and suggest ideas for future classes. Classes at community centers can be a good way to begin taking classes outside of high school and often include a number of the benefits listed earlier in this document.



Consider Apprenticeships

If you are interested in the skilled trades such as cosmetology, cement masonry, or plumbing, you may want to explore an apprenticeship in that field. Apprenticeships are offered through community and technical colleges and through trade organizations or companies such as a carpentry builders’ association. An apprenticeship is a training program that prepares workers through on-the-job training and classroom instruction.

Apprenticeships are a great way to gain knowledge in a field so that you can be a competitive worker, and they help you get into careers available only to those with specialized experience. Typically, you will get paid while completing an apprenticeship. Applying for an apprenticeship is a lot like applying

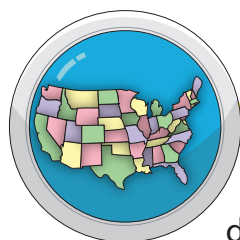
for a job. You may have to fill out an application, go through an interview process, and take some tests that will assess your skill levels in math and reading and writing. The application process can be different for each job. Sometimes, apprenticeship training can take a little longer than a program at a college, but it may be a good fit for you.

Check out these websites for more information on apprenticeships in Wisconsin:

www.dwd.wisconsin.gov/apprenticeship/

www.dwd.wisconsin.gov/youthapprenticeship/

www.witechcolleges.org/your-education/types-degrees-and-diplomas/apprenticeship



Consider College Options in other States

There are over 250 college programs for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the United States. If you are interested in attending college in another state, check out the Think College database of college options at www.thinkcollege.net/college-search.

As you research, notice the differences between the programs. Some focus on job skills and independent living skills while others focus on access to college courses and campus life. Some programs offer on-campus housing while others do not. Decide what is most important for you based on what you hope to gain by attending college. When you look at colleges in other states, pay attention to costs and distance from home. Some programs in different states charge “out-of-state” tuition, others do not. Besides tuition, be sure to ask for information on costs for books, on-campus housing, or other living environments. Whether you are considering college options close to home or outside of your home town, you will also want to find out about the types of support they offer.






Support Services Available at College

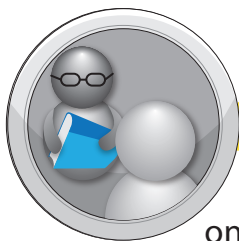
All colleges offer a range of support services to students. When touring a college or university, seek out the college staff you will likely work with if you attend that school. This will give you a sense of the college climate, which will help you know if you would feel comfortable and included there. It is also a good way to learn what opportunities and services are available to students. There are some specific steps you can take to get the information you need about supports available to help you succeed at the colleges you are considering.



Accommodations through the Disability Resource Center

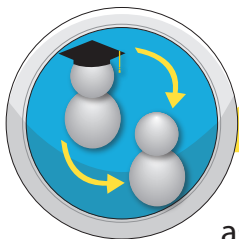
Nearly all colleges have a disability resource center which provides services to students with disabilities to make sure they have access to the opportunities available at the college. These services can be extremely helpful, but they are very different from special education services in high school. Below are some of the differences:

-  Disability disclosure. When you start going to college, people might not know that you have a disability. If you want assistance from the disability resources center you will have to disclose that you have a disability. This means you share information about your disability with others. This is a personal decision and it can be a difficult one to make. If you choose not to disclose your disability, you will NOT be able to have accommodations or the support you might need to be successful in college. For more information on disclosure of a disability, visit the following website: www.thinkcollege.net/october-2010/disclosure-of-disability
-  Documentation of disability. If you decide to disclose that you have a disability, your next step is to submit documentation of your disability to the disability resource center. Updated testing might be needed, and an IEP is usually not accepted as the only documentation of a disability. A disability services coordinator will look over your documentation and work with you to identify appropriate accommodations and possibly other types of support. Please remember that it will take time for the disability services coordinator to look over your documentation, meet with you, and set up accommodations, so it's a good idea to start this process as soon as possible. There are a number of websites listed at the end of this document with information about disability documentation in Wisconsin. Keep in mind, it is always best to contact the individual campuses to ask what they require.
-  Accommodations. The support that you received in high school will probably be different from the accommodations you will receive in college. Possible accommodations that you may be eligible for in college include note-taking, assistive technology, extended time on tests, alternative media, or interpreting. If there are specific accommodations you'd like to be able to access, ask about them. Also, ask about the types of assistive technology available so that you can become familiar with these tools while still in high school, if possible. There is a list of some types of assistive technology available earlier in this document. Other types might also be available to you – and the list of options is growing all the time. The more you know about the type of technology that is helpful to you in school, the better self-advocate and more independent you can be!
-  Self-advocacy. While you were in high school, your IEP team met once a year to talk about the support you needed. And maybe without you even knowing it, they worked with the paraprofessionals and teachers to make sure everyone knew which accommodations would be best for you. In college, no one will do this for you. You will need to advocate for yourself. This means that you need to understand the accommodations you are eligible to receive and take responsibility for providing your instructors with the documentation from the Disability Resource Center listing your approved accommodations.
-  1:1 support. In high school it's common to have a paraprofessional or other school staff with you in classes. This does not usually happen in college. However, if you find that you need more intensive supports than the college provides, the disability resource center may be able to help you find other types of support or fee-based services. You may also be able to get support from adult service providers. See the section below, Finding Additional Sources of Support and Funding.



