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Disability Services in College: What Parents Need to Know

Educational Brochure for Parents

Overview

Disability services in college operate under different laws and expectations than services provided in high school. While high school supports are guided by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), colleges operate under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. These laws emphasize equal access rather than entitlement to services.

As a result, students with autism must take primary responsibility for disclosing their disability, requesting accommodations, and using approved supports. Parents play an important role in helping students understand these changes while encouraging self-advocacy and independence.

Key Features of College Disability Services

- Students must self-identify and request accommodations
- Documentation requirements are determined by the college
- Accommodations are approved on a case-by-case basis
- Parents do not communicate directly with disability services staff
- Services focus on access, not academic modification

Parent Support Checklist

- ✓ Review disability documentation requirements with your student
- ✓ Encourage early registration with the disability services office
- ✓ Support your student in understanding approved accommodations
- ✓ Reinforce that accommodations must be requested each semester
- ✓ Encourage direct communication between your student and campus staff

Recommendations for Parents

Parents are encouraged to support preparation rather than advocacy on behalf of their student. Practicing conversations, reviewing emails, and discussing accommodation use can help students feel more confident navigating disability services independently. Reinforcing responsibility and follow-through supports both academic success and future workplace readiness.

For More Information

For individualized guidance, transition planning, or vocational rehabilitation services related to college students with autism, please contact:

Dr. T. Scott Smith
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collegeandautism.com
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