

# What's Next?

A mental wellness guide to prepare  
for 12th grade and beyond. 2022



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# INTRODUCTION



Junior year is the first year of high school that really focuses on preparing you for life after high school; all while you have to remember to take care of yourself! It is difficult to know where to look when it comes to receiving mental health treatment after high school is over, and what that entails. This is a guide that gives you resources during this confusing and exciting time of your life.

Transitioning into your next stage of life is a big change, and can cause a lot of feelings. Whatever your path is it's important to take care of yourself. There are many resources out there, and this is your guide to help. Feelings of loss, excitement, and uncertainty are normal. These feelings can become intense, and it may be important to reach out for help.

Resources are available at <https://mindpeacecincinnati.com/resources-for-families/transitions/> for incoming seniors.

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# BRAIN HEALTH TIPS



## SELF-CARE

Self-care refers to the activities and routines practiced to benefit your psychological, physical, spiritual, and social well-being. Self-care activities should be practiced on a regular basis. These activities help reduce stress, increase productivity, improve health, help achieve work-life balance and prevent burnout.

## PHYSICAL SELF-CARE

- Spending time in nature can lower stress. As little as 10 minutes of sitting or walking in a natural setting can lower your heart rate and blood pressure while also increasing feelings of calmness and comfort.
- Drink water! Dehydration is one of the major causes of headaches.
- Exercise or dance to get out extra energy and relax. This helps to release endorphins (chemical in your brain) that makes a person feel good.
- Eat three well-balanced meals containing protein, fruits and vegetable.

## MENTAL SELF-CARE

- See a therapist or participate in support groups during times of high stress.
- Keep a journal. Evidence shows that writing about stressful events helps come to terms with them, reducing the impact they have on your life (Psych Central, 2016).
- Take a break from television, social media, and the internet to avoid over-exposure to negative information.
- Express emotional healing practices of crying, laughing or story-telling.
- Read books or listen to podcasts. Check out the Eternal Sunshine app for ideas.
- Participate in activities that make you happy, feel good and are empowering.
- Plan ahead, stay organized, and set time to relax. Consider using a planner or scheduling app like *TickTick*.
- Set realistic goals for yourself.

## SPIRITUAL SELF-CARE

Spiritual self-care involves caring for your soul. It can help you find peace between your inner feelings and emotions and the stressors of your life. Spiritual wellness involves seeking a purpose and meaning in your life.

- Try meditation, mindfulness, or yoga.
- Pray or attend a religious service.
- Express gratitude. Think of 3 different things you're grateful for every day.

## CHECK OUT THESE APPS!



### ALOE BUD

A self-care companion



### BETTER SLEEP

Relax and Sleep Sounds -integrating mindfulness into sleep



### ETERNAL SUNSHINE

Inspirations, meditations & podcasts



### TICKTICK

To-Do List & Calendar- planner, reminders and habits

## Mindfulness Exercise

### Example: "5-4-3-2-1"

Focus on the world around you. What are:  
**5** Things you see  
**4** Things you hear  
**3** Things you can touch  
**2** Things you can smell  
**1** Thing you can taste

## SOCIAL

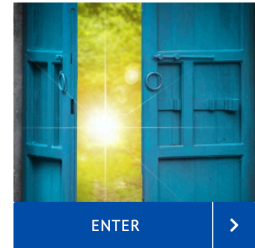
Social self-care is having fun with the people you love. It could mean making time to meet for lunch or simply having a video call. Socializing and connecting with people lift up our emotional mental health with feelings of love, empathy and acceptance.

- Spend time with quality friends and family and share how your days are going. Don't be afraid to seek support from others, and to ask for help.
- Be an active member of the community by joining a club, organization, volunteering at the local foodbanks, recreation centers, schools, etc.

Open the Virtual Door to Self-Care!

For calming, refocusing, exercise, self-awareness and mindfulness tools to help in in your self-care process visit our Virtual MindPeace Room™.

<https://mindpeacecincinnati.com/virtual-mindpeace-rooms/>



Jr. High and High  
School  
(7-12th grade)

## RESILIENCY

Resiliency is the ability to adjust to circumstances and keep going during tough times, whether it's a minor hassle or a major life event. Resilience helps you take on challenges, form stronger relationships and embrace new experiences. A lack of resilience can lead to anxiety, poor self-care, depression and risky behaviors, such as substance abuse. We can't always control events, but we can control our responses.

## MANAGE STRESS

Identify your sources of stress and how they affect you. Once you understand how your behavior changes in response to stress (e.g., your health suffers, you isolate yourself from others), you can modify unhealthy or unproductive reactions and develop coping strategies for your vulnerable areas. Self-Care kits can aid in immediate relief when you're feeling overwhelmed (see examples on the next page).

## EXAMINE YOUR THOUGHTS

Negative or inaccurate thoughts about ourselves, others, or the future can produce unhelpful emotions and behaviors. Increase your awareness of how you interpret events, so you can challenge and alter counterproductive thoughts and develop a more adaptive thinking style.

