



# TRANSITION TO COLLEGE

A Timeline for High School Students  
with Mental Illness

AUGUST 2014



**Disability  
Rights** OHIO

We have the legal right of way.



# INTRODUCTION

Attending postsecondary education or training is an important decision in preparing for a future career. Continuing your education increases the chances that you will be able to find a job that pays well and matches your skills and talents. Leaving high school and continuing your education gives you an opportunity to transition into an adult. Transitioning to postsecondary education can be difficult. Not all of your options are the same, and some programs offer more services and supports than others. The application process is filled with paperwork, tests, interviews and/or essays, and each program has a different set of requirements.

This process can be especially challenging if you have a mental health disability. Transitioning to college is difficult enough, but individuals with a mental health disability sometimes need additional services and supports, or must examine different factors to ensure that they will be successful.

The purpose of this guide is to help students in transition who have a mental health disability get an idea of what is required to attain postsecondary education, with tips especially for students who have a mental health disability. The guide will also point out programs and services available that might be helpful to a student with a mental health disability.

## PREPARING FOR COLLEGE

Students with a mental health disability who wish to attend college must follow the same guidelines, rules and processes as students who do not have a mental health disability. Students cannot be discriminated against in the application process or in the awarding of scholarships or grants because they have a mental health disability.

The purpose of preparing for postsecondary education is so a student can discover what career or goal they wish to meet, determine what training or education they need to achieve that goal, and find a specific program or school that can best provide them with the education and training that they need. This process can be complicated and should be tailored to the individual student. Most schools provide high school guidance counselors to assist students in this process. However, this may not be the best fit for some students, including some students with a mental health disability.

There are other programs that offer mentoring and the individualized approach that is needed to help a student achieve postsecondary education.



## RESOURCES

### LEARN MORE ABOUT POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Going to College ([going-to-college.org](http://going-to-college.org)) is a website for teens who have a disability who want to start thinking about college. The website provides videos on exploring interests, setting goals and developing an education plan.

The Education Planner ([educationplanner.org/students](http://educationplanner.org/students)) also helps students determine what careers might be appropriate for them and help provide information about education options and finances.

The Ohio College Access Network ([apps.ohiocan.org/printdirectory](http://apps.ohiocan.org/printdirectory)) is a network of organizations that offer mentoring and other support to help students achieve a college education. You can contact the member organization near you to connect with a mentor.

Ohio Reach ([ohioreach.wikispaces.com/Ohio+Reach+Campus+Liaisons](http://ohioreach.wikispaces.com/Ohio+Reach+Campus+Liaisons)) is a program for students who are exiting the foster care system and attending college. They have campus liaisons regionally to help connect students to resources that they may need for attending postsecondary education.

Your local community college may also have resources available to help you explore different career options. The directory at [ohio.collegesonline.net](http://ohio.collegesonline.net) can help you find a community college near you.

The Ohio Public Library Information Network ([oplin.org/content/find-a-library](http://oplin.org/content/find-a-library)) is the network of public libraries in the state of Ohio. Public libraries often have programs and services geared towards helping students attend postsecondary education.

If you are a student in the foster care system, your emancipation counselor should also help inform you about your postsecondary education options, including information about health insurance and financial help to attend postsecondary education or training.

# CONSIDER YOUR GOALS

## DETERMINE WHAT CAREER IS RIGHT FOR YOU

Think about what career would be right for you. You can take the Student Interest Survey ([exploringyourcareer.org](http://exploringyourcareer.org)) and discuss the results with your high school guidance counselor and your mentor to determine what career path might be right for you.

Once you know what career path you would like to achieve, you can start determining what kind of postsecondary education you need. Talk with your high school guidance counselor, mentor, or other person who currently works in that field about what type of training and education are needed and what credentials are required. Each career has different requirements.

Once you determine what career path you want to pursue and what degree program you need to attend, you can use that information to determine what institution would be best for your postsecondary education.

## DETERMINE WHICH POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION OPTION IS RIGHT FOR YOU

There are many options for postsecondary education, and while it is important to get the education you need so you can find a career that is fulfilling, linking your career goals to an appropriate program is only one of many considerations. For students with a mental health disability, there are other considerations as well. You want to be sure that you have the services and supports you need to manage your mental health while you are attending postsecondary education.

Prior to deciding on an education program, list of all of the services and supports you would need to succeed in a program. For example, do you need to be close to home, where you can be by family and friends? Do you need a flexible schedule so you can fit in medical or other appointments? Do you need access to support groups or peer mentors? Consider all of these questions and more as you decide which program to attend.

