

**Disability Services & College Transition:**

**A Guide for  
Students and Families**



Colby-Sawyer  
College

A Publication of the Academic Development Center

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*Dear students and families,*

*We know that selecting a college can be a complicated task. When you add to the search the comparison of disability programs and services, a family's process is even more elaborate. In our meetings with prospective students and families, we answer many questions about Colby-Sawyer's services for students with disabilities; however, many families also bring broader questions about students' transition to college.*

*By far, the most frequently asked question we encounter is "Will my child get the help he/she needs?" The question introduces an essential and multifaceted conversation. In their exploration of postsecondary options, each prospective student and family bring a unique perspective and set of needs. We want to give students and their families as much information as we can to help them in this very important search. We hope this guide can offer some insight into the transition process and the spectrum of disability support in higher education, as well as a useful overview of Colby-Sawyer's services. Please feel free to contact us with any questions you may have.*

*Ann Chalker, Director of Learning Services*

### **The Transition from High School to College**

Residential, liberal arts colleges, such as Colby-Sawyer, introduce many wonderful opportunities and significant responsibilities. While students take advantage of new academic and co-curricular options, they adapt to an increase in academic rigor, the accountability of independent study and the obligations of residential living. Simultaneous to these adjustments, students experience a considerable change in their personal support networks as they integrate into a new social community.

The demands of independent learning and living, as rewarding as they are, can exceed students' initial expectations. College life consists largely of unstructured time and unsupervised study. The in-class hours of college usually add up to only a third of the in-class hours of high school. As a result, students' contact with instructors generally declines and their individual study time significantly increases. Faculty may not check attendance or monitor daily work in their classes, and they expect students to be responsible for both keeping up with course material and actively seeking assistance when they have questions. Moreover, students take on full responsibility for their academic, residential and financial decisions while at college. Students are required to fulfill the college's procedural obligations and to act on their own behalf in college hearings.

The amount of work in college generally increases from that of high school; however, the higher expectations for learning and performance more appropriately characterize the academic transition. Coursework requires students to synthesize and evaluate information and to consistently use abstract thinking skills. Exams may be less frequent but may constitute a larger portion of students' grades. Writing assignments are frequent and usually require students to demonstrate strong conceptual understanding and synthesis of the course material. Students are also evaluated on their contributions to class discussion and their collaboration for group projects. Beyond the initial transition to college, students experience continually increasing expectations as they progress through their education, particularly as they advance into major-level courses (sophomore/junior years) and internship programs.

### **A Liberal Arts Education**

A liberal arts education allows students to develop their knowledge and skills within an interdisciplinary context. A liberal arts institution, such as Colby-Sawyer College, requires students to study a broad range of subject areas in addition to their selected majors. While a student's major may constitute only 25-30 percent of his/her total credits, the liberal education requirements comprise approximately 33 percent of a student's education at Colby-Sawyer. Students are expected to integrate knowledge from a variety of disciplines and critically analyze the information and perspectives presented in their courses. Please see the Colby-Sawyer catalog and student handbook for more information about the college's liberal education program.

### **The Transition in Disability Services from High School to College**

Post-secondary institutions design their disability service policies in line with a different set of laws than those that govern primary and secondary education. Prior to college, students may receive accommodations, auxiliary aides, academic modifications and personal services. The laws applicable to postsecondary institutions do not require the same level of assistance and modification. Though postsecondary institutions have a responsibility to offer reasonable accommodations to students who can, through the proper procedures, support the existence of a disability and need for accommodation, these institutions are not required to fundamentally alter the nature of their programs or courses. The following table offers some specific points of comparison for disability-related services and accommodations.

