

Disclosing a disability in postsecondary settings



Disclosure means to share personal information about your disability with others so you can receive accommodations. When and if to disclose is your choice, but sooner is usually better.

Meet with disability services staff

Disability information is disclosed at the postsecondary level when you meet with the disability services staff, preferably before the semester begins, so that accommodations are in place for you to use when needed.

Disability disclosure is part of the application process for inclusive higher education for students with an intellectual disability. The information is required as part of the admission process and kept confidential. The student will have the choice to disclose to the college disability services and request accommodations. Each university is organized differently and accommodations may be provided through the inclusive higher education program staff.

IEPs and 504 plans end when students graduate from high school

When special education students are in elementary through high school, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that students are provided with appropriate services. An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan is developed each year and implemented by teachers and

other special education professionals addressing the educational needs stated in the evaluation. However, once students graduate from high school, the IEP or 504 Plan come to an end. Because of this, it is up to a student to make the decision whether or not to disclose/reveal information about a disability at the postsecondary level.

Privacy of disability information

Privacy is a concern for many students who may be hesitant to disclose a disability. However, the information from your disability services file does not appear on your college transcript and the contents of your file are kept securely. You should consider all of this information when and if you choose to disclose.

Request for documentation

Documentation is usually requested by college disability services when accommodations are requested. This documentation may include records from a professional, such as a medical doctor, psychologist or other qualified diagnostician. High school information, such as an individualized education plan (IEP) and last three-year evaluation

or Section 504 plan, may help identify services that have been effective and may qualify as sufficient documentation. However, this is not always the case. If a new evaluation or further information from a medical doctor or psychologist is needed, the cost for this service is paid for by the student.

Essential components of college disability documentation

Most college disability services will want documentation including:

- Signed, dated and typed letter on professional stationery from a certifying professional such as a medical doctor, psychologist or neurologist who has credentials for diagnosing a disability.
- Clearly stated diagnosis.
- Description of assessment and relevant history.
- Description of functional limitations or educational impact.
- Current enough documentation to determine present impact and validate the accommodation request.
- Recommendations for accommodations, including what has been helpful in the past.

This information, in addition to your input and the requirements of your course or program, are the basis for determining effective and appropriate postsecondary accommodations.

**Wise student advice:
Know what works best for you**



“I am a student registered through disability services. I have a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and currently have a 3.85 GPA. I am very proud of this!

As I’ve learned to deal with my TBI, I’ve realized how important it is to ask for help. I really needed to get over my pride and now that I have, this has helped tremendously.

One of the strategies I’ve used to be successful here is to really understand my disability and how it affects me. I’ve learned I cannot take 8 a.m. classes, no back-to-back classes, and I even try to take classes every other day. Breaks are essential for me. I’ve also learned that taking a stress relief course or some kind of less intense class with my other more difficult classes helps to even my class load. I’ve taken yoga and piano courses that have been relaxing for me. I’m okay with all of this, because I know it is essential to helping me be successful here at Central Lakes College.

I couldn’t have done all this without the guidance and support from disability services.”

— *Social work major*