

4th Annual Michael Golds Memorial AD/HD Conference

SELECTING THE RIGHT COLLEGE AND APPROPRIATE FIT FOR THE AD/HD STUDENT

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I. Making the Transition to College

A. What are the AD/HD young adult's strengths and weaknesses?

- Need to learn to anchor and structure self without the coaching of parents.
- Be realistic in assessing the social, emotional, and environmental distractions and academic demands at a college campus.
- AD/HD teen's emotional development generally lags behind.
- AD/HD individuals have a difficult time adapting to change.
- A local community college or 4 year college plus job if not ready to go away.
- Keep in perspective that college is a commitment and investment toward the future (www.collegeispossible.com)

B. Meet with high school counselor and therapist to discuss college options, readiness and how to prepare for the transition.

- Discuss if ready and able to handle academic, social and daily living skills of independence and formulate a plan. Is the student able to self-regulate and establish/adhere to schedule?
- Meet with therapist to help young adult understand how AD/HD impacts his/her learning and lifestyle. Know strengths. Be an AD/HD expert.
- Start doing laundry, money budgeting and time management and use of planner with summer job and/or taking a class at a local college.
- Need to be prepared for the independence and challenges of college life.

C. Acceptance of yourself with AD/HD is essential. The more you know and understand, the better you can educate others about it and self-advocate at college.

- Be willing to ask for help.
- Get further clarification/explanation on new concepts, tests and assignments.
- Be comfortable describing your disability and advocate for the services you need.
- Need to be willing to work longer and harder
- Be willing to sit in front of the class.
- Anticipate college to take longer than four years.
- Set goals that are attainable with help of career counseling center and advisor.
- Focus on consistency, resilience, persistence, and follow-through.
- Use an AD/HD coach (www.americocoach.com).
- Use medication as prescribed.
- Understand the compensatory skills for learning differences.
- Develop adaptive study, coping and living skills.
- Seek out psychotherapy at the counseling center if you feel overwhelmed with the transition. Avoid shut-down (feeling immobilized).

D. What type of academic and social environment would best meet the young adult's needs? It needs to be the right fit for the individual to achieve success.

- Avoid meltdowns with a good support system in place with access to academic support and counseling services and an assigned advisor.
- Structured support services that offer individualized appointments and seminars on study strategies, time management, organizational skills and future planning (career counseling center).
- Student mentors, supplemental instruction, extensive content tutoring services, writing labs, math labs, and foreign language labs.
- No stigma seeking academic support services, because this is available to all the students.
- Smaller classroom environments give personal attention and opportunity to interact directly with professors and get feedback.
- Adult mentor who is a graduate of the college and available to answer questions and take you out (if in an out-of-state college).
- On-campus living environment where the majority of the students reside
- Academic advisor who is knowledgeable about AD/HD and LD.
- Acceptable to begin college with a light or reduced schedule.

II. The College Search

A. Research the colleges on the internet under Princeton Review's comprehensive college profiles at REVIEW.COM; www.petersons.com; www.collegeboard.com

B. What to research? Disability offices and academic support services offered are very important priorities for the AD/HD or LD student.

- Is there a full-time learning specialist who is the director/coordinator of disability services?
- Range of services offered through the academic support services/ learning center
- AD/HD students should transition into college by going to a small college (less overwhelming campus and more of a community)
- Location is important: consider in-state vs. out-of-state and urban, suburban or rural setting
- Social options and/or Greek system
- Student-professor ratio
- Male/female ratio
- How many students are being serviced at the disability office?
- Are the tutoring services unlimited? What are the operating times for the academic support services?

C. The *K&W Guide to Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities or ADD (6th edition) 2002* is a Princeton Review Book compiled by Marybeth Kravets and Imy Wax. It is an excellent resource in the search. The book is divided into the different levels of support that the colleges provide.

- SP is structured programs that offer the most comprehensive services. It offers a coaching-type of one-to-one relationship and small groups for academic, organizational and time management assistance.
- CS is coordinated services which have at least one certified learning specialist. Provides assistance to students to develop strategies for their individual needs.
- S is services that are reasonable accommodations to all students with appropriate and current documentation (within 3 years). These services do not cost extra and constitute the academic support services of most colleges.
- The book describes the learning disability program and services of each college listed. It gives the director's name and phone number/e-mail address of your contact person in considering the fit.