Colleges and universities often have offices dedicated to meeting the needs of students with disabilities. Contact the college admissions office and ask to be put in touch with the Disability Services Office or other equivalent. Ask this office any questions you may have about any services or supports you may need. Ask about what services are available for students with mental health disabilities. Some important questions to ask include:

1. Do you offer on-site counseling services?
2. What mental health services are offered at the student health center? What is the cost? How long does it take to get an appointment?
3. If mental health services are offered off site, can a student's health insurance provide coverage for an appointment or other services?
4. How does the school maintain confidentiality for students with disabilities?
5. What is the emergency response procedure, both during regular business hours and after hours?
6. Do you have a Wellness Center? What types of health programs does it offer? (Examples: meditation, programs on drinking, suicide prevention, responsible decision making, therapy dogs, etc.)
7. How do I request an accommodation for a disability?



## CONSIDERING TRADE SCHOOL

Two- and four-year colleges are not the only options for postsecondary education and training. Colleges and universities generally offer a more academic focus and have classes on a broad range of topics. If you are the type of person who only wants to attend classes for your specific career, or only learn about one particular career option, then trade school may be a better option for you.

If you are more interested in a professional trade, such as automotive technology, construction, plumbing, cosmetology, culinary, etc., these careers often require that you have a specific form of education and credential that you can only get in a trade school. Going to trade school will provide you with the knowledge that you need to become certified or licensed in a specific trade.

If you think you would be interested in attending trade school, speak to your guidance counselor or mentor about what trade you are considering. You can visit [www.trade-schools.net](http://www.trade-schools.net) to search for trade schools in your area. Each trade school is different. Most programs can be completed in two years or less, and many offer different types of learning options, including online learning.

Trade schools are often less expensive than two- for four-year colleges, but tuition can still be a burden. Most trade schools accept federal financial aid. Many schools also offer scholarships, so if you are interested in attending a particular school, call them and ask about financial aid options. Additionally, you can ask the local trade association if they offer scholarships for students studying that trade. See the section on Financial Assistance on page 10 of this booklet for more information.



# TIMELINE

## KEEP YOURSELF ON TRACK

It is never too early to start thinking about your future career. The following timeline is a general guide of what to think about while you are in high school to help with your future career.

### FRESHMAN YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL

- Meet with your high school guidance counselor and talk with them about what you would like to do for a career
  - Ask if you could take a “career aptitude test,” which will allow you to see what future careers you might be good at
  - Ask other people in your community who currently work in the field you are interested in what type of training/education that they need
- Choose high school classes that interest you, challenge you and that you can succeed in, including honors and AP courses. Work hard to get good grades
- If you are involved with the foster care program, ask to be linked to a College Bound Mentor
- Get involved in your community and school

### SOPHOMORE YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL

- Take the Ohio Graduation Test ([education.ohio.gov/Topics/Testing/Ohio-Graduation-Test-OGT](http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Testing/Ohio-Graduation-Test-OGT))
- Take the ACT: Plan Test ([act.org/plan](http://act.org/plan)) in the Fall - this test may be administered by your school district
- Continue to meet with your high school guidance counselor to talk about your interests. Ask him or her to help you research admissions requirements for programs that will lead you to the career you are interested in
- Continue to choose high school classes that interest you, challenge you and that you can succeed in, including honors and AP courses. Work hard to get good grades



### JUNIOR YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL

- Ask your school about a fee waiver for the PSAT test ([collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/about.html](https://collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/about.html))
- Take the PSAT test in the fall
- Attend any college fairs at your high school and learn about different programs and options
- Determine what type of postsecondary education programs you are interested in. Many two- and four-year degree programs require that you take the SAT or ACT. Determine which tests you need to take to earn your degree.
- Keep in touch with your college mentor/guidance counselor
  - Ask about how to register for the ACT/SAT
  - Ask about how to get a fee waiver for the ACT/SAT
  - Ask about how to get any needed accommodations for the tests
  - Ask about any grant or scholarship opportunities you can apply for
- Take any ACT/SAT prep courses that are offered by your school or in your community. Ask at the public library ([oplin.org/content/find-a-library](https://oplin.org/content/find-a-library)) about books/programs available for high school students preparing for the tests
- Take the ACT/SAT

### REQUESTING ACCOMMODATIONS ON THE SAT

Wrightslaw has produced a *Quick Guide to Accommodations on the SAT for Students with Disabilities*. This guide can be a helpful resource if you feel you need an accommodation on the SAT. ([wrightslaw.com/info/college.SAT.accomm.htm](https://wrightslaw.com/info/college.SAT.accomm.htm))

## SENIOR YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL

### *Fall*

- If you are in foster care, link with your county department of youth services emancipation worker
- Narrow your college choices
- Complete applications for scholarships and grants
- Obtain letters of recommendation from teachers, coaches and mentors

### *January/February*

- Complete the FAFSA application. You can get help completing this form by using the Ohio Benefit Bank ([ohiobenefits.org](http://ohiobenefits.org))
- Contact the colleges you are interested in and ask about financial aid programs and what options are available for you