Tutoring

Most colleges offer tutoring services separate from disability services. Any student on campus who wants tutoring can seek it out. Colleges often provide study groups, one-to-one tutoring, and drop-in times. Some departments, such as the math department, will also provide tutoring for its students. Most departments and instructors can help you get connected with tutors if you decide you want one. Each tutor helps several students, so you will need to make a schedule to meet with him or her. Tutors do not typically attend class with people to provide one-to-one support, although sometimes you can find a tutor who is in the same class with you. Some colleges do have education coaches or peer mentors (a student) who will go to class with you and spend time with you outside of class. At most colleges, though, students who want or need one-to-one support will likely have to find and pay for that help. Sometimes, use of agency money, SSI, or IRIS money can be used. You should check with your agency consultant for clarification.



Mentoring

Some colleges use peer mentors to support students for a number of reasons, such as helping first-year students adjust to college. Other colleges that offer programs for students with intellectual disabilities use peer mentors too. These peer mentors may help with class work, but they may also help the student socially by hanging out in the evening or meeting up for lunch in the cafeteria. By having a peer mentor, you get to know another person at the college and you have someone to go to when questions come up, such as, how to sign up for a club. A peer mentor in class can be great if you have a question, need a concept explained, or directions repeated. This is a person you could text or email after class if you have questions about an assignment. If you think you'd like a peer mentor for a class, and the college does not have a mentoring program set up, try talking to the instructor and/or staff in the disability services center. They may be able to help you find someone in the class who would like to sit by you and offer a little support when needed.



Advising

If you know the area of study you are most interested in (i.e. early childhood education, music, art, plumbing, etc.), arrange to meet with someone from that department. Some departments have someone whose job it is to meet with and advise prospective students about applying. In other cases, professors or course instructors meet with people interested in applying. Meeting with someone in person can be a good way to learn about their program and course offerings and also for you to share your related interests and experiences with them. You might get specific information about classes, instructors, schedules, and expectations of the program. This networking gives you a sense of the program format and flexibility, and it is an advantage to already know the instructors when you decide to take a course and need to ask for an accommodation. Many times, college advisors and disability services offices at the campus work together to help and guide you as you sign up for the courses you want to take.

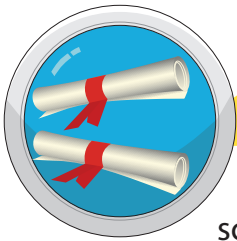


Career Counseling

Since gaining meaningful employment is the ultimate goal of college, visit the career services office on campus to learn how they support students in their career preparation. Many career offices help students write and edit resumes and cover letters, provide mock interviews, assist with finding internships, provide individualized career counseling, and host a job board with current listings. This step is often part of a student's final year or semester at a college; however, you can visit the career services center at any time to find out the types of assistance offered there.

Extra Support and Funding for College

The previous section describes the typical range of supportive services that colleges provide for students who need them. However, if you think you might need additional support, such as educational coaching or help with transportation, you can look to other agencies for support. Programs like DVR, IRIS or Family Care in Wisconsin can sometimes offer assistance with supports related to college. You can check with your local Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) for information on these options or for help getting connected to information for funding resources. If you begin attending college before you graduate or exit from high school, you may be able to get support through your school as you adjust to college life and get connected with the services available there.



Dual Enrollment Can Offer Extra Support and Funding

As mentioned earlier, dual enrollment means being enrolled at both your high school and a college. This can be a great way to try out college courses while you are still in high school receiving supports through your IEP. Some school districts will provide support on the college campus and transportation. Sometimes districts may help cover the costs of taking a course by using special education, or IDEA, funds. Make sure to talk with your IEP team and school district about this option. Include goals in your IEP that are aligned with going to college.



Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

Earlier in this document, DVR is mentioned as a possible source of support to explore career interests and develop a post high-school plan to achieve your career goal. DVR is also another possible source of support and funding for college. You and your parents might have completed an application for DVR services with advice from your teacher or case manager. If you have not already done this, you can do it at any time. It is helpful when applying to DVR to have an

idea about your plan for college and the career you want afterwards. Once found eligible for services, you and your DVR counselor will create an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). If your IPE includes the need for college courses to reach your career goal, then DVR might be able to help you pay for those courses, although they will expect you to seek other funding options first. In Wisconsin, students need to complete a FAFSA (see appendix for information on the FAFSA) prior to DVR providing assistance with college expenses. DVR may award grants of a specific amount to cover part of the tuition (usually not the total amount), and DVR may also be able to help you cover costs of any assistive technology you need to access material for courses. DVR may decide to only pay for courses taken for credit related to a degree or certificate. If you get assistance from DVR with college expenses, then you will need to keep an ongoing dialogue with your DVR counselor to demonstrate academic success.



Long-Term Supports

Between the ages of 17 and 18, you will need to start the process of determining if you will be eligible to get long-term support funding after high school. Someone from your school or another organization may refer you for a functional screening at the adult services intake location in your area. The person you meet for the functional screening could be from one of several places: the ADRC, your county office, or a managed care organization. You might have to work with a few different people and agencies to be sure you get all of the services you are eligible to receive. You may also need to participate in some testing or other assessments in addition to the functional screen in order to apply for disability services at college. You can often work with your school district and doctors to get that done.

If you qualify for adult long-term supports, you will be in one of three programs: Family Care, Include, Respect, I Self-Direct (IRIS), or County-based Adult Waiver services. The type or types of adult services depends on the county where you live. These programs all have different rules for how your long term support funding can be used for your services. It is very important to have someone from adult services in your area explain how your supports will work. If the area where you live is operating under a model called Family Care, which is a managed care program, you will be able to choose either a MCO (Managed Care Organization) or IRIS. If not, then your services will be funded through the county department of human services through a community-based Medicaid Waiver. In some counties there is a waiting list for services.

If you live in a Medicaid waiver county and you are on the Children's Long-Term Supports Waiver (CLTS), that program might be able to help you access college classes and activities. For example, there is a waiver service called Mentoring that can be used to hire someone to help you participate in the college environment before you turn 21. Your Support and Service Coordinator can help to explain the mentoring option and other ways you can spend time in the college environment, as well as how your program will change when you turn 21.

Your long-term support funding could be used to pay for transportation to college, independent living supports, and for a person to "coach" you in your classes. Tuition is not usually covered; however, courses that will help you learn living skills or become more independent in the community might be

covered. Therefore, it is very important to invite all the people and agencies who will be supporting you to sit down together with you to develop a plan that supports your goals. Your plan will be individual to you, so be sure to tell your support team what is important to you and ask what can be covered. If college is important to you, then make sure your team includes it in your individual plan and in your budget to the extent possible.

Paying for College

College is expensive, so it is important to plan for ways to pay for it. As you probably noticed in the earlier sections of this document, several potential sources of some funding for college were mentioned, but many are dependent on availability and whether you qualify. Most families look for a variety of sources of funding to help pay for college. These sources may include private funds, scholarships, and financial aid. Some people need to work while in college and decide to take one class at a time to make it more affordable. One specific thing you can do is visit the PACER website for useful information on planning and funding college: www.pacer.org/publications/possibilities/savings-for-your-childs-future-needs-part1.html



Use Private/Personal Funds

Many individuals and families pay for college from their own funds. Families often begin saving from an early age, and an individual interested in attending college may want to get a job during high school to start saving up. There are some ways to save for college without jeopardizing your benefits—from special needs trusts to Individual Development Accounts. Visit the PACER website for more information:

www.pacer.org/publications/possibilities/saving-for-your-childs-future-needs-part1.html
www.pacer.org/publications/possibilities/saving-for-your-childs-future-needs-part2.html

Consider getting a benefits analysis to help you and your family identify ways to save money so that disability benefits are not negatively impacted. As mentioned above, a special needs trust or an Individual Development Account may be two ways to safely save money. A benefits analysis may also identify ways to utilize your supports and benefits to help you reach your college and career goals. DVR will often pay for a benefits analysis, and these analyses are also likely offered through the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) in your area.

In addition, if you work while you attend college and you are also on public benefits, such as social security income, you will want to make an appointment with a work incentives benefits specialist to see if there are benefits protection programs you can use when you work during college. If you work, you can use part of your earned income to pay for some of your college expenses. Find out if you are eligible for a PASS plan (Plan to Achieve Self-Support).