## BUILD A SUPPORT NETWORK

Positive social connections provide assistance, guidance, and comfort during difficult times. Strengthen your relationships with family, friends and trusted others to form a support network. The quality of these relationships is more important than the quantity.

## SELF CARE KIT EXAMPLES:

Self-care kits should contain some of your favorite ways to de-stress. Suggested items to include could be a stress ball, journal, blanket, earbuds, essential oils, or a favorite book. See examples below.



Kit Contents: Cotton balls, nail polish remover, bottle of nail polish, tea, socks, facial wipes, a candle, and a favorite book.

Put together a self-care kit with items in your home. Think about these questions and fill an empty shopping bag or box with your favorite items.

- What do you do to distract you? Is there a craft you do, show you watch, or activity you enjoy?
- Do you have a favorite pair of sweatpants or a cozy t-shirt?
- Think about your five senses (taste, smell, touch, sight and sound). What can you do to appeal to all these senses?
- What's a way you can express yourself? Art, journaling, poetry, music or something else? Consider creating a playlist of songs that make you happy.

## MANAGE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH:

Learn strategies and tips for managing your mental health by listening to these podcasts:

- [Teenager Therapy](#) - A weekly podcast by five teens navigating the teenage years.
- [Teen Wealth](#) - An inspirational podcast that regularly shares stories, tips, and advice about mental health, self-esteem, and more.

## STUDY TIPS

- **Pick a place and time.** This should be a place that makes you happy and inspired and is quiet, comfortable, clean, and distraction-free. Don't be afraid to mix it up.
- **Study every day.** Prioritize studying so the information is always being renewed in your mind. Then you won't feel overwhelmed with last-minute cramming.
- Plan your time
  - Make a to-do list. Try the TickTick app for help.
  - Set alarms for study plans.
  - Use a planner.
- **Take breaks.** Working too long on one task can lower your performance
- **Ask for help.** Reach out to teachers, family, friends or teaching assistants
- **Stay motivated.** You could decorate your study space with inspirational quotes or photos of people you admire and family members you want to make proud
  - Consider if music or sounds help you focus
- **Discover your learning style.** Are you a:

### Try Quizlet:

Quizlet helps you study on the go by providing tools and games to get you ready for your test(s).



Visual Learner	Auditory Learner	Tactile Learner
<p>Use visual association, visual imagery, written repetition, flash cards, and clustering strategies for improved memory.</p> <p>Use organizational format outlining for recording notes. Use underlining, highlighting in different colors, symbols, flow charts, graphs or pictures in your notes.</p>	<p>Use mnemonics, rhymes, jingles, and auditory repetition through tape recording to improve memory.</p> <p>Read your notes aloud.</p> <p>Examine illustrations in textbooks and convert them into verbal descriptions.</p>	<p>Use direct involvement, physical manipulation, imagery, and "hands on" activities to improve motivation, interest, and memory.</p> <p>Teach the material to someone else.</p> <p>Use case studies and applications to help with principles and abstract concepts.</p>

## TEST TAKING

For many students, tests are stressful. By understanding your worries and trying strategies to relieve those will help reduce stress and increase performance!

### KNOW THE TRIGGERS. ARE YOU...

- Worried when others finish first?
- Focused on whether the classroom is too quiet or noisy?
- Worried about not having enough time to do your best work?
- Overwhelmed with the amount of information presented?
- Having difficulty with reading directions or understanding the test's instructions?

### Test Taking Strategies:

- Write down important formulas, equations and dates
- Read instruction carefully
- Look for clues in the questions
- Estimate how much time each section takes to properly pace yourself

## TIPS TO OVERCOME TESTING WORRIES

- Don't give a test the power to define you. An exam won't tell you whether you're the most brilliant (or least brilliant) student in your class. Your performance on an exam mostly depends on how effectively you studied for the test, and the test-taking strategies you use.
- Visualize completing the test successfully. Using vivid images, play the entire "tape" in your mind – from the moment you wake up on the day of the exam to the moment you finish the exam.
- Anxiety can increase with the use of caffeine, so on test days reduce your intake.
- Take deep breaths.
- Open your eyes and give yourself a positive, very specific self-talk (i.e., "You're sure to do well. You studied hard. You're doing the best you can.") This whole procedure should take only about a minute and it is well worth the time.

### PICTURE IT:

**Try this activity-** *Close your eyes and picture yourself doing well on the test from start to finish. Imagine your teacher passing out the test. Make sure your pencil is sharpened. Take your time and read each question. Picture yourself completing the test. Go over each item to make sure the answers are correct. Envision yourself getting the test back, and getting the grade you wanted.*

## PARTICIPATING IN SOCIAL EVENTS

It's important to attend social activities, but some social situations can be hard for people, and that's normal! For those who experience social anxieties, it's best to understand your personal triggers and learn how to cope with them. The goal is to reach a level of calmness. Prior to the event, focus on your breathing to calm yourself.

