The College Admission Process for Students with Learning Disabilities and ADHD

Definition

- **A mental or physical impairment that substantially limits a major life activity**

- **Assessed by a licensed professional**

- **Comprehensive evaluation**

- **Diagnosis as per DSM···**

- **Specific accommodations requested must address the substantial functional limitation(s) measured by the assessments**

College versus High School

What counselors, parents and students need to be aware of:

- **Difference in Laws**
- **Difference in Parental Access**
- **Difference in Requirements**

How the Laws are Different

- **High School: Individuals With Disabilities in Education Act**
  - IDEA is an Education Entitlement Law

- **College: The Americans With Disabilities Act Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act**
  - ADA is a Civil Rights Law (ADA is also the relevant law for testing)

High School and IDEA

- **Students Entitled to an Education Until Age 21 or Graduation**

- **Parents Have Rights and May Access Information**

- **School District Responsibilities: Interventions, Evaluations, Identifications, Cost and Advocacy**

- **Interventions May Include Individual Educational Plan (IEP), Goals and Objectives, and Modifications to the Curriculum**

- **All Professionals and Family Have Access to Students Records**

College: A.D.A & Section 504

- **Equal Opportunity in All Settings**

- **Parents Have No Rights and Cannot Access Information**

- **Accommodations: No IEP, Colleges are not obligated to waive courses or other academic requirements**

- **Student Must Self-Advocate and Disclose**

- **Student Responsible for Costs**

- **Records Are Available to Support Services Staff and All Others Must Have Signed Permission From Student**

Testing with SAT or ACT

- **Eligibility**
  - ◆ **IEP**
  - ◆ **504 Plan**
  - ◆ **Plan based on current Psycho-Educational Evaluation**
  - ◆ **Accommodations Must Already Take Place in School**
  - ◆ **School Testing Required for Some Accommodations**
  - ◆ **Accommodations Available Once During Testing Period for School Testing**

SAT Accommodations

- **Evaluation Within the Last 5 Years Verifying the Disability**

- **When Appropriate, a Reading Evaluation Must Be Included**

- **Computers May Be Approved for Writing Section**

- **School Testing: Have 4 Day winow to Administer Test**

- **SSD Students Register on Line**

SAT Accommodations continued

- Variable section eliminated for extended-time students

- All 100 % extended-time students will be tested over 2 days; one 5-minute break/day

- All 50% extended-time students will test in 1 day; two 5-minute and one 1-minute break

- Two-page limit for computer typed essays; no spell check or other aids allowed

- Streamlined application process if accommodations have been used in school for at least 4 months, certified by school official

- Students register only once in high school. Do it early!

ACT Accommodations

- **Evaluation Verifying the Disability Within Last 3 Years**

- **Request Must Include: Evaluation Dates, Subtest Scores and %ile Scores, Functional Limitations Affecting Learning, & Specific Recommendations**

- **Students Apply online test date then counselor submits documentation**

- **Some accommodations require school based testing and some allow multiple day testing**

- **National Test Centers Will Offer Extended Time on Each Test Date**

- **"limits a major life activity compared to the *average* person"**

Which Test?

ACT - Pro
- **Shorter extended time test day**
- **More flexible school-based administration (3 week window; can give one section per day)**
- **Questions feel more like those encountered in classroom**

ACT – Con
- **More challenging to gain approval**
- **Student must register for test and then request approval**
- **Student should be on formal plan for at least a year**
- **Requires stronger reading skills**

SAT − Pro

- **Fewer questions**
- **Approval process is more straight forward**
- **Application primarily based on duration of use of requested accommodations in school**
- **Once authorized, approval is valid throughout high school for all College Board exams, including AP**

SAT − Con
- **Length of extended time exam with few breaks**
- **Restrictions on scheduling school-based accommodations**

Determining When a Student is Ready for a 4-Year College

Has he or she taken standard college prep curriculum?

- 4 years of English

- 3 years of math (Algebra 1 & 2 and Geom)

- 2 years of history/social science

- 2 years of lab science

- 2 years of foreign language

- 1 year of visual or performing art

Can the student achieve academic success independetly?

- **Modified classes necessary?**

- **Any areas of subject deficiencies?**

- **Grade point average of 2.4 or above?**

- **Upward trend in grade point average?**

- **Executive Function?**

- **Self advocacy skills?**

Executive Function Skills Required to Succeed in College

Executive Function Skills:

- Planning

- Organization

- Self-regulation (sleep, personal hygiene, nutrition, time management)

- Reasonably independent and mature

Executive Function and College Life Cont.

- Unstructured Schedule

- Long Term Assignments

- Social Life

- Food Choices

- Roommate

College is a Test of Executive Function for All Students!

