

## Education for People with Disabilities



### What is Special Education?

If your child's diagnosis or injury occurred during the summer break, you may feel intimidated by the process and bureaucracy of the special education system. In essence, special education provides instruction for children with disabilities that meet the child's individual needs and allow them to receive *a free and appropriate public education*. A child with disabilities can access special education from birth to age 21 through the Early Intervention Program (birth to age 3) and your local school district (age 3 to 21). For a breakdown of each program, to learn more about special education, and access resources please see our [Education for Children Living with Paralysis](#) site or download our [Education for People with Disabilities](#) fact sheet.

### Following the law

There are three laws that affect special education: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These 3 laws allow children to avoid discrimination in school and receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in

the least restrictive environment (LRE). It is also important to remember that each state has their own rules to implement and clarify these laws. Understood.org provides a section on [children's rights](#) that can help parents navigate this tricky and sometimes confusing system.

Some parents, especially those who expect a push back from their school districts, believe that having a printed copy of these laws available to read, highlight, and bring with them to their school meetings is a powerful tool to effectively advocate for their child's rights. While [IDEA Part B](#) may be the most relevant to parents, [Section 504](#) and [ADA](#) could also be useful. To find information on all the laws affecting special education, I recommend you to visit the [Laws & Guidance](#) section of the US Department of Education site.

### **First, the golden rules of Special Education...**

- Document everything. Every phone conversation, letters sent or received, assessments made, and appointment notices need to be documented and properly stored. Parents usually keep a binder and a file cabinet to keep orderly track of their child's paperwork. This will allow you to check on timelines for implementation of services, find documentation to back your claims to the Child Study Team and provide evidence during mediation or appeals.
- Remember this: your child has the right to a free appropriate, public education. This means that the education should be tailored to your child's needs while providing access to the general school curriculum as appropriate to him.

### **What to do when your infant has paralysis...**

- You do not need a referral from your doctor or a diagnosis. You can contact Early Intervention (EI) yourself as soon as you have concerns about your baby's mobility or development.
- This [Early Intervention Contacts](#) site has a list of E.I. referral phone numbers for each state.
- You can receive therapy through E.I. and through other medical professionals at the same time. If you do, it's a good idea to keep all therapists informed of each other's therapy plans and objectives.
- In addition to your case manager, you may request a social worker through Early Intervention. This professional can help you with short-term family counseling or by referring and/or helping you navigate a program or service for your child outside the E.I. program.
- E.I. is a "family center, activity based" model. Make sure to actively participate in all your child's sessions, ask questions, model therapy routines, and follow through in between sessions.

- A successful transition from Early Intervention to Preschool requires time and preparation. Request a transition meeting at least 3 months before your child's third birthday or sooner if her birthday falls during summer vacation. To learn more about transitions see this quick and useful [fact sheet](#) from the Pacer Center.
- If your child is close to his third birthday and you would like assistance with the transition to preschool, you can request an E.I. evaluation and transition assistance. Remember, by law, the Early Intervention Program must assist all children until their third birthday.

### **Do your research...**

- Talk to other parents in your school district/ neighborhood. They are a great resource to learn about the usual policies of special education in your school district, what's worked for them in the past, how to approach the administration for a special request, etc.
- If age appropriate, talk to your child about his experiences in school (was he comfortable with his therapist? Did she felt rushed during her sessions? Did the teachers allowed the accommodations in his IEP?) Write down the relevant comments to share with the Child Study Team (CST).
- You are allowed to present evaluations from independent healthcare professionals during your child's Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) meeting. Such evaluations include privately paid therapy assessments, rehabilitation discharge papers, doctors' records (physiatrist, neurologist, development pediatrician). These evaluations should be considered during the IEP meeting.
- If you anticipate a difficult meeting, research and inform yourself about special education advocates or lawyers. (See below for details)

