

TOURING THE OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES

Like other college-bound students, students with disabilities should make a point of visiting colleges before applying. However, in addition to visiting the admissions office, students with disabilities should also make an appointment to visit the Office of Disability Services. Determining if the school offers the support services and accommodations options needed.

Colleges are required by law (Rehab Act Section 504 and Americans with Disabilities Act) to offer support services and reasonable accommodations, however the level of support and types of accommodations available to students with disabilities varies widely from campus to campus, ranging from basic to comprehensive.

A visit to the Office of Disability Services is an opportunity to ask about the availability of support and accommodations that will help students be successful in college by putting him or her on a level playing field with peers.

Some important questions to ask:

- What documentation do you need to receive services? How current must testing be to apply for accommodations?
 - How many students with disabilities does your office serve?
 - How many staff work in the office?
 - What Assistive Technology (AT) services do you offer? Do you have an AT expert on staff?
 - Will I have both an advisor in the Office of Disability Services and a regular academic advisor? If both, how will the two advisors work together?
 - Do you have other students with a similar disability as mine? If so, what is graduation rate for those students?
 - Do you track students who have used your services after graduation? If so, what do your findings show about their success after graduation?
-

Students should prepare ahead of time for a meeting with the Office of Disabilities Services. Practicing the questions with a parent or other adult beforehand can be helpful to avoid having to read questions from a script. Taking notes can help students remember details about the visit and note any red flags, like the office is hard to find on campus or the staff seem off-putting or unfriendly.