Building Readiness

- **Realistic Assessment of Current Support at Home and at School**

- **Step-by-Step Program to Reduce Support and Build Independence**

- **Practice Student Ownership of Learning Needs**

- **The Elevator Speech**

Types of College Support Programs

- Structured Programs

- Coordinated Services

- Basic Service Programs

Structured Programs

- **Comprehensive – significant support**

- **Students may be required to sign contract**

- **Usually, substantial program participation fee**

- **Some programs have a separate admission process**

Services may include:

- Staff Trained in Learning Disabilities

- Special Orientation Programs

- Curriculum Modifications

- Assistance with Advocacy

- Academic Monitoring and Counseling

Some Colleges With Structured Programs

- Curry College

- American University

- Landmark College

- Marist College

- Lynn University

- Fairleigh Dickinson University

- University of Arizona

- Rochester Institute of Technology

- Mitchell College, CT

- University of Denver

Coordinated Services

Moderate levels of Support provided with access to a Learning Disabilities Specialist (at Least part-time) who assists students in coordinating academic adjustments. Faculty trained to be receptive to accommodations.

Services May Include:

- **Learning Strategies Instruction**

- **Counseling**

- **Tutoring**

- **Assistance With Advocacy**

Colleges With Coordinated Services

- All UC and CSU and CC Campuses (if staffing is preserved)

- Boston College

- Brown University

- Cornell University

- University of San Francisco

- Santa Clara University

- Stanford University

Basic Service Programs

These Programs Provide the Minimum Amount of Support Necessary in Order to Comply With the Law.

Colleges With Basic Service Programs

- Oregon State University
- University of Redlands
- Loyola Marymount University
- University of the Pacific
- Emory University
- Marquette University
- Oberlin College
- Whittier College

A Sampling of Types of Services:

- Adaptive Technology Lab
- Extended time on quizzes and exams
- Exams administered in distraction-free room
- Alternative Testing formats (e.g. oral exams in lieu of written exams)
- Early Registration and Reduced Course load
- Text to Speech

- Books on tape and enlarged handouts
- Use of a tape recorder to record lectures**
- Talking calculators**
- Spell checkers**
- Note-taking services
- Advocacy Seminars
- Learning Disability Support Group

** Students might be required to provide their own equipment

The Right Match?

- **Structured Programs Work Best for Students Who Need Close Monitoring and High Levels of Support.**

- **Coordinated Programs Work Best for Students Who Want to Be "Mainstreamed" but Know They Will Need Support.**

- **Basic Service Programs Work Best for the Highly Motivated, Independent Self-Advocators.**

College Selection Cont.

- *Find the Right Match*

- **Family needs to Visit College Campuses**

- **Meet With the Disabled Students Services Office During Campus Visits**

- **Be realistic About the Level of Support Needed and Be Certain the Level of Support Provided Meets Students Needs**

Application Issues

Disclosure of LD is not required, but….

- Can help to explain relative weaknesses

- Can help to explain low test scores

- Can show persistence in overcoming adversity

- Should not be the defining part of the application.

Special Application Issues

If college has a PROGRAM to which LD students must apply:

- A separate application may be required, in addition to regular application

- Documentation must be sent to program

- Program director MAY be involved in admission of student to college & program

Preparing Students for Transition to College

- Student needs to attend and understand IEP meeting

- Must understand and Be Able to Discuss Disability Without Parental Support

- Realize that Learning Programs will Communicate only with Students, Not Parents

- Students Must Advocate for the Support They Need

- Appropriate Documentation is Essential

- Accommodations should be requested before beginning of school

Prepare Student to Access Support

- Students should practice self disclose

- Student should set up meeting with service coordinator before or during orientation

- Student should be able to read and understand documentation and must provide documentation before or during this meeting, to see if adequate

- Students need to know what services & accommodations they will need

- Program coordinator may give them letter to self advocate with faculty

Remind Students to Use all Campus Resources

- **Tutoring/Learning Centers**

- **Career Counseling Centers**

- **Counseling Centers**

- **Writing Centers**

- **Peer Mentoring Programs**

- **Academic Advising Centers**

- **Health Centers**

Which LD Students are Successful?

- **Understand and can articulate their LD**

- **Began advocating for self in high school**

- **Can study on their own**

- **Know how to get help when they need it**

- **Resourceful-can figure ways to get around problems**

- **Resilient-know how to recover from failure**

Resources

- **www.Collegeboard.com**

- *The K & W Guide to Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities* **by Kravets and Wax**

- *College Guide for Students with Learning Disabilities* **by Sclafani and Lynch**

- *Colleges That Change Lives* **by Loren Pope**

- *Where You Go Is Not Who You'll Be* **by Frank Bruni**

Final Thoughts

- **Make Sure Students Have Appropriate, Timely Testing**

- **Students Need to Understand Their Test Results**

- **Students Need to Practice Self-Advocacy**

- **During application process students should communicate With College Learning Support Programs As Well As With Admission Offices**