To find a benefits specialist near you and your local ADRC, check out the following websites:

www.eri-wi.org/benefits-specialists

www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/ltcare/adrc/customer/map/index.htm



Apply for Scholarships

Look into scholarship opportunities within your local, school community. Many districts have local scholarship funds. Find out how to access the application process by meeting with your high school counselor, case manager, and parent/guardian. You can also work on investigating scholarship opportunities by starting a search online with your teacher or parent/guardian. There are many scholarships for which you may apply, but be sure to check for any special requirements or information on who can apply. Sometimes, the person or group offering the scholarship may want a potential recipient to be a family member or someone who is the first to go to college in their family, etc. There are also scholarships specifically for students with disabilities, so check out the ones listed at the websites below. Applying for scholarships may take time but can be worth it.

Money received for scholarships does not need to be paid back!






<http://www.thinkcollege.net/topics/paying-for-college#scholarships>

<http://www.washington.edu/doit/Brochures/Academics/financial-aid.html>



Look into Financial Aid and the Higher Education Opportunity Act

Financial aid is money that is loaned to a student to help him/her pay for college. To receive this federal financial aid, you have to meet eligibility criteria and fill out a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Some of the eligibility criteria for financial aid programs at the present time include:

-  Demonstrate financial need
-  Have a high school diploma or GED
-  Be enrolled or accepted for enrollment as a regular student in an eligible degree or certificate program
-  Be enrolled at least half-time
-  Maintain satisfactory academic progress in college or career school

Unfortunately, these criteria disqualify many people with intellectual disabilities from being eligible for financial aid. You may still need to complete a FAFSA, though, especially if you are a DVR consumer. While it is discouraging that many students are not eligible for this aid, change is coming. The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 included opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities to apply for federal financial aid (such as Federal Pell Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG), and Federal Work Study), if they attend a program at a college or university that has been approved by the federal government as a Comprehensive Transition Program. As of July 2014, there are thirty-four approved CTP programs in the United States, but this number is expected to grow. To learn more about federal financial aid, this act and approved colleges, visit <http://studentaid.ed.gov/eligibility/intellectual-disabilities>

If you would qualify for financial aid, you might be offered a work-study job at the college where you want to attend. This arrangement would employ you in a job on campus and the money you earn would go towards your tuition costs. If you are interested in this option, you should check the eligibility criteria at the college you want to attend when you apply.



Check into Auditing Policies

As explained previously, if you receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), audit fees are waived in the University of Wisconsin College system. This means you can audit a course for free at any of the 2-year or 4-year UW colleges. Unfortunately, this does not apply in the Wisconsin Technical College System. For more information about the University of Wisconsin's auditing policies for individuals receiving SSDI or SSI, see the appendix.



Serve in AmeriCorps

Another possible source of funding for college is AmeriCorps, a branch of the Corporation for National and Community Service. AmeriCorps provides individuals with opportunities to serve their community in the areas of health, environmentalism, education, or public safety. During a year-long term of service, members work full-time or part-time and earn a monthly living stipend. At the end of their completed service term, members earn a Segal Education Award to pay for college expenses (such as tuition, fees, and books) at a qualified higher education institution, including some vocational programs. The award can also be used to pay back educational loans. **In 2012-13**, a full-time member earned **\$5,500** and a part-time member earned **\$2,750**. To learn more about AmeriCorps and the Segal Education Award visit the following websites:

www.americorps.gov

www.waisman.wisc.edu/thinkcollege/service_americorps.htm

This document covered a lot of information and ideas about seeking out opportunities to attend college. Below is a brief summary in the form of a checklist to help you as you make your plan for college.

12 Steps to THINKING COLLEGE












1 Talk with your family and case manager/teachers about your post-high school goals, including college.



2 Meet with your IEP team to develop an employment goal and a postsecondary education goal that fit well together.



3 Map out a course of study for classes in high school that matches with your employment and educational goals and that will help you get into college.

-  4 Develop annual goals and objectives that will help you reach your postsecondary education and employment goals.
-  5 Spend time both in school and out of school exploring jobs you are interested in to see if they are a good match for you.
-  6 Seek work experiences and extracurricular activities that are related to the type of career you ultimately want to have.
-  7 Apply for DVR services that might be able to assist you with funding to access career-related assessments, job development, job coaching, benefits analysis, or college courses.
-  8 Talk with your family and guidance counselor and do research about possible ways to pay for college.
-  9 Start or keep saving money to help with your future college expenses.
-  10 Set up a benefits analysis to determine how best to save for college.
-  11 Tour college campuses and set up meetings with the disability resource center at the schools where you choose to tour.
-  12 Study, work hard, advocate for yourself, and be involved in your school and community.