### **On seeking the mythical ideal classroom...**

- There is such a thing as the ideal classroom for your child. The process takes time-- make sure to give yourself several weeks before the IEP meeting to prepare.
- Learn this phrase: *least restrictive environment*, and make it your mantra. This is your child's right under IDEA, ADA, and Section 504. If you are seeking an inclusive or a regular classroom setting, it is important to emphasize this right to your Child Study Team. This is especially relevant for children with mobility impairments without a developmental delay.
- Visiting schools is crucial for the ideal placement. Make sure to request visits to in-district and out- of-district schools, if appropriate, from your CST several weeks prior to the IEP meeting.
- While visiting the schools, keep a notebook for notes or use a questionnaire to help you identify the pros and cons of each school. Check the [MAAPS Checklist for](#)

[Parents](#), this [Special Education School Visit Checklist](#), and this [Choosing Schools](#) article for reference.

- While visiting the schools, check for accessibility roadblocks and evaluate the school's willingness to problem solve them.
- Make sure to consider the medical care your child will need during school hours. If your child will need assistance with her bladder or bowel programs, taking medications, or may have complications such as seizures or autonomic dysreflexia (AD), it is extremely important to meet with the school's nurse and request a health care plan within this IEP or 504 Plan.

*By Patricia Correa, Reeve Foundation Information Specialist*

### Websites

<http://www.180medical.com/scholarships>

#### **180medical: Scholarships**

Awards educational scholarships to people with spinal cord injury, spina bifida or transverse myelitis.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EW\\_nWRtKDWc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EW_nWRtKDWc)

#### **ABC Medical: Managing College Life with a Disability—Are You Ready?**

A webinar that has been posted to YouTube.

<https://www.affordablecollegesonline.org/college-resource-center/students-with-multiple-sclerosis/>

#### **Affordable Colleges Online: College Students with MS: A Guide to Campus Resources and Support**

This website offers tips for college students with MS as well as educational scholarships for those with MS.

<http://www.aahd.us/initiatives/scholarship-program/>

#### **American Association on Health and Disability (AAHD) Scholarship Program**

The AAHD Scholarship Program supports students with disabilities pursuing higher education. Preference is given to students who plan to pursue undergraduate/graduate studies in the field of public health, health promotion, disability studies, to include disability policy and disability research.

<http://www.aapd.com/>

#### **The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)**

2013 H Street, NW, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor

Washington, DC 20006

Phone: 202-457-0046 (V/TTY)

800-840-8844 (Toll-free)

Email: [scholarship@aapd.com](mailto:scholarship@aapd.com)

The American Association of People with Disabilities is the nation's largest disability rights organization. AAPD promotes equal opportunity, economic power, independent living, and political participation for people with disabilities.

<http://www.ahead.org>

**Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD)**

107 Commerce Center Drive, Suite 204

Huntersville, NC 28078

Phone: 704-947-7779

AHEAD is a professional membership organization for individuals involved in the development of policy and provision of services to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities involved in all areas of higher education.

<http://www.aucd.org/>

**Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)**

1100 Wayne Avenue, Suite 1000

Silver Spring, MD 20910

Phone: 301-588-8252

E-mail: [aucdinfo@aucd.org](mailto:aucdinfo@aucd.org)

AUCD is a membership organization that supports and promotes a national network of university-based interdisciplinary programs. Network members consist of: 67 University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, 43 Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities Programs, and 15 Intellectual and Developmental Disability Research Centers. Through its members, AUCD is a resource for local, state, national, and international agencies, organizations, and policy makers concerned about people living with developmental and other disabilities and their families.

<http://www.cosdonline.org>

**Career Opportunities for Students with Disabilities (COSD)**

1411 Oak Haven Road

Knoxville, TN 37932

Phone: 865-567-3765

COSD sponsors Full Access summits which bring together up to 60 undergraduate or graduate students or recent alumni with disabilities and select national and regional employers for networking and education. The COSD site offers the COSD Career Gateway™ as a resource to connect with employers.

