Supports for College Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders

The Spokane Chapter of the Autism Society of Washington gets inquiries from members about issues with transitioning to adulthood including education, independence, and making friends. This information sheet is not intended to be an inclusive guide, as programs frequently change. Additions and corrections are gratefully accepted to assist our members. The material is for educational purposes only and ASW does not endorse or recommend specific programs.

After high school ends, families have few options for adult services. If the student is planning to go to college, he or she may need additional services than what is typically offered on campus. The free and appropriate education for persons with documented disabilities ends for most at graduation at age 18 or 21 and colleges are under no obligation to provide the same type of supports as the students had in grades K-12. But, a college degree is often considered a key to successful employment and may be worth the efforts.

College for Persons with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities
There are some examples in Spokane of people with intellectual disabilities or developmental disabilities (ID/DD) attending college; they need more support than a neurotypical student. They might receive assistance from nonprofit groups or a disabilities employment agency if the education is shown to increase their potential employment. The student might be able to apply to the Department of Vocational Disabilities and make a case for assistance. Some colleges offer non-credit classes for people with DD that do not result in a degree, but the student gets the opportunity to experience campus life. The Community Colleges of Spokane offers non-credit classes for person with ID/DD through PACE Services Program. PACE Services plays an important role in the Spokane Community College's (SCC) mission by providing job readiness and specialized programs to individuals with obstacles to learning and employment. http://scc.spokane.edu/Become-a-Student/PACE-%E2%80%94-People-Accessing-Careers-Education/PACE

College for Persons with High Functional Autism or Asperger’s Syndrome
There have been numerous students with ASD who have graduated from local colleges. Students with high functional autism or “Asperger’s Syndrome”, who are of normal or high intelligence, also need more supports than neurotypicals to be successful. Supports are needed for academic success, such as help with planning, note taking are needed as well as support for social skill such as how to work on group projects, make friends, or be safe on campus. The supports are college disability offices, family supports or commercial/special designed college programs.

College Disability Offices
All colleges have a disability office. They are familiar with students with autism, but a student has the obligation to contact the office themselves if they want any help or accommodations. The Community

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College of Spokane disability offices have assisted students with autism with options for quiet testing area, and arrangements for accommodations of some type. At an ASW seminar at SCC, some faculty members said they would like the individual student to inform their instructors of their autism and any learning difficulties so that material can be modified if possible and to avoid misunderstanding. College disability offices may also list scholarships for persons with ASD and have information about tutoring. Also, the disability office would have information about having a note taker or aide accompany the student with special needs. Generally speaking the colleges would not provide the note taker or aide.

**Family Support**
Traditionally students with ASD have had to rely on family members for support at college. Living at home during the college years and/or transitioning to a dormitory might work for some. Executive functioning is often a problem with people with autism, and having a family member help with the schedules, deadlines and waking up on time can be the difference between dropping out and graduating. Participation in campus life is also a part of college, and family support for this aspect is more difficult.

**Special Designed College Programs and Commercial Programs**
With the increased interest in people with ASD to attend college, some colleges have started autism specific programs to help people with special needs get through college. There are also some businesses that have programs to help the potential college student with special needs be successful. Many of these businesses are located near larger cities that work for their model.

**Special Designed College Programs near Spokane**
- **University of Idaho**: The Raven Scholars Program is an individualized, supported-transition program for University of Idaho students on the autism spectrum. In 2018 there were a handful of students participating. [https://www.uidaho.edu/current-students/cdar/raven-scholars](https://www.uidaho.edu/current-students/cdar/raven-scholars)

- **Bellevue College**: Autism Spectrum Navigators Program, Bellevue WA “Our mission is to provide advocacy and access services for autistic students that lead to successful academic outcomes while providing educational opportunities that increase self-knowledge in the areas of executive functioning, self-regulation, social interaction, self-advocacy and career preparation; and to actively promote a campus and community environment of inclusion and understanding of students, faculty and staff with neurological differences.” [https://www.bellevuecollege.edu/autismspectrumnavigators/](https://www.bellevuecollege.edu/autismspectrumnavigators/)

- **Central Washington University** (CDW), Ellensburg WA: Learning and Inclusivity for Neurodiverse Central Students (LINC) LINCS is a multifaceted program designed to improve the experience of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder attending Central Washington University. LINCS supports students in three main areas: Social Involvement Academic Support Campus Connections”. [http://www.cwu.edu/disability-support/lincs](http://www.cwu.edu/disability-support/lincs)

**Commercial & Special Designed College Programs**
- **College Living Experience (CLE)**: “CLE has been providing transition supports to young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD and other varying exceptionalities. Our success as the industry leader

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stems from our commitment to remain focused on the potential of each individual we serve. Over the years the evolution and innovation of CLE services has been based on our mission which inspires us to reach beyond the boundaries of the traditional supports.” Six locations: Austin Texas, Costa Mesa California, Denver Colorado, Fort Lauderdale Florida, Monterey California and Washington DC. [https://experiencecle.com/](https://experiencecle.com/)

**Northwest College Support**, Coeur D’Alene ID. “Northwest College Support, we generate positive life changes for struggling college students and young adults. Our educational-therapeutic transition program helps young adults to make positive choices and live healthy, independent lives. Northwest College Support is a young adult transition program serving families and young adults from all over the United States and the world.” [http://www.collegesupportnw.com/](http://www.collegesupportnw.com/)

**College Internship Program (CIP)** Our mission is to inspire independence and expand the foundation on which young adults with Asperger’s, ADHD and other Learning Differences can build happy and productive lives.” Full year and summer programs located in Massachusetts, Florida, Indiana and California. [https://cipworldwide.org/](https://cipworldwide.org/)