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# College/University Pathway

## Accompanying Family Guide

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This resource has been developed to help students and families navigate the transition out of high school and into college/university. In this guide you will find important information discussed in school based transition meetings.



AUTISM PROGRAMS  
School Support Program



# Pathway to College/University

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Students who are able to meet the challenges of applied/academic work tend to be on the college/university pathway, graduating high school with an Ontario Secondary School Diploma. In Grades 11 and 12 courses are broken down into college level and university level with students registering based on their desired postsecondary pathway.

## A Good Place to Start

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The *Transition Resource Guide for Students with Disabilities* website has useful resources for students and families regarding the services in college/university (C/U). [www.transitionresourceguide.ca](http://www.transitionresourceguide.ca)

*Postsecondary Language Dictionary* outlines the main differences between high school and university. [http://www.transitionresourceguide.ca/sites/transitionresourceguide.ca/files/language\\_dictionary.pdf](http://www.transitionresourceguide.ca/sites/transitionresourceguide.ca/files/language_dictionary.pdf)

*Community Resource Directory* lists services in Toronto for those with ASD. <http://www.surreyplace.on.ca/resources-publications/community-resource-directory/>

## Self-Advocacy and Self-Disclosure

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Self-advocacy is one of the most important skills a student with ASD can have. It involves awareness, confidence, decision-making, self-evaluation, problem solving and disclosure. Having self-advocacy skills in C/U is important, particularly when students are required to disclose their disability in order to receive supports. With this skill set, students will be able to navigate the postsecondary environment with more success.

To further develop self-advocacy here are some things to review/practice at home:

- Understanding of autism and how it affects him/her personally
- Understanding of strengths and needs
- Participate in the IEP and IPRC processes as early as possible
- Role play asking for accommodations, extensions, and help from teachers
- Have your teen examine whether current accommodations work for his/her learning needs
- Coach your teen on how to have difficult conversations such as asking for deadline extensions, or moving tests
- Teach/encourage your teen to advocate for themselves in social situations
- Role play discussions with teachers around planned absences and gathering of necessary work

There are benefits to disclosing but it is always a personal decision, and one that students must make for themselves. This is something that requires a lot of thought and practice. The link below provides more information on disclosing in postsecondary.

<http://www.transitionresourceguide.ca/resources/advocacy-and-disclosure>

Sample disclosure letter for professor (template)

<http://www.transitionresourceguide.ca/sites/transitionresourceguide.ca/files/disclosure-letter-template.pdf>

## Building Independence

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To determine which skills would be essential to develop think, *“if my child doesn’t learn the skill, will someone else have to do it for them?”* Regular practice in the natural environment in which it occurs is key (e.g., regular use of an agenda, prioritize dates/events on a calendar, chunk large-scale assignments, etc.).

To assist with developing independence at home, it is important to teach a skill and then allow your teen to work through it independently. Too much support can lead to an inability for the teen to cope independently. As more independence is gained, add more responsibility. It would be beneficial to build and establish routines for homework and studying early on in high school with the goal of the teenager being able to initiate these skills independently by postsecondary. For additional information around building independence, please refer to the article *“10 Levels to Living Independently”* by Michelle Garcia Winner: <https://www.socialthinking.com/Articles?name=10-Levels-to-Living-Independently>

Below are examples of independence skills that can be established at home:

- Travelling independently
- Opening a bank account
- Grocery shopping
- Ordering food
- Making simple meals
- Household chores
- Booking appointments
- Have son or daughter participate in social opportunities with family and friends

## Important Skills for Academic Success

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Suggested skills required for success in C/U include sustained attention during class; maintaining satisfactory notes; organizational skills; understanding and completing assignments; successfully completing tests and exams; gaining information from written material; and producing quality written work.

**In postsecondary it is usually not the academic component that causes difficulty. Often, impairments in social and executive functioning skills can lead to failures of classes and campus life. It is important that these skills are practiced and developed regularly.**

Below are ways to improve executive functioning skills at home:

- Plan and execute a family meal
- Prioritizing activities in order to get out of the house on time
- Building working memory through the use of agendas, calendars and/or to do lists
- Using family schedules/calendars or apps (ex. Cozi) for planning
- Alarm clock for waking up
- Timer for transitioning from breaks back to work/chores
- Visual reminders and other apps to ease anxiety (Settle My Glitter, Meditation)

To help plan how much time will be needed for each C/U course per week, it is a good rule to assign 3 hours of independent work for every 1 hour of in-class lecture. This takes into account supplemental reading, homework, reviewing notes.

Complete TCDSB/SPC [Skills for Pathways Checklists: Postsecondary Pathways](#) and see which skills need more practice. Choose one or two skills to work on at a time.

