



## Section 504

# ACCESS Higher Education

**Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act** offers protections against discrimination and ensures that proper academic adjustments and modifications are offered by any school that receives federal funds. For individuals who received special education services through IDEA, there are a few big changes to expect.

### Eligibility (aka *Qualified Individual*)

Under Section 504, an individual with a disability is defined as:

*Any person who (1) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, (2) has a record of such an impairment or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment. Major life activities include walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working, caring for oneself, and performing manual tasks.*

A qualified individual must meet the same admission requirements as students without disabilities.

### Notification of Disability

Under 504, the individual is responsible for informing the college that they have a disability and for requesting academic adjustments or modifications. The school has the right to request documentation of the disability.

### Communication

Because the student is an adult, communications are between the individual and the college. This is a big change from K-12 where the parent, school, counselors, and others communicate and plan services for the student.

### Disability Support Services

Most colleges have a disability support services office and designated Disability Services Coordinator. If a school does not have a disability support office, they are required to have a 504 Coordinator or ADA Coordinator. This is the person that helps students with disabilities communicate with school faculty, as well as helps to make sure you are receiving any reasonable modifications that you need.

### Level of Support

Colleges are not required to provide the same level of academic support offered in high school. There is no IEP plan or specially designed instruction, and the school is not required to lower or modify essential requirements. Work with the school's Disability Support Services to help get what you need to participate in college activities and coursework, including the application process.



### MODIFICATIONS

Under Section 504, colleges are required to provide reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures when the modifications are necessary to avoid discrimination on the basis of disability. This means that the school does not have to change the fundamental nature of a program or be subjected to undue financial hardship.

The U.S. Department of Education provides examples of academic modifications that a college may provide under Section 504 to make sure students with disabilities receive equal educational access:

- Reducing a course load.
- Substituting one course for another.
- Providing note takers, recording devices, or sign language interpreters.
- Extending time for test-taking.
- Offering priority registration for courses.
- Equipping school computers with screen-reading, voice recognition, or other adaptive software or hardware.
- Providing TTY in a dorm room if telephones are provided in other rooms.