	<b>K-12</b>	<b>Higher Education</b>
<b>Applicable laws</b>	IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act): IDEA guarantees a free and appropriate public education.	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act): Education is <u>not</u> a right. Students must be "otherwise qualified" for admission into the institution and particular academic programs. (IDEA has no impact on higher education.)
<b>Documentation and Testing</b>	School districts are required to provide free testing and evaluation. Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) are implemented by school staff members.	Colleges have the right to ask for current and appropriate documentation of disabilities. Students must provide adequate documentation and are responsible for necessary evaluation costs. IEPs/504s do not constitute acceptable documentation of disability.
<b>Advocacy</b>	School personnel are responsible for identifying students with disabilities and for ensuring equal and appropriate educational experiences for them. Parents/guardians are in charge of educational decisions for their students.	Students are responsible for contacting the appropriate staff members and for following all designated procedures to initiate and receive accommodations. Students are responsible for their educational decisions. The college is not responsible for problems with accommodations that are not brought to the attention of the disability services office.

	<b>K-12</b>	<b>Higher Education</b>
<b>Accommodations— Curriculum and Programs</b>	Instruction is designed to meet the individual needs of the student, based on his/her present level of performance. Depending on the level of performance, special education services may significantly modify high school academic requirements.	Fundamental alterations of program and curricula are <u>not</u> required. Students in higher education are expected to be “otherwise qualified.” Once a student has sufficiently documented that he/she has a qualifying disability, the college is responsible for providing reasonable and appropriate accommodations that provide equal access but do not result in unfair advantage, require significant alteration of the program or activity, result in the lowering of academic or technical standards, or cause the college to incur undue financial hardship.
<b>Accommodations— Courses</b>	Depending on a student’s specific learning disabilities and academic performance, course materials and/or requirements may be modified. In addition, program requirements may be altered. Some students may have certain standard diploma requirements, such as foreign language, math or science courses, waived.	Colleges are not required to waive or modify coursework, courses or program requirements. Course substitutions may be permitted in some cases. Accommodations should not compromise the educational intent or evaluation standards of a course or assignment.
<b>Accommodations— Testing</b>	Accommodations for tests are based on IEP goals and objectives, which correspond to present levels of academic performance. They can include: extended or unlimited time, alternative test site, open book, alternative format, prior delivery of test questions, and alternate test measures.	Reasonable accommodations for tests must be supported by disability documentation and can include: extended time, alternative testing site and—in certain circumstances—alternative format. Students should not expect to receive modifications for exams. Colleges have the right to approve or deny testing accommodations that are not reasonable, given the educational purposes of the test and the evaluation objectives of the professor.
<b>Academic Services</b>	Students on IEPs work with a case manager. Specialized instruction is provided to students who are in need of it. In addition, they may receive supportive services such as speech pathology, counseling and occupational therapy.	Students do not have individual counselors, personal tutors or case managers. Tutorial assistance is not a required service for students and, when offered, is subject to service alteration and limitation. Auxiliary aids are required when they are necessary to ensure effective communication.
<b>Personal Services</b>	Schools are, in certain situations, required to offer personal services and attendants (i.e. for students with physical/medical disabilities).	Colleges are not required to provide personal attendants, readers for personal use or study, or other personal devices or services.

## The Spectrum of Disability Support in Higher Education: **PROGRAM—SERVICES—COMPLIANCE**

Disability services at institutions of higher education vary considerably in resources, structure and philosophy. Prospective students should consider what kinds of academic assistance they currently receive in their high schools and what balance of support and independence might be appropriate for them as they first transition from secondary education.

A useful framework for comparing disability support at different institutions is the program-services-compliance spectrum. **Formal disability programs** offer the most support for students. Some programs are more comprehensive than others, but most actively coordinate a variety of accommodation and support services for students with documented disabilities. Students provide their documentation of disabilities, and program staff members determine appropriate accommodations and suggested aids the students can access. Disability programs often monitor students' progress and offer academic assistance through individual counseling and/or peer/group activities, such as academic skill courses or mentorship programs. These programs can assist students in developing or enhancing compensatory strategies for their academic work. Formal disability programs commonly employ multiple learning specialists and often offer summer bridge programs to help prepare students for college level work. Colleges with formal disability programs are ideal for students with disabilities who would benefit from a supported transition to college. While students connected to the program follow the same academic path as students without disabilities, the program offers formal and varied support throughout the student's education. Some students with disabilities elect to begin college at an institution with a formal disability program and later transfer to another college or university.

