

Rights and Responsibilities of Students with Disabilities

This is a short guide to knowing and understanding the law.

Student Rights

In college **you are responsible** to make sure that your needs are met. Two federal civil rights laws can assist you in reaching your school goals. These laws are called the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** and **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act**. These laws provide students with these rights:

- the right to equal access to postsecondary education;
- the right to non-discrimination;
- the right to participate in, and enjoy the benefits of your school;
- the right to an accessible education;
- the right to an appropriate accommodation;
- the right to have information about your disability kept private.

Understanding the laws can assist you in achieving success as a student. Many web sites on the Internet can help you learn more about how these laws relate to you. One site that answers many of the questions you may have is located at:

www.pacer.org/pride/504.htm

In addition, the state you live in may have laws, often called “human rights laws,” which prohibit discrimination and require equal access for people with disabilities.

Please realize that the laws do not require a school to lower its academic standards. Schools will not:

- give you easier work; or
- change the rules to make it easier for you than other students.

You must continually meet relevant academic and conduct standards to receive protection of the law.

Disclosure

If you think you will need any accommodations because of your disability, you must tell your school. You will not receive accommodations or assistance unless you inform the Disability Services office and provide appropriate documentation of your disability.

Your responsibility is to inform your school that you will need an accommodation. Each school has its own paperwork requirements necessary to arrange an accommodation. Most schools require that you provide recent, professional documentation from a doctor or other licensed professional. Simply put, you may have to prove you have a disability.

Accommodations must be appropriate and effective for your situation. An effective accommodation will address your specific limitations caused by your disability.

Finally, understand that your school must provide educational accommodations at no cost to you. But they do not have to provide or pay for:

- personal devices;
- accommodations for personal use;
- accommodations which fundamentally alter a school program;

This means that schools will not pay for personal care attendants; they will not pay for you to have an accommodation at home to do your homework; and they do not have to provide an accommodation if it is too expensive.

Student Responsibilities

1. Notify the School:

If you will need any accommodation, register with the office for Disability Services.

2. Provide Documentation:

It is the student's **responsibility** to provide professional documentation of his/her disability. The Disability Services office will be able to tell you what types of documentation are required.

3. Determine your classes' requirements and possible needed accommodations:

4. Request Accommodations:

Request accommodations as far in advance as is possible.

5. Meet Academic and Conduct Standards:

You get no special treatment because you have a disability. You must still meet the essential requirements of a class or program. You are also required to follow the conduct standards of the university as all other students do.