

Differences Between Secondary and Postsecondary Education

Secondary Education (High School)

- **Governed by federal laws:** Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).
- **Purpose:** To ensure that all eligible students with disabilities have available a free appropriate public education (FAPE), including special education and related services (IDEA). To ensure that no otherwise qualified person with a disability be denied access to, or the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination by any program or activity provided by any public institution or entity (504/ADA).
- **Eligibility:** (for special education services) All infants, children, and youth (0 through 21 years) with disabilities (as defined by the state Administrative Rules for Special Education, and/or the ADA).
- **Documentation:** School districts are responsible for providing trained personnel to assess eligibility and plan educational services.
- **Receiving Services:** School districts are responsible for identifying students with disabilities, designing special instruction, and/or providing accommodations.
- **Self-Advocacy:** Students with disabilities learn about their disability, the importance of self-advocacy, the accommodations they need, and how to be a competent self-advocate.

Postsecondary Education (College/University)

- **Governed by federal laws:** Section 504 (particularly subpart E) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).
- **Purpose:** To ensure that no otherwise qualified person with a disability be denied access to, or the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination by any program or activity provided by any public institution or entity (504/ADA).
- **Eligibility:** (for disability services) Anyone who meets the entry level-age criteria of the college and who can document the existence of a disability as defined by the 504 ADA.
- **Documentation:** Students are responsible for obtaining disability documentation from a professional who is qualified to assess their particular disability.
- **Receiving Services:** Students are responsible for telling Disabilities Services staff that they have a disability, and for requesting accommodations for each class. Accommodations (not special education) are provided so students with disabilities can access the educational programs or courses used by other students.
- **Self-Advocacy:** Students must be able to describe their disability, identify strengths and weaknesses, and identify any accommodations needed and how to be a competent self-advocate.