On the opposite end of the spectrum are the colleges and universities with a **compliance** focus. These institutions offer students with documented disabilities reasonable accommodations and auxiliary aids, as required by Section 504 and the ADA. A disability services coordinator determines and ensures the provision of accommodations. Institutions with a compliance focus generally offer few or no academic services beyond reasonable accommodations; if additional services are available, these services are generally not associated with the disability office.

Finally, in the center of the spectrum are the colleges that do not have formal disability programs but offer reasonable accommodations and selected **services and referrals** to students with documented disabilities. Within this category, some colleges offer more coordination of services than others. In addition to reasonable accommodations and necessary auxiliary aids, some institutions may coordinate general academic programming, such as campus tutoring centers or occasional workshops on study strategies. Colleges in this category generally do not monitor students' academic progress or track students' use of services. Students with disabilities who thrive in this environment are prepared to be independent in their learning and living experience, are able to act as self-advocates and are fully knowledgeable about their disabilities as well as effective compensatory learning strategies. Colby-Sawyer College falls into this services and referrals category.

## **Colby-Sawyer College**

Colby-Sawyer College is an independent, coeducational, residential, undergraduate college that provides programs of study which innovatively integrate liberal arts and sciences with professional preparation. Colby-Sawyer fosters academic excellence and individual development in an environment that is committed to liberal studies as a foundation for lifelong learning. Students appreciate the close interaction among faculty, staff and students and the emphasis on internship and other complementary educational experiences. Students are challenged to participate in leadership opportunities both in and outside of the classroom to enhance their individual development.

### **Disability Services at Colby-Sawyer**

Academic services for students with disabilities are coordinated through the Academic Development Center, which serves all Colby-Sawyer students. The center's learning specialist offers students with documented disabilities reasonable and appropriate accommodation services and referrals to other campus resources, such as tutorial assistance and personal counseling services. Students with physical disabilities may receive accommodations, services and assistance through several offices on campus. Students with physical disabilities should disclose their disabilities to the Baird Health and Counseling Center if they require physical modifications or medical services and to the Academic Development Center if they require academic accommodations.

Colby-Sawyer does not offer college preparatory courses or remediation. Students who feel they could benefit from remediation or specialized programs to further develop compensatory learning strategies are advised to first consider a transition program that offers these types of courses and support.

Students are encouraged to use tutorial services for academic assistance, but there may be instances, particularly in a student's first year, when he/she would particularly benefit from the learning specialist's assistance. The learning specialist will work individually with students who have disabilities to help them develop strategies specific to the disability and a particular curricula area. Examples of these strategies include: time management, organization, reading for retention and recall, writing, and preparation for exams. In these cases, students may make an appointment or series of appointments with the learning specialist to discuss their academic concerns. The learning specialist does not monitor students' academic progress or track their use of other services.

### **Academic Services at Colby-Sawyer**

The Academic Development Center (ADC) offers educational support for all Colby-Sawyer students through peer and professional tutorial assistance. The center is staffed by a director, a learning specialist, an administrative assistant, four part-time professional tutors and fifteen peer tutors. All services are by appointment and free of charge. Students may make up to one appointment per class per week.

### ADC—Course Tutoring

This peer tutorial service, available for most first- and second-year courses and select upper-level courses, can help students maximize their learning in particular classes. Students can meet with peer tutors to improve their understanding of course concepts, to review for exams, or to develop study strategies targeted for particular courses.

### ADC—Writing

Peer and professional tutors assist students with the process of writing—from brainstorming to editing. Students can meet with tutors in the initial stages of writing to clarify thinking and/or plan an outline, or they can meet later to discuss ideas for revision. Writing sessions offer students supportive, objective and helpful responses, which enable them to improve the quality and focus of their writing.

### ADC—Time Management and Study Skills

Successful students know how to make the best use of their time and study efforts. Students can make appointments to discuss time management and organization strategies or to review effective approaches for note taking, reading and test preparation.