[http://www.transitionresourceguide.ca/sites/transitionresourceguide.ca/files/transition\\_readiness\\_-\\_student\\_checklists.pdf](http://www.transitionresourceguide.ca/sites/transitionresourceguide.ca/files/transition_readiness_-_student_checklists.pdf)

Take a look at tips for success at school by Ontario School Counsellors' Association ([www.osca.ca/students/2013-11-07-18-12-28/success-at-school.html](http://www.osca.ca/students/2013-11-07-18-12-28/success-at-school.html))

## Building Networks/Gaining Experience

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Building networks and gaining experience are key to developing a healthy, fulfilling life. These experiences can help develop social networks and skills for future career development (e.g., volunteering for gaming conference when they want to get into video game design). Different skills can be acquired by creating new experiences outside of the school. Colleges and Universities provide various opportunities for students to engage, have fun and contribute outside of the classroom such as:

### **Athletics and Recreation**

#### **Special Interest Clubs**

#### **Student Governments, Unions and Councils**

#### **Volunteering**

- Ontario Volunteer Centre Network ([www.ovcn.ca](http://www.ovcn.ca))
- Volunteer Toronto ([www.volunteertoronto.ca](http://www.volunteertoronto.ca))

- **Attend Specialty Classes**
- Public library programs, classes and events
- Community classes: Michaels craft store, Home depot, etc.
- Parks and Rec arts classes
- Continuing education courses

A resource to review for potential options within the community is the Community Resource Directory for adults. <http://www.surreyplace.on.ca/resources-publications/community-resource-directory/>

## Deciding on the College/University Pathway

Deciding between college and university is a tough decision, and it is important to consider strengths and interests when making the decision. Self-evaluation and asking what appeals to your teen in terms of career aspirations may help with decisions.

**Colleges** offer apprenticeships, certificate programs, and diplomas that range from less than one year or up to 4 years. Some offer programs in partnership with a university to grant a degree and a diploma. College instruction tends to be practical and hands on with smaller class sizes, which leads to greater student-teacher interaction.

**Universities** offer undergraduate degrees (or bachelor’s degree) that are 3-4 years in length. After obtaining a degree, graduate programs (master’s and doctoral degrees) also exist. University instruction tends to be heavy on theory, and lecture based with larger class sizes.

## Factors to Help Determine Best Fit

| Factor   | Question to ask Yourself  | Notes |
|--|---|-------|
| Population of students                             | How do you feel about the size of the school population?                                  |       |
| Size of campus                                     | Is the campus/ school too big or too small?   |       |
| Campus layout                                      | Is it difficult to find your way around campus?   |       |
| Size of typical classes                            | Do you prefer classes with more or fewer students?  |       |
| Proximity of the campus to home                    | Do you like that you are close to home or do you wish you were further?                   |       |
| Availability of high interest program/courses      | How important is it that you have a choice of courses that really interest you?           |       |
| Receptiveness of accessibility/disability services | Were questions answered willingly?<br>Were they friendly?                                 |       |
| Available supports/services                        | Are there academic supports to access?<br>At school, do you currently use accommodations? |       |

# Applying to Colleges/Universities

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The Guidance Department will give specific instructions on how and when to apply for college and university. To find information regarding the application process for university and college please see the websites below:

To apply to an Ontario university, <https://www.ouac.on.ca/>

To apply to an Ontario college, <http://www.ontariocolleges.ca/apply>

## Transition Activities

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To ease the postsecondary transition, consider this list of suggested activities:

- Attend university/college fairs
- Attend open houses
- Visit campus - guided tours with faculty of interest
- Participate in student for a day - offered by some colleges and universities. Some may offer workshops, social events, or a conference to visit the campus and find out more about college/university life.
- Visit school website, print off campus map
- Speak to a graduate or someone in the program of interest

## After the Application

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Here are the steps for your teen after receiving the offer:

- Accept the offer, if still interested
- Contact the Accessibility Services Office to schedule an appointment immediately
- Make sure the necessary documentation for services and accommodations is available
- Register for any Transition/Orientation programs
- Review any transition materials you may have been given
- Apply for Financial Aids (see the next section)
- Confirm important dates and information such as fee schedules, registration dates and course selection process
- Schedule a campus tour

Plan B options:

- You may be on a waitlist or declined
- Call admissions to find out about what you can do to improve your chance the next time
- Upgrade courses in high school
- Consider accredited distance education, funded by the Ministry of Education  
<http://www.ilc.org/index-main.php>
- Take continuing education courses related to the program, or essential skills upgrading courses
- Consider another year of high school
- Consider another program at the C/U
- Consider Job readiness programs:
  - JVS ([www.jvstoronto.org](http://www.jvstoronto.org))
  - Spectrum works ([www.spectrumworks.org](http://www.spectrumworks.org))
  - Ready Willing and Able ([readywillingable.ca](http://readywillingable.ca))
  - Autism Job Club ([autismjobclub.ca](http://autismjobclub.ca))
  - Specialisterne ([ca.specialisterne.com](http://ca.specialisterne.com))
  - Project work ([www.projectwork.ca](http://www.projectwork.ca))
  - Ontario Disability Support Program: Employment Supports  
([https://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/programs/social/odsp/employment\\_support/](https://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/programs/social/odsp/employment_support/))

## Financial Aid

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The Financial Aid office at the C/U will have further information on financial assistance.

**Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP):** is available to full-time students. Those with a permanent disability could be eligible for full-time OSAP funding if studying at 40% or more of a full course load. When applying, you must self-identify as having a permanent disability.  
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/osap-ontario-student-assistance-program>

If a student qualifies for OSAP they may be eligible to get additional aid to pay for disability-related educational services and equipment, through programs such as:

- **Bursary for Students with Disabilities:** Available as a grant to students with permanent disabilities who have disability-related educational costs for services (e.g., psychoeducational assessment) or equipment required for postsecondary participation..  
<https://osap.gov.on.ca/OSAPPortal/en/A-ZListofAid/PRDR015050.html>
- **Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment for Persons with Permanent Disabilities (CSG-PDSE):** Available as a grant for those who qualify for student loans, have permanent disabilities and have disability-related educational costs for services and equipment.

# Support Services

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There is a range of supports for students in C/U (counselling, tutoring etc.) These supports can be accessed through Accessibility/Disability Services to address the specific needs of a particular diagnosis.

## Accessibility/Disability Services

- As soon as an offer is accepted students are encouraged to register with Accessibility/Disability Services as soon as possible to set up an intake meeting. Tips for your intake meeting with Accessibility/Disability Services:

[http://www.transitionresourceguide.ca/sites/transitionresourceguide.ca/files/tips\\_for\\_your\\_intake\\_meeting\\_at\\_the\\_osd.pdf](http://www.transitionresourceguide.ca/sites/transitionresourceguide.ca/files/tips_for_your_intake_meeting_at_the_osd.pdf)

- For a detailed list of all the C/U Disability/Accessibility Services offices in Ontario see [www.transitionresourceguide.ca](http://www.transitionresourceguide.ca)
- Parents are not active members unless granted written permission from their adult child.

## Accommodations in College/University

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- The laws that regulate accommodations at C/U are different from those for high school.
- Students will not automatically receive the same accommodations at C/U that they received at high school.
- Each C/U requires specific documentation to register with their Accessibility/Disability Services to arrange accommodations. Learn what specific documentation is required ahead of time.
- Determining which academic accommodations are appropriate is a shared responsibility among students, accessibility services, and the professors.

A recommended and common accommodation is a reduced course load. Others may be:

- Extended time on exams
- No more than one exam per day
- Access to a computer or spell check on exams
- Note-taker in class
- Alternate format material (ex. audio-recorded texts)



# Mental Health and Well Being

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Teens with ASD are at higher risk for depression and anxiety than their peers without ASD. It is important for both students and parents to anticipate and understand these changes to ease the transition. Developing coping strategies and seeking appropriate support are good skills to practice before the big transition into the college/university environment.

## Mental Health Services for Youth in Toronto

|   |
|---|
| ● East Metro Youth Services   |
| ● Delisle Youth Services  |
| ● Distress Centre of Toronto  |
| ● Hincks-Dellcrest Children’s Mental Health Centre                        |
| ● Integrated Services for Autism and Neurodevelopmental disorders (ISAND) |
| ● Redpath Centre  |
| ● Turning Point Youth Services  |
| ● Unison Health Community Services  |
| ● Youthdale Treatment Centre  |
| ● Youth Link  |
| ● Surrey Place Centre Community Resource Directory for further assistance |

## Going to College/University: Transition Checklist

Visit the campus to find:

- Program Registrar's Office
- Financial Aid Office
- Career Centre
- Athletic Centre
- Restaurants
- Libraries
- Quiet spots to relax or take a break
- Accessibility/Disability Services Offices

### Accessibility/Disability Services

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Where to find it |  |
| Name(s) of Staff |  |
| Address          |  |
| Email            |  |
| Phone Number     |  |

### Task Checklist

| Task  |  |
|---|--|
| Obtain psychoeducational assessment and other necessary documents   |  |
| Register with school's Accessibility/Disability Services Office to request academic accommodations<br><br>Ideally, all necessary accommodations should be in place at least 3 weeks before the start of school  |  |
| Apply for OSAP and/or other financial aids<br><br>*It is advisable to apply for OSAP even if you are not going to use the loan. If you are OSAP-eligible, you may be eligible for other bursaries such as the Bursary for Students with Disabilities (BSWD)<br>*If you have a permanent disability, you are still eligible with a 40% course load to qualify for OSAP |  |
| Understand accommodations and be prepared to explain why they are needed in a concise way<br><br>*It may be helpful to create a template letter to give to your professors explaining your accommodations   |  |
| Select and register for courses for the fall term Date: _____<br><br>*Check with the Accessibility/Disability Services office to see if you can reduce your course load   |  |
| Register for the transition or orientation program offered during the summer  |  |

**Important Dates:** To help keep track of important dates and deadlines. Complete a similar template (individualized to student need) and post where it can be seen.

| <b>Item</b>   | <b>Date/s</b> |
|---|---------------|
| Tuition fee payment deadline                          |               |
| Transition/Orientation Week                           |               |
| First day of class                                    |               |
| Last day to add courses                               |               |
| Last day to drop courses without financial loss       |               |
| Last day to drop courses from academic record and GPA |               |
| Winter course registration start date                 |               |
| Reading week  |               |
| Midterms  |               |
| Final Exams   |               |