

Advocacy Notes

TRANSITION

Myths about IEPs, 504s, Higher Education Admissions & Accommodations

Myth #1. Students should be moved from an IEP to a 504 plan for senior year because it "looks better" when they apply to college.

Colleges don't ask students applying for admissions whether or not they have a disability (they're not allowed to), and students don't have to tell them if they don't want to. Therefore, IEP teams should not let a student's plan to attend college change the kind of educational plan they're on as seniors, or take their services away because they're worried about how this might affect their chances of getting into college. Teams should also know that there is no reason to send students' IEPs with their applications - colleges don't ask for this. (Students will register for accommodations after they enroll at college, and they will send their documentation directly to the disability services office.)

Myth #2. Students should stay on their IEPs because talking about their disability will give their college applications a boost.

For parents or professionals who think sending the IEP will put students at an advantage (or think the opposite - that disclosing a disability will put them at a disadvantage), read this post from my blog - [Admission Deans from Yale, Muskingum Answer FAQs about the Process for Students with Disabilities](#). When it comes to college applications and admissions, students and everyone working with them have a lot of concerns. Even if they know the application won't ask if the student has an IEP or 504 plan, they worry that students' transcripts will indicate this in some way. Case managers should ask the right person in the district whether this happens. Transcripts probably don't state that students had an IEP or 504 plan, but no decision about students' services should be made without making sure everyone involved has the correct information.

Myth #3. Students should be moved from an IEP to a 504 plan because 504 plans are valid at college

Regular readers of my work know there is a lot of misunderstanding about 504 plans. People believe that since Section 504 covers both K-12 schools and colleges, colleges have to follow 504 plans. This is not true. Colleges do have to provide eligible students with accommodations, but this is not because the students had 504 plans. Neither 504 plans nor IEPs are valid after students graduate from high school. One cause for confusion may be that some colleges accept students' 504 plans or IEPs as documentation (meaning proof) of the disability and may grant students the accommodations they received in high school. This can lead to an understandable misconception that colleges are following students' 504 plans, but this is not what they're doing. Colleges may provide the accommodations that students received in high school because the students are eligible and the accommodations are considered appropriate.



Myth #4 – High school students should be taken off of any plan for their senior year because there aren't accommodations at college for students with learning disabilities and/or ADHD

Colleges do provide accommodations for all sorts of disabilities. In some cases, students may even get more accommodations than they received in high school. No one should take away all of students' accommodations in their senior year because of any misunderstanding about the availability of college accommodations. Ideally, though - by senior year - college-bound students should be trying to work with only the kinds of accommodations they might find available at college. (Of course, each student's situation is different, and IEP teams must make individualized decisions based on students' needs.) It is important is that – as early as the 8th grade meeting that writes the plan for 9th grade - all members of the team have a good understanding of what kinds of accommodations colleges typically offer. If college is a goal for students, the plan should be to provide direct instruction in learning strategies and the use of assistive technology so that by senior year, students are ready to function without the supports they're unlikely to find at college.

This article can be found at <https://www.wrightslaw.com/info/trans.myths.accoms.hamblet.htm>

Elizabeth Hamblet is the author of [From High School to College: Steps to Success for Students with Disabilities](#), a unique step-by-step guide and essential resource for college-bound students, their families, and the special educators and school counselors who work with them.