<http://www.parentcenterhub.org/find-your-center/>

**Center for Parent Information and Resources**

c/o Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN)

35 Halsey St., Fourth Floor

Newark, NJ 07102

Email: [malizo@spannj.org](mailto:malizo@spannj.org)

Families with a child who has a disability often need information about their child's disability, about early intervention (for babies and toddlers), school services (for school-aged children), therapy, local policies, transportation, and much more. Every state has at

least one Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) to offer families just this kind of information. Many states also have a Community Parent Resource Center (CPRC), which offers the same type of support and training to parents of children with disabilities.

<http://chairscholars.org/>

**ChairScholars Foundation**

16101 Carencia Lane

Odessa, FL 33556-3278

Phone: 813-926-0544, 888-926-0544 (Toll-free)

E-mail: [programs@chairscholars.org](mailto:programs@chairscholars.org)

The ChairScholars Foundation provides scholarships for college or vocational training to low-income students with severe physical disabilities. There are three programs; the National Scholarship Program, the Florida Scholarship Program, and the New York Metropolitan Area Program.

[www.collegechoice.net](http://www.collegechoice.net)

<http://www.collegechoice.net/50-best-disability-friendly-colleges-and-universities/>

**College Choice: 50 Best Disability Friendly Colleges and Universities**

<https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/disability.html>

**Disability.gov: Guide to Student Financial Aid**

[www.dreamcollegedisability.org](http://www.dreamcollegedisability.org)

**DREAM (Disability, Rights, Education Activism, and Mentoring)**

DREAM is a national organization for and by college students with disabilities, supported in our work by our sponsoring organization, the National Center for College Students with Disabilities (NCCSD) and based at the Association on Higher Education And Disability (AHEAD). DREAM is open to higher education students of all types, including graduate students, part-time students, and those who are auditing higher education courses. It is open to students of all ages with any kind of disability, culturally Deaf students, and nondisabled students who are our allies and peers. They explicitly include people who have traditionally been marginalized or under-represented in the disability or higher education communities. They strongly advocate for disability culture, community, and pride, and hope to serve as an online virtual disability cultural center for students who want to connect with other students.

<http://www.fape.org/>

**Families and Advocates Partnership for Education (FAPE)**

PACER Center

8161 Normandale Boulevard

Minneapolis, MN 55437

Phone: 952-838-9000

E-mail: [pacer@pacer.org](mailto:pacer@pacer.org)

The FAPE project is a partnership that aims to improve the educational outcomes for children with disabilities. It links families, advocates, and self-advocates to information about the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The project is designed to

address the information needs of families whose children with disabilities receive special education services.

<http://www.finaid.org/otheraid/disabled.phtml>

**FinAid: Financial Aid for Students with Disabilities**

This page lists several scholarships for students with disabilities as well as financial aid resources.

<http://www.going-to-college.org/>

**Going to College**

Virginia Commonwealth University  
Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Workplace Supports and Job Retention  
1314 West Main Street  
P.O. Box 842011  
Richmond, VA 23284-2011  
Phone: 804-828-1851, 804-828-2494 (TTY)

This site is an online resource for teens with disabilities to learn about college life and what to do to prepare for it using the voices of college students with disabilities. It's also a resource for parents to help their son or daughter learn about college and prepare for success.

<http://www.heath.gwu.edu/>

**HEATH Resource Center**

The George Washington University  
HEATH Resource Center  
2134 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20052-0001  
E-mail: [AskHEATH@gwu.edu](mailto:AskHEATH@gwu.edu)

A national clearinghouse on postsecondary education for people with disabilities.