## Colby-Sawyer College **Basic Policies and Procedures for Disability-Related Services**

### **Disclosing a Disability and Providing Documentation**

**Disclosure:** After you have been accepted to Colby-Sawyer and have sent in your deposit, you will receive a large packet of information and forms. A Special Needs Disclosure Form will be part of this packet. This form should be returned to the college by the deadline listed in the packet. The Special Needs Disclosure Form can also be picked up during the April open houses coordinated by the Admissions Office and sent to the Academic Development Center separately. Documentation of a student's disability/disabilities should be sent directly to the ADC during the summer prior to beginning at Colby-Sawyer. Please feel free to submit documentation with the special needs disclosure form.

**Documentation:** Appropriate documentation constitutes psychoeducational testing, neuropsychological assessments, or other relevant clinical assessment. Oftentimes, families and prospective students ask whether IEPs or 504 Plans should be sent to the college. IEPs and other educational plans can serve as supplemental materials but are secondary and optional. The learning specialist determines appropriate accommodations based on the information provided in the original testing/assessment reports. We highly suggest that students submit documentation before the beginning of the school year or during the first week of class.

The documentation must identify each specific disability for which the student is requesting accommodations. Furthermore, a student's documentation needs to clearly support any request for accommodations by explaining how the disability currently and substantially impacts particular learning and/or other major life activities. Documentation must be comprehensive and current. (Please see our handouts, "Guidelines for Documentation of Disabilities," for specific information.) The learning specialist will review each student's documentation and will assign accommodations necessary for equal access to the college's programs. Accommodations vary in accordance with the documentation and disability. For extended time accommodations, time and a half is our standard provision; if a student's documentation indicates both a need for time allowance that exceeds our provision and a clear rationale for that recommendation, we will take the evaluator's suggestion into consideration.



Colby-Sawyer  
College

Academic Development Center

## Disclosure Form for Learning Accommodations

Colby-Sawyer College is committed to providing you with the best learning environment possible. To help us plan for any additional services you may require, please complete this form and return it in the enclosed, postage paid envelope. The disclosure of this information in no way affects your admission status. If you have no specific learning needs, please *do not* return the form. **Thank you.**

In pursuing my education at Colby-Sawyer College, I may need to request services for:

<input type="checkbox"/> Learning Disabilities*	<input type="checkbox"/> Psychological Needs
<input type="checkbox"/> Attention Deficit Disorder*	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical Impairment Affecting Mobility
<input type="checkbox"/> Hearing Impairment	<input type="checkbox"/> Visual Impairment
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____	

\*If you have never been assessed for a learning disability but believe that testing could be beneficial, we suggest that you request an evaluation from your local public school system or a private practitioner prior to your arrival.

The services or accommodations I have received before, and believe that I might need at Colby-Sawyer College, include the following. (Documentation will be required for some requests.)

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I understand that I am not obligated to disclose this information; it is strictly voluntary. I also understand that the Director of Learning Services will distribute this information only to those individuals who can assist in providing services that relate to my specific needs.

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Permanent Address: \_\_\_\_\_

(city) \_\_\_\_\_ (state) \_\_\_\_\_ (zip) \_\_\_\_\_

Home Telephone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Please complete and mail to:

Director of Learning Services, Academic Development Center, Colby-Sawyer College  
541 Main Street, New London, NH 03257

Questions? Phone: (603) 526-3714; Email: [learning@colby-sawyer.edu](mailto:learning@colby-sawyer.edu)

### **Initiating Accommodation Services**

Students are responsible for initiating services once they arrive at Colby-Sawyer. Students should contact the Academic Development Center, preferably within the first week of classes, and make an appointment with the learning specialist. The initial meeting will begin the process for documentation review and possible accommodation assignment. Students may initiate services at any time during the semester; however, documentation review and related arrangements take time. Accommodations should be requested in advance of need.

**Student Profiles and Academic Accommodations:** Once a student has initiated services with an appointment, the learning specialist reviews the student's documentation and develops a learning profile, which both summarizes the student's learning strategies and preferences and lists assigned accommodations and student responsibilities. During a follow-up appointment, the student is given copies of the profile, which he/she is expected to share with his/her academic advisor and the instructors in whose classes he/she will use the listed accommodations. Students will not be entitled to accommodations unless they have shared the profile with the faculty member and provided adequate notice to the faculty member for any accommodations that require special arrangements. The profile is intended to assist classroom instructors in better understanding the student's learning style and in implementing classroom accommodations that are listed on the profile. This act of self-advocacy provides the student an opportunity to explain his/her learning needs and to establish a rapport with the instructor.