## KNOW YOUR TRIGGERS

- Struggles with changes in routine
- Sensitive to increased noise levels
- May be nervous around unexpected happenings/activities
- Unfamiliar with people present
- Unable to perform special activities

**TIP:** Practice deep breathing! Breathe in slowly to the count of seven and exhale to the count of seven.

## TIPS TO OVERCOME SOCIAL ANXIETY

- **Challenge negative thoughts.** Identify the automatic negative thoughts. Then think about them and challenge them.
- **Focus on others, not yourself.** Remember that anxiety isn't as visible as you think.
- **Learn to control your breathing**
  - Follow a YouTube breathing exercise video.
- **Face your fears.** Be patient with yourself; take baby steps when facing your fears. Start small and work your way up.
- **Make an effort to be more social.** Volunteer or take a social skills class.
- **Adopt an anti-anxiety lifestyle.** Avoid caffeine. Get quality sleep. Eat a balanced diet.
- **Bring a friend.** Going to new places can be easier with a familiar face by your side.

## SLEEP

**Teenagers need 8+ hours of sleep every night.** Not getting enough sleep has adverse effects on a person's cognitive thinking and processing skills. The hippocampus controls the brain's memory, and when you experience sleep deprivation your memory also suffers.

### TIPS FOR GETTING GOOD SLEEP

Lack of sleep can also have physical consequences. Not enough sleep can make you sick, leading to more colds, flu, coughs, and sniffles, and can be associated with weight gain.

- Avoid caffeine at night, and limit it during the day.
- Create a sleep schedule, and stick to it.
- Don't sleep in on weekends or days when you have time off. Wake up close to the same time every day.
- Put books and technology away at least 30 minutes to an hour before bedtime.
- Don't use your computer or phone in bed.
- Exercise earlier in the day, never just before bed.
- Sleep with earplugs and use an eye pillow to drown out any bright lights and loud noise.
- Turn out the lights when it's time to go to bed. If you fall asleep to a TV, put it on a sleep timer!
- Still having trouble sleeping? Try watching a YouTube bedtime story or nature sounds.

#### **FACT:**

Light from televisions, cell phones and other electronics negatively impacts your sleep. This type of light is often called "blue light" and can impact your circadian rhythm. The circadian rhythm helps our body and mind know what time of day you're supposed to be awake or sleeping.



## SCREENS

Did you know that youth ages 8-18 spend on average 7.5 hours a day in front of a screen? Whether it's scrolling through your phone, iPad, or sitting in front of the TV, too much screen time has been linked to sleep problems, poor grades, and a greater risk of obesity. Being in front of screens for long amounts of time can also lead to mood problems, a lack of physical activity, and poor self-image (aacap.org, 2020).

## TIPS

- Turn off notifications
- Set a timer to turn off your technology
- Try something new; read a book, workout, hang out with friends!
- Turn your phone on do not disturb
- Set screen time limits under your phone settings.

#### **TIP:**

Try blue light glasses! Blue light has a high energy frequency that can delay the body's release of melatonin, which can result in having a hard time falling asleep. Wearing blue light glasses can reduce the impact of blue light which can result in improved sleeping patterns (Barnes, 2020).



## RESOURCES:

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**TAKE CARE OF  
YOURSELF, AND WORK  
ON YOUR GOALS!**

# SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT



If you're overwhelmed or having difficulty coping, who will you seek out for support? Consider establishing a support team, in addition to professional assistance you may already have. Depending on the severity of your symptoms, you may need occasional or ongoing help.

## MILD SYMPTOMS

- Talk with a trusted friend or advisor
- Review your self-help or coping strategies
- Reach out to your support team
- Consider speaking with a school-based therapist

## MODERATE SYMPTOMS

- Assess severity and contact the community crisis line, mobile crisis unit, or call 911 if needed (contact info below)
- Consult with your care team (medical/primary care and psychiatric)
- Schedule an appointment to be seen for therapy. Speak with your school counselor, school-based therapist or visit [www.MindPeaceCincinnati.com](http://www.MindPeaceCincinnati.com)
- Contact your family or a trusted friend for support

## SEVERE SYMPTOMS

- If in Greater Cincinnati, visit the Mental Health Urgent Care by Best Point (513) 527-3040  
5051 Duck Creek Road, Cincinnati, Ohio 45227
- Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department
- Contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800) 273-8255 or text "home" to 741-741
- Contact your local mobile crisis unit:  
Butler County (844) 427-4747, Clermont County (513) 528-7283,  
Clinton and Warren County (877) 695-NEED (6333), and Hamilton County (513) 584-5098

**If you have a friend who has one or more of the signs below, support and listen to them. Express your concern for their wellbeing and ask how you can support them at this time. Also, tell a trusted adult or ask if you can help them find mental health services and support (MentalHealth.gov, 2020).**

### SIGNS OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES:

- **Withdrawing from social activities**
- **Thinking of harming yourself or others**
- **Low or no energy**
- **Feeling numb, hopeless or like nothing matters**
- **Suicidal thoughts**
- **Risk-taking behaviors**
- **Severe mood swings**
- **Change in eating habits**
- **Repeated use of drugs or alcohol**
- **Drastic changes in behavior, hygiene, personality, or sleeping habits**

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# WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS AFTER HIGH SCHOOL?