[https://www.kennedykrieger.org/sites/default/files/community-related-files/guide\\_for\\_school\\_personnel\\_working\\_with\\_students\\_with\\_spina\\_bifida\\_1.pdf](https://www.kennedykrieger.org/sites/default/files/community-related-files/guide_for_school_personnel_working_with_students_with_spina_bifida_1.pdf)

**Kennedy Krieger Institute: A Guide for School Personnel Working with Students with Spina Bifida (PDF)**

[https://www.kennedykrieger.org/sites/default/files/community-related-files/guide\\_for\\_school\\_personnel\\_working\\_with\\_students\\_with\\_spinal\\_cord\\_injuries\\_1.pdf](https://www.kennedykrieger.org/sites/default/files/community-related-files/guide_for_school_personnel_working_with_students_with_spinal_cord_injuries_1.pdf)

**Kennedy Krieger Institute: A Guide for School Personnel Working with Students with Spinal Cord Injuries (PDF)**

<http://www.kidschance.org/>

**Kids' Chance**

Victoria Burkhart, Executive Director  
Kids' Chance of America  
Phone: 484-945-9903 or 877-933-0222 (Toll-free)  
E-mail: [admin@kidschange.org](mailto:admin@kidschange.org)

Kids' Chance provides educational scholarships to children of workers seriously injured or killed on the job. Not available in all states.

[www.makingheadway.org](http://www.makingheadway.org)

<http://makingheadway.org/blog/making-headway-foundation-scholarships-available/>

**Making Headway Foundation**

115 King Street

Chappaqua, NY 10514-3460

Phone: 914-238-8384

Email: [info@makingheadway.org](mailto:info@makingheadway.org)

Making Headway is accepting scholarship applications for the Scott J. Reisser Memorial Scholarship Fund from pediatric brain or spinal cord tumor patients living in the NY, NJ or CT metropolitan areas. Applicants must be able to show that they have been accepted into a 4 or 2 year college or vocational program.

<http://www.makoa.org/education.htm#education>

**Makoa: Education Resources**

This page lists links to educational resources for people with disabilities, including resources at specific schools.

[www.nccsdonline.org](http://www.nccsdonline.org)

**National Center for College Students with Disabilities**

107 Commerce Centre Dr., Suite 204

Huntersville, NC 28078-5870

Toll-free: 844-730-8048

The National Center for College Students with Disabilities (NCCSD) is a federally-funded project under the U.S. Department of Education (P116D150005), through the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE). Their mission is three-fold: provide technical assistance related to students with disabilities, collect info and do research on disability services at universities and colleges, and report to the U.S. Dept. of Education about the current status of college students with disabilities.

<http://www.ncdae.org/>

**National Center on Disability and Access to Education (NCDAE)**

Center for Persons with Disabilities

6800 Old Main Hill

Utah State University

Logan, UT 84322-6800

Phone: 435-797-8284, 435-797-1981 (TDD)

NCDAE monitors and promotes electronically-mediated distance education policies and practices that enhance the lives of people with disabilities and their families.

<http://www.miusa.org/ncde>

**National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange (NCDE)**

Mobility International USA

132 E. Broadway, Suite 343  
Eugene, OR 97401

Phone/TTY: 541-343-1284

E-mail: [clearinghouse@miusa.org](mailto:clearinghouse@miusa.org)

NCDE is a comprehensive, one-stop resource on advising and tools for people with disabilities, professionals, educational institutions and organizations on increasing disability inclusion in international study, volunteer, teach and other exchange programs.

<http://www.ndpc-sd.org>

**National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD)**

209 Martin Street

Clemson, SC 29631-1555

Phone: 866-745-5641 (Toll-free), 866-212-2775 (TDD)

E-mail: [NDPCSD-L@clermson.edu](mailto:NDPCSD-L@clermson.edu)

NDPC-SD assists states in dropout prevention, reentry and school completion for students with disabilities.

<http://www.newmobility.com/1998/09/disability-friendly-colleges/>

**New Mobility: "Disability-Friendly Colleges".** September 1998.

This article based on a survey of 34 public colleges and universities presents an overview of services and accommodations available in general and at specific schools.

