



Breaking Down Barriers: Going to College

This topic is important because college is up to the family and the student. Everybody should have a choice to go to college.

In my senior year of high school, all of my friends were talking about college. I would hear them say things like: I got into the University of Michigan. I realized that I wanted to be able to say that I got into college, too. I thought it would be a cool experience to be a college student. Last year, a new program started at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan for people with developmental disabilities. It was started by a few very caring people who thought outside the box. They are my parents, teachers, university people, and me. It's called Oakland University Transition. I am enrolled in this transition program, but not the college. I take classes and get help with homework from peers and the support people from the transition program.

My first day of college was a bit scary, but I got used to it. Overall, the transition was fun and exciting, and I had a good high school teacher who helped me make my dream of going to college come true. I take two buses to the campus and sometimes get a ride home with a friend. In the Oakland University Transition program, students like me take two to four classes and do volunteer job training exercises at the Lowry Childhood Education Center and the student radio station WXOU. We're also involved in the recreation and social stuff on campus. I still have an IEP (Individual Education Plan), and I have meetings at the end of every year, just like I did in high school. (This is unique to the Oakland University Transition program.)

These are the steps I took to make it happen:

- The first step is to have a good caseload teacher. A case load teacher is a teacher that helps you in high school. They help kids with disabilities make sure they are included in class and meet the IEP (Individual Education Plan) goals. Tell them you want one of the IEP goals to be going to college.
- Next, you'll have a lot of meetings with your high school team to plan how you are going to go to college. You'll do research a pick a program that works for you.



- You need to have lots of meetings with the college program, high school support team and your parents to figure out how things will work.
- When you get to college, take classes because you like them and/or major in something you are interested in.
- Try to have people around you who can support in you and who believe you.

Web resources:

Are you a person with a disability who thinks that college or training beyond high school is not an option? Think again! There are educational opportunities available for everyone who wants it. Check out this website to learn more: Check out their website at: <http://www.thinkcollege.net/students/index.php>

ECLG's mission is to improve transition outcomes for students with learning disabilities and/or learning differences. They work with school districts throughout North America to help bring the concepts of self-advocacy, self-efficacy and self-determination into the classroom. Check out their website at: www.eclg.com

The HEATH Resource Center of The George Washington University, Graduate School of Education and Human Development, is an online clearinghouse on postsecondary education for individuals with disabilities. Check out their website at: www.heath.gwu.edu/

The Transition Coalition provides online information, support, and professional development on topics focusing on the transition from school to adult life for youth. Check out their website at: www.transitioncoalition.org/
Go to: Tools and Resources, 18-21 Programs Database

The Postsecondary Education Research Center (PERC) project, which is coordinated by TransCen, Inc. has information and resources on college options for students with intellectual disabilities. Check out their website at: <http://www.transitiontocollege.net/>