By now you may have decided which colleges to apply to, whether or not to go into the military, or whether to start working. While this is an exciting time in your life, this may also be quite stressful. Try to identify your feelings and fears, and talk about what you're going through.



## UNIVERSITIES

Most schools offer a range of admissions options. Investigate which of your favorite schools offer:

- **Regular admissions** means that schools mail their decisions around April.
- **Rolling admissions** means that a school processes applications as they come in; you can apply at any time before the deadline.
- Most schools offer an **early-action** option, which means that students can be admitted early, but don't have to commit to a decision until spring, typically.
- The **early-decision** option is for students who are really sure about the school they want to attend, and who want to know earlier than April if they have been admitted. There's a drawback to applying under an early-decision option, though. You are promising that school that you will attend if you're admitted.

Application costs vary and sometimes can be waived. Contact the university's admissions department to get more information.

Don't cross a school off your list just because the tuition is steep. Ask your school counselor about possible scholarships. Also, ask the university's financial-aid office about scholarships, grants, work-study programs, and loans. See if your family's employers offer scholarships.

**TIP:** Ask the your school counselor about scholarships, grants, work-study programs, and loans.

To apply for federal aid in the United States, you must fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form, although some schools use their own forms. FAFSA is a free application and is used when applying for federal student aid, such as grants, work study, and loans. Every year over 13 million students apply for aid with FAFSA and over \$120 billion in grants, work study, and loans are administered from the U.S. Department of Education. Visit [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) for more information.

## URBAN VS. RURAL SCHOOL- WHICH IS BEST?

**Urban schools** are located in big cities with easy access to entertainment and transportation. They provide increased access to internships, networking opportunities, and careers. Urban schools also have a variety of activities and cultural events, and typically a more diverse student body. Going to an urban school can provide you with the adventure of life in the big city however, may lack the close-knit campus culture of other universities. While activities on non-urban campuses are often the center of the school's social scene, in a big city, off-campus events can take the center stage. Big city living can also distract you from your school work due to the independence and varied entertainment options available.

**TIP:** Try to visit a campus when school is in session so you can get a good idea of what life is really like on campus.

**Rural Schools** are located in the countryside. They are typically far away from major cities, meaning most students live on campus and most activities occur on campus. Rural schools usually have access to nature, outdoor recreational activities, on-campus entertainment, and fewer distractions or temptation to spend money. However, some students may find this environment unstimulating or restricting. There also may be less access to transportation, internships or networking opportunities.

## COMMUNITY COLLEGES

### BENEFITS:

- Tuition is offered at a lower cost.
- You are able to complete core courses and then transfer your credits to a university.
- Classes are smaller which allows for more one-on-one interactions.
- Flexible scheduling and night courses are readily available.
- Some community colleges offer on-campus living.
- STEM programs are also available.

**FACT:** School counselors say that 75% of students change their majors after they enter college.

### DISADVANTAGES:

- Most only offer an Associate's Degree, which is a 2-year program.
- Less of a campus lifestyle is provided.
- Limited degrees may be offered.

### MYTHS:

There are myths associated with community college. These include: low quality professors, students with low high-school GPA's, and that students will not get a good job in the workforce. This is not the case. Some people who've attended community college include:

- *Walt Disney: Founder of Disney World and Disneyland*
- *Fred Haise: Apollo 13 Astronaut*
- *Calvin Klein: Fashion Designer*
- *Clint Eastwood: Actor and Oscar-winning director*
- *Beverly Cleary: Children's Author*

## MILITARY

Entering the military can be an excellent choice for students. Discipline, earning money, saving for college, learning a trade — all of this is possible in the armed forces. Veterans are also entitled to many benefits both while in the service and after.

Speak to a current or former service member if you are unsure if the military is the right choice for you. You should carefully explore all of the pros and cons of a military career. After all, if you don't like the service you can't easily drop out. Those who enlist in the military, whether it's for active duty (full time) or National Guard/Reserves (part-time) have a minimum service obligation. The ways to serve can be in active duty, reserves, or Individual Ready Reserves (The Balance Careers, 2020).

If you want specific training through the military, make sure the contract you sign includes that training. Explore your options at <http://todaysmilitary.com>.