D. It is important to have priority/criteria in mind when you search the book to decide the appropriate choices and then make the contact with the disability director. The priority/criteria for my son included:

- College location and proximity to a city
- Safety rating of the city nearby
- Small college of 2,300 students or less
- A high percentage of students living on campus
- More female than male
- Waivers and course substitutions
- No Greek system
- Religious organizations on campus
- Extracurricular activities particularly radio, theater, newspaper, athletics
- Academic requirements
- Extensive academic support services available and unlimited
- An advisor connected to the disability office to oversee academic program and monitor progress.
- Flexibility of the college with reasonable accommodations for AD/HD
- A mandatory freshman transition to college class
- Full-time learning specialist to assist with and coordinate services.

E. College Selection Resources:

There are two other guidebooks that I found to be useful in this search process: *The Best 331 Colleges --The Smart Buyers Guide to Colleges* is a 2002 edition of the Princeton Review and *The Insiders Guide to the Colleges 2002* published by Yale Daily News. These books describe the learning and social environments of the colleges. It gives information about the type of students on campus and what they have to say about the college scene both socially and academically. They talk about how approachable the professors are and the ambience of the campus.

Other helpful resources include: Networking with other parents of AD/HD students.

- Educational consultants who specialize in colleges for ADHD/LD students- Telephone number of the IECA is 1-703-591-4850 and the website is www.educationalconsulting.org.
- Princeton Review's "The Best 331 Colleges" has educational consultants for colleges listed in the back of the book by state.
- On-line study guides at www.sparknotes.com.

III. The Common Application and College Campus Visits (www.commonapp.org)

A. We sent the common application to nine colleges from our search.

- SAT was taken with extended time which can be arranged through the high school counselor who sends in the documentation.
- Personal statement is very important. In the concluding paragraph of my son's essay he disclosed with this statement "In having ADD, I accept that I need to apply myself longer and harder than my classmates do. I will continue to work hard to succeed at college." (collegeapps.about.com)
- Disclosure can be after acceptance.

B. Interview with admissions office and chose to disclose our son's AD/HD

- Admission counselors push Early Admission which closes other options.

C. The campus visit is a determining factor in the fit. Take advantage of the offered overnight visit with a student and attending classes

- Ask questions from priority list during the student-led campus tour and visit.
- Eat in the student dining room and talk to the students or professors that are there.
- Take in the environment of the campus and neighboring city it is in.
- Ask random students about the social life on campus and how stressful are the academics.
 - Ask admissions and students about alcohol use and drugs on campus.
 - Ask about substance free dorms.

- D. The disability directors/coordinators at the different colleges varied in experience, position, credentials, availability, and services offered. Some were not learning specialists or in a full-time position.
- Prepare a list of questions particular to the student's learning style.
 - List specific services needed and ask details on how your AD/HD student would receive them.
 - Be able to articulate nature of disability and describe services that helped in high school (Bring 504 plan or IEP with you).
 - Ask how faculty responds to the needs of students with learning differences?
 - Who informs the professors of the accommodations?
 - What services are offered through the academic support services?
 - Is there priority registration?
 - Are there support groups and skill development seminars?
 - Is there a pass/fail option available for a student who can not meet course requirements? Is a course substitution available? (Students must put forth effort before waiver or substitution in many colleges).
 - Do schools offer regular appointments with learning specialist and/or peer mentor? (These contacts help students avoid procrastination trap.)
- E. Final selection. After visiting the 9 small colleges chosen, my son decided on the school which best fit our priority and criteria list.
- The disability director/advisor is key. She told him what was involved in the transition to college for an AD/HD student.
 - She emphasized the need to self-advocate, ask for help, and she let him know all the resources available to him if he pursued the academic and skills assistance. She warned that he should not wait until a crisis at the end of the semester to request services, as other AD/HD students have.
 - Foreign language was pass/fail with tutoring. If necessary to waive the foreign language requisite, a culture class could be substituted.

F. Know your rights. Read the federal disability law under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) of 1990 to know your rights in a postsecondary setting such as college. The disability coordinator at the college level is mandated by the ADA to provide reasonable modifications or accommodations for students who have ADHD/LD.