Profiles must be renewed every semester a student wishes to use accommodations. Students should simply make an appointment with the learning specialist at the beginning of each academic term to update their profiles. If the student experiences problems with the assigned accommodations or wants to discuss alternative/additional accommodations, he/she must see the learning specialist as soon as possible.

**Student Responsibilities for Accommodations and Services:** Students are responsible for initiating services and renewing accommodation profiles in a timely manner. In accessing their assigned accommodations, students must observe all Colby-Sawyer College and CSC Academic Development Center rules. This responsibility includes complying with attendance policies, following ADC procedures for exam proctoring, respecting academic integrity expectations, and submitting registration and other required paperwork on time. Failure to follow relevant policies and procedures can result in the suspension of certain accommodations. The college is not responsible for problems with accommodations that are not brought to attention of the Learning Specialist at the Academic Development Center.

**Housing and Other Non-Academic Accommodations/Disability Services:** Requests for single rooms and other housing accommodations must go through either the Academic Development Center or Baird Health and Counseling Center. These offices determine appropriate accommodations and/or adjustments and then forward their recommendations to the director of residential education. The Academic Development Center staff makes recommendations for single rooms and other housing accommodations for students who have documented learning disabilities that *directly and substantially impact the residential experience*. The Baird Health and Counseling Center staff makes similar recommendations for students who have physical,

medical or psychiatric disabilities that significantly impact residential living. Questions regarding the documentation and request process for housing accommodations should be directed to the ADC or Baird staff. If a student experiences problems with his/her housing accommodations, he/she should notify both the Residential Education Office and the office that processed the original accommodation request (ADC or Baird).

Students with medical or psychiatric/counseling needs should note these needs on the Special Needs Disclosure Form and the medical history packet that are included in the summer mailing. If a student is currently taking medications and plans to continue them at school, he/she should speak to the Baird Health and Counseling staff, who can help the student coordinate refill and/or delivery processes.

## **Campus Resources and Student Responsibility for Success**

Accommodations are assigned to permit equal access to academic programs. Students should take responsibility for their learning by communicating with their instructors and advisors, practicing good study habits, and utilizing campus resources, such as the Academic Development Center tutorial services. Services beyond the provision of reasonable accommodations are subject to change.

Though academic accommodations are coordinated through the Academic Development Center, many offices and individuals can help students make the most of their academic, co-curricular and residential opportunities at Colby-Sawyer College.

- **Academic Development Center** (603) 526-3711
- **Colby-Sawyer College ADA/504 Website**
- **Academic Advisors**  
(Academic Departments)  
Opportunities for educational planning are provided to assist students in realizing the full value of their college experience. All Colby-Sawyer students have an academic advisor who takes personal interest in their progress. This advisor confers with the student at regular intervals, giving advice on both academic and career matters, including the choice of career or graduate school.
- **Baird Health and Counseling Center** (603) 526-3621  
The Baird Health and Counseling Center provides primary health and counseling services to all full-time matriculated students. Health services include the treatment of common acute and chronic problems, physical exams and immunizations. Counseling services are available for relationship problems, eating disorders, substance abuse and other issues facing young adults. Baird also provides referrals to outside physicians and agencies.

- **Residential Education** (603) 526-3755  
Colby-Sawyer College residence halls are places of learning in which students are challenged to investigate the many dimensions of human interaction, explore current social issues as a vehicle for personal and social development, and develop leadership skills. Every residence hall has undergraduate staff members who serve as peer advisors to the students in the hall. The student staff is supervised by resident directors, professional staff members who live on campus and facilitate community development in one building or a cluster of buildings.
  
- **Harrington Center for Career Development and Community Service**  
(603) 526-3764  
The Harrington Center offers career exploration and job placement resources as well as information concerning internship sites for students, job listings, and community service opportunities. The Harrington Center staff also co-administers student internships and the college's student employment program.