## ENTERING THE WORKFORCE

Another option is an **internship**. Over the course of a year, you could potentially participate in two or three internships to explore career choices. Internships are short-term work experiences to learn about many areas of a particular career. These could be in-person or virtual. Most often, this is offered to students. This helps get entry-level experience in particular jobs or industries. They're also a great way to make contacts and develop mentoring relationships. If you have a business in mind contact them to see if they offer internships. Many internships are unpaid, so planning ahead is crucial if you need to save money for living expenses.

Don't overlook **trade** opportunities. Careers involving a trade or technical skill allow you to specialize in a particular occupation which typically involves working with your hands. Jobs may include carpentry, masonry, electrical work, mechanics and more. Apprenticeships provide an affordable way to enter these in-demand careers. They provide a combination of on-the-job training and related classroom instruction under supervision. Over 90% of apprentices turn in to employment after the program completion. To understand opportunities that are available visit [www.Apprenticeship.gov](http://www.Apprenticeship.gov).



Still unsure about how to enter the workforce? Here's a local organization that helps youth with the transition.

- Ikron Transitional Youth Program- provides curriculum designed to assist youth in planning a career, completing trial work experience, and obtaining and maintaining employment.
  - Call (513) 621-1117 or go to <https://cincinnati.ikron.org> for more information.

## TAKING TIME OFF

For some students, taking a year off between high school and the "real world" can be beneficial. This can be a good time to travel, do community service, or even live in a foreign country before the responsibilities of life makes it harder to do so.

Community service organizations offer a wide variety of choices where students can match their skills and interests. Americorps ([www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov)), for example, offers hundreds of programs across the United States with a small stipend, plus a chance to obtain money for college or vocational training. Many religious organizations provide community service programs as well. Many of these organizations provide services in-person and remotely (teleserve).

You should keep in mind that a brochure may not fully reflect reality, such as some work and service camps in developing countries. You should expect difficulties, but know that the rewards of community service often outweigh the hardships — and can actually change the direction of a person's life. Speaking with previous participants should give a more realistic view than promotional material.

Remember: taking time off doesn't necessarily put you at a disadvantage for college admission. For many young adults — especially those who choose an internship or international service — it can sometimes be an advantage.

While researching colleges, find out if they have delayed admissions programs. If not, ask the colleges what their position is on students who take time off and how that might impact your chances of getting in if you reapply.

## FINDING YOUR PASSION

Your school counselors are a good starting point for helping you research information on your interests. You may have access to Naviance ([www.naviance.com](http://www.naviance.com)) or other online services that can also help steer you in the right direction.

There are many associations, both local and national, for thousands of occupations. Find out where they're located and get information on how to pursue particular career paths. Consider taking a career aptitude test. Below are two recommended tests.

- Meyers-Briggs- a personality test which measures psychological preferences in how people perceive the world and make decisions. ([www.16personalities.com](http://www.16personalities.com))
- MAPP Career Assessment Test-measures your temperament, aptitude, how you get along with people, and the top careers that match your needs. ([www.assessment.com/TakeMAPP](http://www.assessment.com/TakeMAPP))

Consider attending meetings or arranging for an informational interview where you can meet one-on-one with people at their workplaces to find out more about what they do. Ask friends, relatives, or others you know in different industries to assist you in your search. After all, there's often nothing more flattering than having someone ask about what you do.

**Whatever you choose to do now does not have to be what you do forever. You can always go back to school or change a career path — lots of people do this every day and with great success!**

Check out the podcast [\*"Life After High School"\*](#). This podcast hosts a variety of guests who "didn't know what they wanted to be when they grew up" to now excelling in their respective fields.

*Remember to take care of yourself. Making a decision on what to do after high school can be a stressful time in one's life. Whether you decide to go to college, enter the workplace, take a gap year, or join the military you will do great! Listen to your heart and do what you feel is best for you! It is important to talk about how you feel and know that it is always okay to ask for help!*

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# JUNIOR YEAR – STEPS TO COLLEGE



Investigate college choices with your school counselor

Register and take the ACT and SAT

See the school counselor to confirm graduation requirements

Complete college essays for applications before senior year starts

Get excited for your senior year of high school!

Use resources such as Naviance ([www.naviance.com](http://www.naviance.com)) to decide on what careers and colleges best suit you

Create a list of colleges that meet your needs / criteria

Go on college visits including meeting with the disability or counseling offices

Finish and refine your resume

Retake the ACT/SAT if needed



# SENIOR YEAR- STEPS TO COLLEGE



- Complete final edits for your college essay
- Finish your resume
- Decide which colleges to apply
- Ask teachers/ school counselors for two letters of recommendation

- Work on and submit the FASFA form: October 1
- Work on college applications
- Watch for early decision submissions

- Take the SAT/ACT if needed for the last time
- Work on completing financial aid and scholarships



- Watch for the Student Financial Aid Report
- Watch for acceptance letters

- Make final decision on a college
- Notify all other colleges of final decision

- Take AP Exams
- Send final transcripts to colleges
- Send thank you letters to teachers and counselors