Conclusion

Many individuals do not follow the traditional path to college these days. Colleges and universities are working to meet the needs of people with different types of schedules, interests, and support needs. The types and number of careers is also very broad and a wide variety of courses related to many of them can be found at colleges. Employers like to see college course work on people's resumes. By taking college courses, you will have an advantage in the job market.

Just because you have a disability does not mean that college is not for you. You might take one class at a time. You might take courses on a variety of topics in different career fields. It might take you several years to finish a program or certificate. Any way that you do it, attending college expands your knowledge, skills, and career opportunities. So, as you plan for your life after high school, don't forget to "think college!" Being a strong self-advocate will make it easier for you to tell people about your interests, strengths and preferences and it will also help you access your career goals. Do not be afraid to try something new. Go for it!

Resources

General Information

- <http://www.thinkcollege.net>
- <http://www.thinkcollege.net/college-search>
- <http://www.thinkcollege.net/topics/resources-for-families>
- <http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/thinkcollege>
- <http://www.postsecondarychoices.org>

Websites for Students

- <http://weconnectnow.wordpress.com>
- <http://www.thinkcollege.net/think-college-island>
- <http://www.wiyouthfirst.org>

Wisconsin Department of Instruction's Transition Information and Opening Doors Series

- http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/sped_transition

Cutting Edge Program at Edgewood College-Madison, Wisconsin

- <http://www.edgewood.edu/Prospective-Students/Cutting-Edge>
- http://innovationsnow.net/Cutting_Edge_Pilot_Project.html
(see link "Inclusion into Regular Education Courses" at bottom of page)

Youth and Course Options

- <http://youthoptions.dpi.wi.gov>
- http://youthoptions.dpi.wi.gov/files/youthoptions/pdf/yo_faq.pdf
- <http://courseoptions.dpi.wi.gov>
- http://courseoptions.dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/cte/pdf/Comparison_between_Course_Options_and_Youth_Options_May_9_2014.pdf

Apprenticeships

- <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/apprenticeship>
- <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/youthapprenticeship>
- <http://www.wistechcolleges.org/your-education/types-degrees-and-diplomas/apprenticeship>

Disability Documentation and Accommodation Information

- <https://heath.gwu.edu/files/downloads/autismspectrumdisordersguide.pdf>
- <http://www.witc.edu/stusvcscontent/docs/accommodations/2013-Disability-Accommodations-Guide.pdf>
- <http://www.ahead.org/about>

Disability Disclosure Information

- <http://www.thinkcollege.net/october-2010/disclosure-of-disability>

Contact Information for College/University Disability Services

Wisconsin Technical College System

- <http://www.wtcsystem.edu/about-us/governance/system-office/educational-services/student-success>

Wisconsin Independent Colleges

- http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/cedd/connections/pdfs/2012_WI_Independent_College_DS_Contact_List.pdf

University of Wisconsin 2-Year Colleges

- <http://uwc.edu/students/disability>

University of Wisconsin 4-Year Colleges

- <http://litemoon.uwsa.edu/ideass>

Paying for College

Saving for College

- <http://www.pacer.org/publications/possibilities/your-childs-education/163-planning-and-funding-your-childs-educationpost-secondary-schools-part1.html>
- <http://www.pacer.org/publications/possibilities/saving-for-your-childs-future-needs-part1.html>
- <http://www.pacer.org/publications/possibilities/saving-for-your-childs-future-needs-part2.html>
- <http://www.thinkcollege.net/topics/paying-for-college>

Finding a Benefits Specialist and Your Local ADRC

- <http://www.eri-wi.org/benefits-specialists>
- <http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/adrc/customer/map/index.htm>

Scholarships

- <http://www.cliu.org/cms/lib05/PA06001162/Centricity/Domain/26/DisaboomScholarshipList.pdf>
- <http://www.rubysrainbow.org>

Financial aid and the Higher Education Opportunity Act

- <https://studentaid.ed.gov/eligibility/intellectual-disabilities>
- <http://www.thinkcollege.net/topics/opportunity-act>

Auditing Policies

- <http://continuingstudies.wisc.edu/advising/guests.htm>
- <http://www.uwsa.edu/bor/policies/rpd/policies.pdf> (see 4-10, Class Audit Policy)

AmeriCorps

- <http://www.americorps.gov>
- http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/thinkcollege/service_americorps.htm

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Along with several reviewers and editors who added valuable contributions.

We hope that it provides helpful information to guide youth and their families to figure out what college option(s) are the right match for them.



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University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities
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