

Realizing the College Dream with Autism or Asperger Syndrome

Program Description

The transition to college can be a stressful time for students and their families, especially if the student has ASD or a developmental disability. Whether the student is transitioning into a fully included college setting or is entering a support program specifically for students with disabilities, the transition can be difficult for both the student and the parents. Preparation is crucial to a successful transition. The presenter, a parent of a college graduate with autism and a professional working with parents of children with disabilities, will discuss strategies to help the student and family prepare for this important transition.

Part of preparing the student and the family involves helping them understand the many differences between high school and college and the change in the student's responsibilities at the college level. The presenter will discuss the importance of functional skills, or skills to help the student be as independent as possible, and the importance of self-advocacy skills for the student with ASD in college. The presenter will also discuss the change in the role of the parent in supporting the student at the college level and ways that parents can help support the student while respecting their privacy and independence. She will also cover the law that protects students with disabilities in college and the role of the Disabilities Service Office on campus in supporting students.

The presenter will include personal stories of her family's experience and ways her son adapted to the rigors of college and the complications of living in a dormitory. She will also discuss common difficulties college students with ASD may face and some strategies that can be used to support the student. In closing, she will describe the positive outcomes of the college experience for her son and for her as a parent.

Program Objectives

Upon completion of this workshop, participants should be able to:

1. Explain the importance of preparing both the student with ASD and the parents for the transition to college.
2. Describe possible options in North Carolina for a college experience for students with ASD or other disabilities.
3. Outline the importance of teaching functional skills to improve the student's ability to be as independent as possible in college.
4. List common difficulties in college for students with ASD.
5. Demonstrate strategies for supporting the student with ASD in college.
6. Discuss the importance of the student's self-advocacy skills and the change in the parent's role in supporting the student at the college level.

Target Audience

Human Service Professionals, school personnel, parents or caregivers, students with disabilities, and anyone interested in this topic.

Contact Hours

1.5 to 3.0

Agenda Topics

A Personal Story from Diagnosis to College Graduation
The Transition Plan in High School
Differences Between High School and College
Options for a College Experience for Students with ASD
Preparing for the Transition- Functional Skills
Preparing for the Transition- Self-advocacy skills and self-disclosure
Developing a Transition Notebook/File
Transitioning from IDEA to ADA
Possible Accommodations and Disabilities Support Services
Challenges for Students with ASD in College
Strategies for Supporting the Student

Faculty

Ann Palmer is a parent of a 38-year-old son with autism, an author and presenter, and a professional having worked with families for close to 30 years. She was the Parent Support Coordinator at the UNC TEACCH Program and the Director of Advocacy and Chapters at the Autism Society of North Carolina. Ann is recently retired from being a faculty member at the Carolina Institute for Developmental Disabilities (CIDD) at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. She is the author of four books published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers. Her book, *Realizing the College Dream with Autism or Asperger Syndrome: A Parent's Guide to Student Success* was written about her son's college experience. *Parenting Across the Autism Spectrum: Unexpected Lessons We Have Learned*, was co-authored with Maureen Morrell and was the Autism Society of America's Literary Work of the Year. She is also the author of *A Friend's and Relative's Guide to Supporting the Family with Autism: How Can I Help?* and co-author of her newest book, *Drinking, Drug Use and Addiction in the Autism Community*.