## AUG & SEPT

## OCTOBER

## NOVEMBER

## DEC & JAN

## FEB & MAR

## APRIL

## MAY

- Understand and review your 504 Plan with high school, if needed
- Confirm transitional plan on your IEP with your mental health provider and school, if needed
- Go on college visits including meeting with the disability or counseling office



- Apply for benefits if needed (i.e. SSI or Medicaid). For SSI go to [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) or call 1-800-772-1213. Contact Medicaid at the Hamilton County Job and Family Services at (513) 946-1000 or [www.hcjfs.org](http://www.hcjfs.org)

- Submit college applications for regular decision
- Watch for early acceptance letters



- Meet with your mental health team to go over fears and coping strategies
- Apply for scholarships

- Pay the college admission deposit



IEP– Individualized Education Program

FASFA– Free Application for Federal Student Aid

[MindPeaceCincinnati.com](http://MindPeaceCincinnati.com)

513.803.0844

# WHAT IS A 504 PLAN AND HOW CAN IT HELP?



You may have heard the term 504 Plan or Section 504 before, but not really understood what it means and how it can help. Section 504 is a civil rights federal law that public school districts are required to follow.<sup>1</sup> In this tip sheet, we offer some information on 504 plans.

## A 504 PLAN IS...

- Based on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This federal act prohibits the discrimination of students with disabilities in public school systems and ensures these students receive the educational supports they need to succeed in school.
- An **education plan** which:
  1. Identifies the modifications and/or accommodations needed to remove learning barriers for a student within mainstream education.
  2. Outlines the responsibilities of all stakeholders (e.g. parents, student and school) in removing these learning barriers.
- Not just for academic purposes and can be used to ensure equal access for extracurricular activities and athletics.

## TO QUALIFY FOR A 504 PLAN, A STUDENT MUST...

- Generally, be between the ages of 3 and 22 (which can vary by program and state/federal laws).
- Have an enduring, documented mental or physical disability which has been evaluated as substantially limiting one or more major life activities (e.g. reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, etc.).<sup>2</sup>

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A 504 PLAN?

- Legally requires public schools to provide accommodations and modifications to qualified students with disabilities (including mental health conditions or learning disabilities).

## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A 504 PLAN AND AN INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN (IEP)?

504 PLAN	IEP
Students who have an ongoing, documented disability that have been evaluated as requiring accommodations to succeed in school, as provided by the Rehab. Act of 1973. <sup>3</sup>	Students with one or more disabilities outlined within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) who have been evaluated as needing special education services. <sup>4</sup>
A 504 plan is often a written document, but does not have to be. Section 504 plans typically outline accommodations the student needs in order to mitigate barriers presented by their disability. No due process is outlined in Section 504 legislation – school districts are left to define this for themselves. <sup>5</sup>	An IEP must be a formal, written document. It must meet many due process requirements by law (i.e. detailed plans and timelines for the evaluation, specialized instruction, and educational services of a student, etc.). An IEP has many procedural safeguards and rights.
Students with 504 plans may receive accommodations that support their access to the general education setting and curriculum. <sup>6</sup>	Students with IEPs may receive specialized instruction and other educational services in a mainstream classroom or special education classroom depending on their needs. <sup>6</sup>

- Examples: Counseling, preferential seating, adjusted class schedules, assistive technology like “smart pens”, voice recorders or computers for taking notes, extended time for assignments, quiet space for test taking, etc.
- Can be helpful throughout a student’s lifetime as evidence of having a disability in order to qualify for some disability services (e.g. housing, transportation, vocational rehabilitation, Social Security determination).

## **SHOULD A STUDENT EVER GET A 504 PLAN INSTEAD OF AN IEP PLAN, OR GET BOTH?**

- If a student’s disability does not impair them enough to need specialized education services, then a 504 may be obtained (if the student is qualified by meeting eligibility and evaluation requirements) instead of an IEP.
- Students cannot have both a 504 Plan and an IEP. An IEP would typically be inclusive of accommodations outlined in a 504 Plan.
- Because some students may perceive special education services as stigmatizing, getting a 504 might be an alternate way to acquire necessary accommodations.

## **HOW CAN A STUDENT GET A 504 PLAN IN HIGH SCHOOL (OR EARLIER)?**

- A 504 plan evaluation process may be started by a parent/guardian or the school. If you believe you qualify, you should ask the school to conduct a 504 evaluation.
- To get a 504 plan, the student must be evaluated to see if he or she is deemed to have a qualified disability.<sup>7</sup> This evaluation process includes:
  - Documentation of the disability (such as a doctor’s diagnosis),
  - Evaluation results (if the student was recently evaluated for an IEP),
  - Information provided by the student’s parents and teachers, including observations and other relevant data,
  - Academic record, and
  - Any independent evaluations (if available).<sup>7</sup>
- If a student has a qualified disability, a 504 plan can be created and implemented by a 504 committee. This committee may include the student, their parents, teachers, and school administrators.
- Parents and students should check in with the school about the 504 plan because updates are not required by law.

