

Transitioning from College to Work

Start the process early!

Transitioning from college to work is a process. Students must begin this process early and be able to transfer knowledge of their learning disability (LD) into a world of employment. Students should consider the following:

- What do I think the impact of the LD will be on my job performance?
- **How and/or when should I disclose my LD?**
- Do I know the typical accommodations made in the workforce?

In addition to understanding the disability, students must analyze training and career goals in relation to their disability. What kind of tasks will the job include? What kind of interaction between job tasks and the disability will need to be determined? When answering these questions, the student should assess the work environment, the type and amount of co-worker or peer interaction, specific tasks or essential functions that must be performed, and how performance is evaluated.

Know your legal rights!

Students should understand the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act ([ADAAA](#)) of 2008 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, which assure equal access and non-discrimination. Students must recognize how equal access applies to them within a particular employment setting, and in relation to their disability. They need to ask themselves the following questions:

- Is it necessary for me to disclose my disability in order to perform more efficiently?
- **To whom do I disclose?**
- How do I disclose?
- When do I disclose?

- **How do I negotiate accommodations? And with whom?**

Develop a history of work experience.

Look for opportunities to gain work experience. Some examples include:

- Campus leadership opportunities (e.g., student government, mentoring programs, organization involvement, etc.)
- **Work-study positions on campus**
- Internships
- **Off-campus jobs (some may be listed in the college career center)**
- Summer jobs
- **Service learning opportunities**
- Volunteer positions with community-based organizations and/or religious affiliations
- **Job opportunities found through family and friends**

Understand the job culture.

Every company or organization has its own unique culture. The job culture consists of company rules, values, and beliefs, which are widely held but often unspoken.

- Observe co-workers, not only how they work, but also how they communicate and interact.
- Know what is expected of employees.



Determine effective job accommodations.

Match job tasks or essential functions with strengths and weaknesses to identify accommodations that will improve job performance. Accommodations that may be used in the workplace include:

- Audio recorders (smart phone, smart pens, tablets, etc.)
- **Audio job materials (for review when needed)**
- Speech-to-text software or app
- **Text-to-speech software or app**
- Demonstration of tasks/assignments (record video with smart phone or tablet for multiple playbacks)
- **Diagrams to explain the process of an assigned task**
- Separate or quiet work space
- **Computer software (e.g., word prediction, grammar-check, templates, etc.)**
- Color-coding of files, work assignments, etc.

Take advantage of the Job Accommodations Network (<http://askjan.org/>) to explore workplace accommodations further.

Identify and use a support system.

Family, friends and co-workers are vital to successful employment. A support system can be a valuable asset through the entire transition process from college to work.



Devise an “individual employment” approach.

Individuals eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Services (in some states also called Rehabilitation Services Administration, or RSA) can work with counselors to design an individualized plan addressing employment, assessments, and services related to employment. This may also include employment training.

Develop job skills.

Many workplaces will offer options for learning how to do the job. Some options to explore include:

- Coaching/Mentoring
- Internships

Seek assistance.

Here are a few of the many resources that are available:

- Rehabilitation Services Administration, <https://rsa.ed.gov/>
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Helpline, www.eeoc.gov, (800) 669-4000
- HEATH Resource Center, www.heath.gwu.edu
- Job Accommodation Network (JAN), <http://askjan.org/>
- National Rehabilitation Information Center, www.naric.com, (800) 346-2742
- Peterson’s Internships, www.petersons.com

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