

Q&A: My Rights as a Student with a Disability in College¹

Can a college ask me about my disability prior to admission?

No. A college **may not ask** about your disability prior to admitting you. However, a college **may ask** if you can meet the academic and technical standards that are required for admission, as long as those questions are not designed to reveal the existence of disabilities.

Do I have to disclose my disability after I'm admitted?

No, disclosure of your disability is always voluntary. However, as discussed below, if you want the college to provide an academic adjustment or auxiliary aid/service, you must identify yourself as having a disability. Likewise, you should let the college know about your disability if you need and want to be assigned to accessible facilities.

What are academic adjustments?

Academic adjustments are modifications to the academic requirements of a college program and may include auxiliary aids and services. Colleges **do not** have to make modifications to requirements if they can show that they are essential to the instruction of the specific program or any directly related licensing requirement.

Examples of academic adjustments:

- priority registration
- reducing a course load
- substituting one course for another
- extended time for testing
- Notetakers
- Interpreters
- Readers
- Videotext displays
- Talking calculators
- Electronic readers
- Braille calculators
- Telephone handset amplifiers
- Closed captioning
- Calculators and keyboards with large buttons
- Reaching devices

How do I get academic adjustments in college?

Your college has to provide you with appropriate academic adjustments based on your disability and your individual needs. The first step in obtaining academic adjustments is that you must: **(1) identify yourself to the college as having disabilities, and (2) you must make a request for academic adjustments.**

More about the process: Colleges are allowed to establish **reasonable procedures** for you to request academic adjustments and they **can require documentation** of your current disability and your need for the specific academic adjustment(s) you're requesting.

Continued on next page...

Note: Standardized Testing Entrance Exams (e.g., SAT and ACT)

Students with disabilities are entitled to changes to testing conditions that are necessary to allow them to participate, as long as the changes do not fundamentally alter the examination or create undue financial or administrative burdens.

¹ Although the term "college" is used throughout this document, this guidance is applicable to universities, community colleges, and vocational schools (other than schools of medicine, dentistry, nursing, and other health-related schools).

Colleges **may not**:

- ask you to pay for any of the costs of academic adjustments;
- tell you they can only provide your academic adjustments if they find funding;
- refuse to spend more than a specific amount to provide academic adjustments; or
- refuse to provide academic adjustments because they believe another entity outside the college provides the service you're asking for from them.

What happens after I request an academic adjustment?

After you request an academic adjustment, the college will review your request. You should expect your college to work with you in an **interactive process** to identify appropriate academic adjustments. If you request a specific academic adjustment, the college may offer what you requested. However, they may also offer an **effective alternative**. If the alternative they offer you is not effective, you should work with your college to determine a different academic adjustment that does work for you.

Are there things colleges don't have to do?

Colleges **do not have to** eliminate or lower essential requirements of a program (example: although a college may be required to provide extended testing time, it is not required to change the substantive content of the test). The also **do not have to** make modifications that would result in a **fundamental alteration** of the programs or activities being offered or impose an **undue burden** on the college. Finally, colleges **do not have to** provide personal attendants, individually prescribed devices, readers for personal use or help during individual study time, or other devices or services of a personal nature.

What can I do if I'm not getting what I need at college?

Colleges generally have an office dedicated to helping students with disabilities. This is often called the Disability Services Office. They are a good resource for students with disabilities if your professors are not providing what you need to be successful in college. You can also try going to a trusted professor to see if they can help you.

If you need help or have questions about your rights, you can contact [Disability Law Colorado](#).

Finally, you have a right to file a complaint with the [U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights](#) (within 180 days of the alleged discrimination), the [U.S. Department of Justice](#), or the [Colorado Civil Rights Division](#) (within 60 days of the alleged discrimination).

Where can I go for more information?

- [Disability Law Colorado](#);
- [Dear Colleague Letter](#);
- [Transition of Students with Disabilities to Postsecondary Education: A Guide for High School Educators](#);
- [Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education: Know Your Rights and Responsibilities](#);
- [Auxiliary Aids and Services for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities](#);
- [Office for Civil Rights | U.S. Department of Education](#);
- [Educational Opportunities Section | CRT | Department of Justice](#); and
- [Colorado Civil Rights Division](#).