## **CAN A STUDENT USE THEIR 504 PLAN IN COLLEGE?**

- Neither a 504 plan nor a high school IEP apply directly to college; but either can be helpful.
- To get accommodations in college, students must apply to student disability services. The accommodations described in a high school 504 plan can help a student advocate for their needs with student disability services in college.
- It is important to note that colleges are not required to provide accommodations just because a student had a high school 504 plan or an IEP.

- A student can still apply for and receive accommodations in college even if they didn't have an IEP or 504 Plan in high school. Colleges are required to provide accommodations to students with a disability who qualify for them under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

## REFERENCES:

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This publication can be made available in alternative formats upon request

The Transitions RTC is part of the Systems & Psychosocial Advances Research Center (SPARC), A Massachusetts Department of Mental Health Research Center of Excellence



# COLLEGE COUNSELING SYSTEMS



## CONTACT INFORMATION

Community providers are also available in Greater Cincinnati.  
Search the database at: [www.MindPeaceCincinnati.com/search](http://www.MindPeaceCincinnati.com/search)

An important consideration when going to college is understanding how their mental health system works. Each school has a slightly different system, processes and specifications for care. Be sure to contact the mental health or counseling services at your college of choice during the summer, before heading to campus. Here are some questions to consider asking:

- Can the school counseling office offer ongoing therapy?
- If not, do you have transportation to get to appointments?
- Is there an on-site psychiatrist available to help with medication management?
- What support is available to students in crisis?



It's ideal to meet face-to-face with the counseling department and their therapists to establish a relationship before classes begin. Developing a relationship, taking care of paperwork (such as filling out disability forms), and understanding their school system of support are all things that should be accomplished before classes start. By doing so, you will relieve stress and establish a safety net of support if a crisis should arise.

COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY	OFFICE OF COUNSELING SERVICES	WEBSITE	TO REQUEST APPOINTMENTS
Bowling Green State University	(419) 372-2081	<a href="https://www.bgsu.edu/counseling-center.html">https://www.bgsu.edu/counseling-center.html</a>	Call (419) 372-2081 Mon-Fri 10-4
Cincinnati State	(513) 569-5779 (Clifton)	<a href="http://www.cincinnati-state.edu/real-world-academics/student-services/counseling-center">www.cincinnati-state.edu/real-world-academics/student-services/counseling-center</a>	Call (513) 569-5779 or email <a href="mailto:counseling@cincinnati-state.edu">counseling@cincinnati-state.edu</a>
College of Mount St. Joseph	(513) 244-4949	<a href="https://www.msj.edu/student-life/wellness-health-resources/index.html">https://www.msj.edu/student-life/wellness-health-resources/index.html</a>	Call (513) 244-4949
Indiana University	(812) 941-2244	<a href="https://www.ius.edu/personal-counseling/index.php">https://www.ius.edu/personal-counseling/index.php</a>	call (812) 941-2244 or email <a href="mailto:sepersco@ius.edu">sepersco@ius.edu</a>
Miami University	(513) 529-4634	<a href="http://miamioh.edu/student-life/student-counseling-service">http://miamioh.edu/student-life/student-counseling-service</a>	Call (513) 529-4634
Northern Kentucky University	(859) 572-5650	<a href="https://hcs.w.nku.edu/counseling/counseling-services-available">https://hcs.w.nku.edu/counseling/counseling-services-available</a>	Call (859) 572-5650
Ohio State University	(614) 292-5766	<a href="https://ccs.osu.edu/">https://ccs.osu.edu/</a>	Online registration: <a href="https://webauth.service.ohio-state.edu/idp/profile/SAML2/Redirect/SSO?execution=e1s2">https://webauth.service.ohio-state.edu/idp/profile/SAML2/Redirect/SSO?execution=e1s2</a>
Ohio University	(740) 593-1616	<a href="https://www.ohio.edu/student-affairs/counseling">https://www.ohio.edu/student-affairs/counseling</a>	Call (740) 593-1616.
University of Cincinnati – Blue Ash	(513) 745-5670	<a href="http://www.ucblueash.edu/students/services/counseling-services">www.ucblueash.edu/students/services/counseling-services</a>	Call (513) 556-0648 and indicate you are a Blue Ash student
University of Cincinnati – Main Campus	(513) 556-0648	<a href="http://www.uc.edu/counseling">www.uc.edu/counseling</a>	Call (513) 556-0648
University of Dayton	(937) 229-3141	<a href="https://udayton.edu/studev/health_wellness/counselingcenter/index.php">https://udayton.edu/studev/health_wellness/counselingcenter/index.php</a>	Call (937) 229-3141
University of Kentucky	(859) 257-8701	<a href="https://www.uky.edu/counselingcenter/">https://www.uky.edu/counselingcenter/</a>	Call (859) 257-8701
University of Louisville	(502) 852-6585	<a href="http://louisville.edu/counseling">http://louisville.edu/counseling</a>	Call (502) 852-6585 or email <a href="mailto:coping@louisville.edu">coping@louisville.edu</a>
Wright State University	(937) 775-3407	<a href="http://www.wright.edu/counseling">www.wright.edu/counseling</a>	Call (937) 775-3407
Xavier University	(513) 745-3022	<a href="http://www.xavier.edu/health-wellness/counseling">www.xavier.edu/health-wellness/counseling</a>	Call (513) 745-3022

