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MEMBER



Special needs require special lawyers.

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CHOOSING COLLEGES FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

A recent *Wall Street Journal* article described the challenges and opportunities facing students with learning disabilities. According to George Jesien of the Association of University Centers on Disabilities, only recently have colleges and universities made much progress in providing level playing fields for qualified students with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and other learning disabilities.

Colleges exhibit a wide range of attitudes and programs for students with special needs. One parent described her first-hand view of these differences when she toured campuses. Her son needs accommodations for a learning disability; some campuses described fine-tuned supports in place for her son. Other campuses said they didn't have much of a need for such accommodations; that response raised red flags to the parent.

Parents normally are more used to the standardized approach that the law requires in public schools. The public schools must provide instruction tailored to fulfill the student's right to public education. Colleges, on the other hand, are required to make only "reasonable accommodations" for qualified students with disabilities. These accommodations are categorized by various terms, and they are not universal among colleges. The lowest level of support is "basic" support; they can also be called decentralized, limited, or self-directed programs. They provide the accommodations required by law, such as note-taking help or untimed testing. The "basic" level can also mean that the schools are doing nothing; this is one reason that retention rates among students with learning disabilities are lower than overall retention rates by as much as 10%.

"Coordinated services" go beyond the required minimums. They have at least one trained staffer, offer tutors, study-skills classes and other services. They also may have input on admission decisions. "Structured" or

“proactive” programs provide the highest level of support; they charge fees from \$2,000 to \$8,000 per year and some require a contract. Trained staffers monitor progress, and they may offer modified coursework. Fewer than 100 schools are in this category.

Students should visit colleges in which they are interested, interview staff at the disabilities office about the services available, and see if they feel comfortable in working with the people on staff. Campus officials say that if a student reveals that the student has a disability, it is not likely at most colleges that the student jeopardizes the chance of admission. Students may first want to make their initial list of colleges based on general factors, then narrow the list based on the disability supports available. Students should also be as concerned about their chances for graduation as much as their chances for admission. They should make sure that the graduation requirements can be met, and that course substitutions or remedial classes are available.

Ask Allie

O&H: Allie, in between routine visits to the veterinarian, are there any warning signs that pet families should look out for that trigger an immediate visit to the vet?

Allie: Yes, there are several things that people should watch out for in their dogs and cats. Anorexia or refusing food, or excessive drinking or urinating can be symptoms of more serious problems. Vomiting or diarrhea, by themselves are not necessarily cause for immediate concern, but when combined with other symptoms, there is greater cause for alarm. Pale or purple gums can indicate several different conditions. Bleeding from any area (including the tongue, ears and tail) is potentially serious and must be stopped with a cold compress, flour or starch. Of course, difficulty breathing should be treated as an acute emergency, as should frequent vomiting. There are several emergency veterinary clinics in our area that are available. Although they are usually more costly than your regular vet, there are times when you should not wait until the next time your vet's office is open to get help.



Please feel free to e-mail your questions to Allie at: allie@oasthook.com.

Speakers

If you are interested in having an elder law attorney from Oast & Hook speak at an event, then please call Jennifer Lantz at 757-399-7506.

Distribution of This Newsletter

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