- The law obliges an institution of higher education to provide effective, reasonable accommodations.
- ADA is enforced by the US Dept. of Justice. ADA applies to all public and private colleges or universities.
- Section 504 applies to all public colleges as well as to private colleges that receive federal subsidies or grants for research and financial aid. Section 504 prohibits discrimination on the basis of a disability.
- To be called a disability, the impairment has to substantially limit a major life activity such as learning. ADHD reflects an impairment in social and/or academic functioning.
- The law requires documentation (ADA and Section 504) that is current within the three-year period of psychoeducational testing and/or a clinical diagnostic report. Such documentation ensures that colleges provide appropriate accommodations. A student can request that his/her high school update the assessment to comply with the college policy.
- An ADHD/LD student can expect the following reasonable accommodations based on documented need according to campus requirements:
 - A reduced course load
 - Extended time to complete tests and assignments
 - A note-taker
 - Course substitution
 - Waivers or pass/fail option
 - A quiet testing room, books on tape
 - An alternate format for taking tests if required
 - Tutoring and assistive technology
 - Clarification on assignments, tests and new concepts
 - Option to tape-record classes.

- If a professor fails to agree to the recommendations or neglects to provide them, then the student must promptly notify the director of the disability office.

V. Alternatives to College.

Most AD/HD teens need time after high school to mature and acquire life skills before going away to a four-year college.

A. Contact HEATH Resource Center at 1-800-544-3284 or at www.heath.gwu.edu for disability resources available on the postsecondary educational level:

- **AHEAD is the Association of Higher Education and Disability** (www.ahead.org). You can order ALERT, this organization's free newsletter.
- **Vocational Rehabilitation Services** offers vocational counseling, evaluations, training and job placement assistance. It is an eligible funded program .

B. A one- to two-year transitional college will prepare the student to enter a four-year college.

- **Louisburg College in N.Carolina** 1-800-775-0208 or www.louisburg.edu
- **Landmark College in Vermont** 1-802-387-6718 or www.landmarkcollege.edu
- Both Louisburg College and Landmark College help the ADHD/LD student who needs to develop study skills and strategies, time management, organizational skills, critical thinking and assistance with planning structure.
- Students receive individual attention from faculty, very small classes, exploration of individual learning styles and a focus on self-advocacy.
- The book *Learning Between the Lines* by Jonathon Mooney and David Cole addresses the benefit of starting at a college such as Landmark. Both authors were academic failures in high school. David Cole (who is ADHD) learned how to write and how to learn at Landmark. Mooney and Cole both transferred to Brown, an Ivy League College, which was ADHD/LD user-friendly and graduated with honors at the top of their class. In the book they teach students how to take charge of your education, how to learn (which the educational system did not teach), and provide the ‘tools’ to be successful.
- Cole and Mooney demonstrate that acquiring learning skills enhances life skills.

C. Transitional living programs to prepare for independence and life management skills.

The cost of transitional programs may be fully tax-deductible as a medical expense (includes Landmark and Louisburg). These programs allow students to attend a community college, four-year college, vocational school or complete high school credits or get a GED. They assist young adults in need of transition and “at risk” in the world of education, work, health (emotional & physical) and independence. There is personal coaching and mentoring to facilitate healthy behaviors. The average age of students is from 18 to 26. Generally the programs are from 12 to 18 months. The student profile includes prior poor college adjustment, interpersonal difficulties, drug/alcohol use, poor judgement, and inappropriate social choices. There is an independent living curriculum. These programs provide academic, career and life skills support to make it in the world.

- Benchmark (California)** 1-800-474-4848 or www.benchmarkeducation.net
- Echo Springs (Idaho)** 1-208-267-1111 or www.echosprings.com
- College living experience (Florida)** 1-800-486-5058 or www.cleinc.net
- Aimhouse (Colorado)** www.aimhouse.com
- New Lifestyles (Virginia)** 1-540-772-4521 or www.newlifestyles.net

**Thank you for attending the
4th Annual Michael Golds Memorial Conference.**

Brought to you by:
Oakland Community College
The Michael Golds Memorial Fund
CHADD of Michigan

We hope you'll join us again next year!!!

Information on the 2004 Michael Golds Memorial Conference
Should be available by mid-Summer 2004 at www.chaddmi.com.

Keep up on what's new in the Michigan Area World of AD/HD:
Join the mail@chaddmi.com e-mail group.