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*Guide to Transferring:*  
**Disability Services  
in College**

# Disability Services at the College Level: Important Things to Know

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As a college student, it's important to understand your rights and responsibilities when it comes to disability services. Below are some key concepts and suggestions for additional resources:

## **Disability services vary from college to college.**

Services are not the same everywhere, so it's important to do your research ahead of time and find a good fit for you and your needs. Some colleges may have a fully-staffed office or one person who coordinates services.

## **Connecting with disability services early is key!**

Once you've decided on a next college, it's time to contact their disability services office or point-person. Don't wait until you're on campus or the semester has already started. Many disability services offices are busy at the beginning of a semester and may require a certain amount of time to process requests.

## **Only you can disclose your disability and request services.**

At the college level, students are responsible for disclosing their disability and requesting services. If you don't formally register, you won't be eligible to receive accommodations. Disability service staff are prohibited by law from discussing disability-related information with anyone other than you, including your parents, without permission and/or written consent.

## **You will be asked to provide documentation.**

It's important to check with your college's disability services office about the types of disability documentation they require and how old it can be. Some colleges want testing within the past 3-years and others are more flexible. Be clear on what testing you'll need as each college has its own guidelines. Confirm requirements as soon as you decide to enroll.

## **Plan to register even if you don't think you'll need accommodations.**

Register with disability services even if you don't think you'll need them. This way, you'll be known to the office and have everything in place should you realize you need to request an accommodation mid-semester. There could also be activities or opportunities associated with the office you want to take advantage of.

## **Your disability information is confidential.**

Most disability services offices will provide you with an accommodation letter at the beginning of each semester to give to your professors. The letter is notification that you're registered with disability services and lists accommodations you're entitled to. Faculty won't know anything beyond that. Some students find it helpful to speak with faculty about their learning difference and how it impacts them in the classroom, but this is a personal choice. If you run into an issue regarding your accommodations, it's important to let the disability services office know immediately.

## **Be proactive.**

Ask questions about services provided, process and timeline, how faculty are notified, and your responsibilities as a student. You should only have to register with the office once but most colleges will require you re-submit accommodation requests every semester. If something isn't working or you haven't received an approved accommodation, reach out to disability services immediately- they're there to support you!

## You may not get the same accommodations as in high school or at a previous college.

High school and college students are protected by different sets of laws (see *Helpful Resources* below for more on this). Disability services staff will interpret your documentation, in conjunction with information you provide, to make a determination about accommodations you may be eligible for. Contributing factors include, what is determined to be “reasonable” under the law, your documentation, and services available at the college. Knowing what you’ve received in the past can be helpful but services will be provided based on your current needs.

## Colleges expect you to be an expert on yourself!

Disability service professionals will review your documentation but they also want to hear from you (the real expert!) about your learning difference, how it impacts you as a student, and accommodations you’ve received in the past. You can use the exercise below to help prepare for this conversation.

### Exercise: Developing a Personal Summary

You are the best expert on yourself, your learning difference, strengths, challenges, and history! Being able to articulate this can help a disability services professional understand your needs and take this information into account when determining services.

Think about the following and try to keep each response to 1-2 sentences. Write or type your responses down.

1. Describe your learning difference as you understand it (in your own words).
2. How has your learning difference impacted you as a student in the *past*?
3. How does your learning difference impact you as a student *now*?
4. How do you learn best?
5. What strengths are associated with your learning difference? What are the challenges?
6. What learning strategies have you developed at Landmark College?
7. What types of accommodations have you received in the *past*? How did these help you?
8. What accommodations are you requesting *now* and why?

Summarize what you think is most important from the responses you’ve written down and practice sharing it aloud or to a friend or family member. Thinking this through can help you to better advocate for yourself and feel more confident about the conversation!

### Your Personal Summary:



## Resources

Banerjee, M. (2010). Capitalizing on technology for transition. In Stan F. Shaw, Joseph W. Madaus, & Lyman L. Dukes, III (Eds.), *Preparing students with disabilities for college success: A practical guide for transition*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

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National Center for Learning Disabilities, Inc. (2008). *Making the transition from high school to college for students with disabilities*.

<http://www.ncld.org/images/stories/Publications/Forms-Checklists-Flyers-Handouts/checklist-transitioningfromhs-college.pdf>

UDI Online Project (2011). *Learning Disabilities (LD) Module*. Center on Postsecondary Education and Disability, University of Connecticut, Storrs.

<http://udi.uconn.edu/index.php?q=content/learning-disability-module>.

U.S. Department of Education & Office for Civil Rights (2011). *Students with disabilities preparing for postsecondary education: Know your rights and responsibilities*. <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html>