

ADHD Students and College

(taken from "Help your Adolescent ADHD patient make the Transition to College!" by Harlan Gephart. *Contemporary Pediatrics*, 10/05 and "Success for the ADHD College Student" by Stephanie Sarkis. *The ADHD Report* 16:1-5, 10/08)

College can be a challenging and exciting time. For adolescents with ADHD, there are a number of issues that need to be considered to help with the transition from high school to college.

Am I ready for college? Some adolescents with ADHD are ready for college, but for a number, the transition may be difficult and alternatives to entering college right of out high school should be considered. Staying at home and going to a community college with a lighter course load is one option. This can give the student time to "get the hang" of college. The class sizes in community colleges tend to be small and more supportive which is often helpful for the student with ADHD. Also, for a number of students, the 2 year Associates of Arts degree they earn will give them adequate preparation for many vocations. And, for those students that want to go on to a 4 year college, they can commonly transfer after 2 years in a community college.

What impact does ADHD have on learning? ADHD can have an impact on a number of skills which affect college learning success. These include:

- Organization
- Time management (think procrastination)
- Neatness and orderliness
- Consistency
- Productivity
- Study skills
- Ability to work independently

Because of these issues, the student with ADHD may need oversight both from parents as well as teachers in order to be successful.

How to choose a college Colleges for ADHD students need to provide good one-on-one support services by a staff member who understands ADHD. Schools that have education departments (where they educate students to be teachers) often have such services.

Smaller class sizes are usually preferable and it's good to have instructors who are focused on teaching and not research. These allow for good one-on-one help for students in areas such as organizing projects or writing papers. College websites often give you an idea if they have such services, but it's best to visit the college and interview administrators to determine what is available.

Smaller colleges are often preferable for the ADHD student. They are often more flexible and give the student more support. Sometimes a smaller college isn't possible, especially if the student has interests in areas such as engineering which may only be offered at large universities.

Mentors or Coaches A mentor or coach is often very helpful for the ADHD student. This is someone with whom the student meets regularly, possibly once a week, either face-to-face, by phone, or online, and who provides encouragement, instruction, and guidance focused on the student's organizations and academic needs. A mentor offers both practical support, but also helps prevent feelings of loneliness and helplessness that can commonly occur for ADHD students in college.

The ADHD student should also take a class in study skills. This is commonly offered at the school, but, if not, should be taken elsewhere such as in local community colleges. This course should be taken in the freshman year or before leaving home for school.

Educational Rights ADHD students often qualify for accommodations in college under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This is the portion of the federal civil rights law that protects those with disabilities from discrimination. ADHD is considered a learning disability in the eyes of the law. The accommodations offered under Section 504 can be very helpful for the ADHD student and may include extra time for tests, preferential seating in classes, and use of a note-taker or recording device and published lecture notes. ADHD students need to seek such accommodations through the college's Office for Student Disability Services (OSDS).

In order to obtain 504 accommodations parents need to follow specific legal procedures which should be completed before their child completes high school. Section 504 can then be submitted to a college at enrollment though this doesn't guarantee accommodations in college. For information on Section 504, you can look at the following websites:

- www.ed.gov/ocr/
- <http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/sec504.index.htm> and then click on the [Help for College Students with Disabilities Flyer](#) to get more information
- <http://www.help4adhd.org/en/education/rights/504>

Use of Technology The ADHD student can benefit from available technology to aid in college success. A computer is

almost always a must. It offers access to the internet, and access to email (useful for accessing professors and class notes), and can be critical in helping the student with written assignments which is often a tedious task for those with ADHD. Other technologies such as books on tape, personal digital assistant (PDA), and educational or organizational software can be valuable.

Medications Most students who took medication for their ADHD when in high school, will still benefit in college. They will need someone to continue to manage their medication. Some school health services may have physicians who can oversee the medication for the student. Whoever is prescribing the medication will need to see the student periodically.

The student will probably continue on the same medication regimen as in high school, but for some, the change in schedule i.e. waking up late and studying late, may require adjustment in medication timing and possibly the type of medication used.

Also, students need to be careful about their medications as they can be misused or stolen by other students. It's important to have the medication in a secure place. And, be sure your student is aware of the risk of others stealing the medication.

Finally, Some schools conduct random drug testing. If so, the student must carry a signed note from the prescribing physician stating the name of the medication, the fact that it is a stimulant, the reason for the prescription (ADHD) and a statement that a drug test could show up positive for amphetamine due to this medication.

Books

- Bramer JS. *Succeeding in College with Attention Deficit Disorders: Issues and Strategies for Students, Counselors, and Educators*. Plantation, Fla., Specialty Press, Inc.
- Kravets M, Wax I. *The K & W Guide to Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities or Attention Deficit Disorder* (ed 8). Princeton, N.J., Princeton Review
- Quinn P. *ADD and the College Student* (rev. 2001). Washington, DC, Magination Press
- Quinn P, Ratey N, Maitland T. *Coaching College Students with ADHD: Issues and Answers*. Silver Springs, Md., Advantage Books
- Strichart S, Mangrum C (eds). *Peterson's Colleges with Programs for Learning Disabilities or Attention Deficit Disorders* (ed 6). Lawrenceville, NJ, Thomson Peterson's.
- A good place to find many of these books and others on ADHD is:
The ADD Warehouse: www.addwarehouse.com

Websites

- National Resource Center on ADHD
www.help4adhd.org/en/about/irslist
- CHADD (Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder)
www.chadd.org
- American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)
www.aapd.com
- Federal Resource Center for Special Education
www.dssc.org/frc
- National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY)
www.nichcy.org
- Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (civil rights)
www.ed.gov/ocr/
- Education Testing Service (e.g. untimed SAT)
www.ets.org/disability (Link through "Documentations Guidelines" to "Documenting ADHD")