

T. Scott Smith Consulting

T. Scott Smith, PhD
2851 Johnston Street, Suite 527
Lafayette, LA 70503
Mobile: (337) 501-2104
scott@tscottsmithconsulting.com

Understanding the Transition to College for Students with Autism

Educational Brochure for Parents

Overview

The transition from high school to college is a major adjustment for students with autism and their families. College environments differ significantly from K–12 settings, with increased expectations for independence, self-management, and student-led communication. Parents often experience uncertainty about how to remain involved while supporting their student’s growth toward autonomy.

Understanding these changes can help parents shift their role from direct oversight to guidance and consultation. This transition supports not only academic success, but also long-term vocational and independent living outcomes.

Key Differences Between High School and College

- Students are responsible for requesting and using accommodations
- Parents do not have direct access to academic information without student consent
- Schedules are less structured and require independent time management
- Faculty expects students to initiate communication
- Support services are available, but not automatically provided

Parent Support Checklist

- ✓ Discuss expectations for independence before the semester begins
- ✓ Encourage your student to communicate directly with faculty and staff
- ✓ Support the development of time management and organization skills
- ✓ Normalize challenges and emphasize problem-solving strategies
- ✓ Encourage use of campus disability, counseling, and career services

Recommendations for Parents

Parents are encouraged to adopt a coaching role that balances support with independence. Regular check-ins, collaborative problem-solving, and reinforcement of strengths can help students navigate challenges without becoming overly dependent. Early involvement in career exploration and vocational planning can further support successful outcomes during and after college.

For More Information

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

Dr. T. Scott Smith

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

collegeandautism.com

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