[http://sci.washington.edu/info/newsletters/articles/08\\_fall\\_return\\_to\\_school.asp](http://sci.washington.edu/info/newsletters/articles/08_fall_return_to_school.asp)

**Northwest Regional Spinal Cord Injury System at University of Washington: The Road Back to School after Spinal Cord Injury** article

<http://www.pva.org/>

**Paralyzed Veterans of America Scholarship Program**

Phone: 800-424-8200

TTY: 800-795-4327

Assists PVA members and their immediate families in obtaining a post-secondary education from accredited colleges in the United States. Applicants must be either Paralyzed Veterans members, the spouse of a Paralyzed Veterans member, or an unmarried child under 24 years of age who is dependent on the member for principal support. For more info, call Christi Hillman at 800-424-8200 x776 or email [christih@pva.org](mailto:christih@pva.org)

[www.ThePreJaxFoundation.com](http://www.ThePreJaxFoundation.com)

**PreJax Foundation**

1741 Travertine Terrace

Sanford, FL 32771

Phone: 407-734-3114

Email: [info@ThePreJaxFoundation.com](mailto:info@ThePreJaxFoundation.com)

A non-profit organization that gives college scholarships to people with MS or to children whose parents have MS.

[https://www.facebook.com/RampLessTraveledfoundation/timeline?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/RampLessTraveledfoundation/timeline?ref=page_internal)

**Ramp Less Traveled**

Ramp Less Traveled is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting individuals with spinal cord injuries in the pursuit of higher education. Ramp offers a combination of scholarships and mentoring opportunities, partnering their recipients with someone experienced in navigating the confusing maze from hospital floor to college dorm. With ongoing and comprehensive support, they help individuals with spinal cord injuries gain access to the academic, social, and emotional opportunities that college provides.

[www.sentinelsoffreedom.org](http://www.sentinelsoffreedom.org)

**Sentinels of Freedom**

Phone: 925-380-6342

Email: [info@sentinelsoffreedom.org](mailto:info@sentinelsoffreedom.org)

Provides educational scholarships to severely wounded post-9/11 veterans.

<http://www.lookingglass.org>

**Through the Looking Glass**

3075 Adeline Street, Suite 120

Berkeley, CA 94703

TTY: 510-848-1005

Toll-free: 800-644-2666

Through the Looking Glass awards scholarships to high school seniors and college students whose parents have disabilities.

<http://financialaid.utah.edu/scholarships/search/details.php?id=6501>

**University of Utah**

Center for Disability Services

201 South 1460 East, Room 105

Salt Lake City, UT 84112-9055

Phone: 801-581-6211

Scholarship info for people with spinal cord injuries who attending or plan to attend the University of Utah.

<http://www.ed.gov/osers>

**U.S. Department of Education: Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS)**

OSERS provides a wide array of supports to parents and individuals, school districts and states in three main areas: special education, vocational rehabilitation and research.

<http://weconnectnow.wordpress.com/>

**We Connect Now**

We Connect Now is dedicated to uniting people interested in rights and issues affecting people with disabilities, with particular emphasis on college students and access to higher education and employment issues. One of the site's goals is to help college students with

disabilities to succeed in their studies by getting the information and support they need, both through resources, links, blogs, news, studying existing laws and regulations, and through personal contacts.

### **Resources for Undocumented Students:**

<http://www.finaid.org/otheraid/undocumented.phtml>

#### **FinAid: Financial Aid and Scholarships for Undocumented Students**

This page discusses in-state tuition and applying for federal student aid and links to several resources for scholarships that may be open to undocumented students.

### **On Demand Videos**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qF59-wfnl2A&feature=youtu.be>

#### **Shepherd Center: University Accessibility**

A 12 minute video that promotes the idea that education can continue after spinal cord injury. Colleges have disability resource offices that can help students with disabilities navigate college.

---

---

**The information contained in this message is presented for the purpose of educating and informing you about paralysis and its effects. Nothing contained in this message should be construed nor is intended to be used for medical diagnosis or treatment. It should not be used in place of the advice of your physician or other qualified health care provider. Should you have any health care related questions, please call or see your physician or other qualified health care provider promptly. Always consult with your physician or other qualified health care provider before embarking on a new treatment, diet or fitness program. You should never disregard medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read in this message.**

This project was supported, in part by grant number 90PR3002, from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects under government sponsorships are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official Administration for Community Living policy.