## SYSTEM OVERVIEW

COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY	INITIAL VISIT FEE	SESSION CHARGE	SESSION LIMIT	MEDICATION MANAGEMENT*	HOURS	SUPPORT NETWORK	CAMPUS CRISIS SUPPORT*
Bowling Green State University	No Charge	No Charge	Determined by therapist	Refer out	Mon- Fri 8-5	Yes (through counselors on campus)	(419) 502-4673 Wood County Crisis Line
Cincinnati State – Clifton Campus Only	No Charge	No Charge	10 sessions per semester	Refer out	Mon-Fri 9-5	Anxiety support groups on campus	None
College of Mount St. Joseph	No Charge	No Charge	No session limit	Refer out	Mon-Fri 8:30-4:30	None	(513) 807-2516 On-Call Counselor
Indiana University	No Charge	No Charge	No session limit	Refer out	Mon-Fri 9-5	None	(800) 221-0446 Regional Crisis Line
Miami University	No Charge	3 free sessions per year, \$25/therapist or psychiatrist Or group therapy at no charge	No session limit, free sessions reset every semester	Yes, through the student health center	Mon-Fri 8-5	Yes (through counselors on campus)	(855) 249-5649 On-Call Counselor
Northern Kentucky University	No Charge	\$15/therapist (fees are currently suspended for spring 2022), group sessions are no charge	15 sessions per academic year	Nurse practitioner can prescribe some medications	Mon-Fri 8:30-4	Yes (through counselors on campus)	(859) 572-7777 Campus Police, ask for On-Call Counselor
Ohio State University	No Charge	No Charge	10 sessions per calendar year, may refer out after	Yes	Mon-Thurs 8-8 Fri 8-5	Yes (through counselors on campus)	(614) 292-5766 After Hours
Ohio University	No Charge	No Charge	No session limit	Yes	Mon-Fri 8-5	Yes (through counselors on campus)	(740) 593-1616 24/7 University Crisis Line
University of Cincinnati – Blue Ash	No Charge	3 free sessions per semester, \$35/therapist, or no charge for group therapy	May refer out after so many sessions	Refer out	M,Tue,Th,Fri 9-4 Wed 1-5 Closed Daily 12-1	None	(513) 556-0648 Crisis Counseling 24/7

COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY	INITIAL VISIT FEE	SESSION CHARGE	SESSION LIMIT	MEDICATION MANAGEMENT*	HOURS	SUPPORT NETWORK	CAMPUS CRISIS SUPPORT*
University of Cincinnati – Main Campus	No Charge	3 free sessions, \$35/therapist Or no charge for group therapy	May refer out after so many sessions	Refer out	Mon-Fri 8-5	BSN www.ucincybsn.org	(513) 556-0648 Crisis Counseling 24/7
University of Dayton	No Charge	No Charge	Will create an action plan, may be referred out	Yes, will refer to psychiatrist	Mon-Fri 8:30-4:30	Yes (through counselors on campus)	(937) 229-2121 Public Safety 24/7
University of Kentucky	No Charge	No Charge	Typically 5-7 sessions, based off needs assessment	No	Mon-Fri 8-4:30	Yes	(859) 257-8701 24/7 University Crisis Line
University of Louisville	No Charge	No Charge	Typically 10 sessions, then will refer out	Refer to Campus Health Services	Mon, Tue, Fri 9-5 Wed & Thu 9-6	Yes (through counselors on campus)	(502) 852-6585 Counseling Department (not available 24/7)
Wright State University	No Charge  <u>Walk-In Hours:</u> Mon & Thur 10-3 Tues & Fri 12-3 Wed 10-11 (based upon availability of providers)	No charge for students who pay \$20 semester fee  \$20 /appt for students who waive fee	No session limit	Yes, psychiatrist on staff	Mon-Fri 8:30-5	Yes (through counselors on campus)	(937) 775-4567 Raider Cares 24/7 Line
Xavier University	No Charge	No Charge	No session limit	Yes	Mon- Fri 9-5	Yes (through counselors on campus)	(513) 745-3022 Therapist On-Call (513) 745-1000 Campus Police

\*Medication Management: school can provide on-campus medication services

\*Campus Crisis Support: therapist on-call or a hotline to call in case of a crisis