### *March/April*

- Review any financial aid award letter you receive with your high school guidance counselor and college mentor. They will help explain terms to you, such as grants, subsidized loans and unsubsidized loans
- Carefully review any student loan information that you may receive. Not all student loans are the same. Some may end up charging you more money than you need to pay.
- Decide which school or program you wish to attend
- Complete any application paperwork and pay any needed fees
- Contact the admissions office of the college you wish to attend if you have any questions and to ensure that you have completed all parts of the application

### *May/June*

- Make your final college or program choice, and inform your high school guidance counselor. Ask to have your transcript from high school transferred to the college
- Contact the admissions office of the college and ask about orientation and how to schedule your classes for the fall
- If you are exiting from the foster care program, do not elect to have health insurance coverage at the college. You are eligible for Medicaid until you are 21 years old. Ask your emancipation worker for more details.

### *July*

- If you are in foster care, complete the Education Training Voucher on or after July 1st

# FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

## GET HELP PAYING FOR COLLEGE

Postsecondary education can be expensive. However, there are some options to help you pay for your education.

1. **Education Training Voucher** - If you are in the foster care program, you are eligible for the Education Training Voucher, which can provide up to \$5,000 per year for college and vocational training. You can apply in July after you graduate high school. More information can be found on [statevoucher.org](http://statevoucher.org).
2. **Scholarships** - A scholarship is an award of financial aid that helps to pay for a student's education. Scholarships are available based on various criteria determined by those giving out the scholarship. For example, some scholarships might be for students who want to study a certain subject, or for students who play a sport. In order to be eligible for the scholarship, you have to meet all of the criteria determined by those giving the scholarship, and each scholarship is different. Some scholarships require that you maintain a certain grade level to get the scholarship.  
  
College Now has compiled a helpful guide for finding scholarships that may meet your needs: [docs.google.com/file/d/OB41KKSeFh2N5QTICSzIreTJMQVU/edit?pli=1](https://docs.google.com/file/d/OB41KKSeFh2N5QTICSzIreTJMQVU/edit?pli=1)
3. **Grants** - Grants are awards offered by the government to help you pay for your tuition. You do not have to pay grants back. Pell Grants are the most popular grant for undergraduate education. However, in order to be eligible for these grants, you have to attend an approved institution that is allowed to accept these grants. Be sure to ask the admissions office what grants they accept. You can apply for the Pell Grant by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Help with the FAFSA can be found at the Ohio Benefit Bank ([ohiobenefits.org](http://ohiobenefits.org)).
4. **Loans** - Loans are money borrowed by a student to attend college. That means that the student must eventually pay the money back. There are special loans offered through the federal government just for students. These loans usually have lower interest rates and other features. A subsidized loan means that the government will pay the interest. An unsubsidized loan means that the student will pay the interest. Be careful when taking out loans. Student loan debt follows you forever; even if you declare bankruptcy, you will still have to pay back your student loans. You can apply for federal student loans by completing the FAFSA. Help with the FAFSA can be found at the Ohio Benefit Bank ([ohiobenefits.org](http://ohiobenefits.org)).
5. **For more information** about state financial aid programs, refer to the Financial Aid Guidance Memo by the Ohio Board of Regents ([docs.google.com/file/d/OB41KKSeFh2N5c3F6SONYMk0OdDg/edit?pli=1](https://docs.google.com/file/d/OB41KKSeFh2N5c3F6SONYMk0OdDg/edit?pli=1)).



## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS BE YOUR OWN ADVOCATE

As a student with a disability, you need to be informed about your rights. The responsibilities of postsecondary education institutions are very different than the responsibilities of high schools. You will also have additional responsibilities that you did not have in high school.

For example, public high schools are required to provide a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to any student in their jurisdiction. That means that the high school must identify an individual's educational needs and provide any special education or related services to meet those needs. The postsecondary institution is not held to the same standard. They are only required to provide appropriate academic adjustments as necessary to ensure that they are not discriminating on the basis of disability. You are responsible for telling your school that you have a disability and learning what procedures are in place for requesting an academic adjustment.

More information about your rights can be found in the publication *Students with Disabilities: Preparing for Postsecondary Education: Know your Rights and Responsibilities* produced by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights. ([www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html))

If you have any questions about your rights in postsecondary education or training, you can call Disability Rights Ohio at 800-282-9181 (TTY 800-858-3542). Press "2" for intake.



**Disability  
Rights** OHIO

We have the legal right of way.

**Disability Rights Ohio**  
50 W. Broad St., Suite 1400  
Columbus, Ohio 43215-5923

614-466-7264 or 800-282-9181

**FAX** 614-644-1888

**TTY** 614-728-2553 or 800-858-3542

[disabilityrightsohio.org](http://disabilityrightsohio.org)