

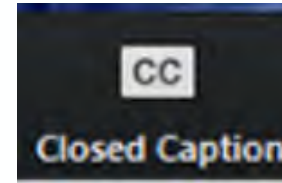
RAISE



Beyond High School: Inclusive Postsecondary Education Options & How Students Can Prepare

Using Closed Captioning

- To start using CC, click the caption button



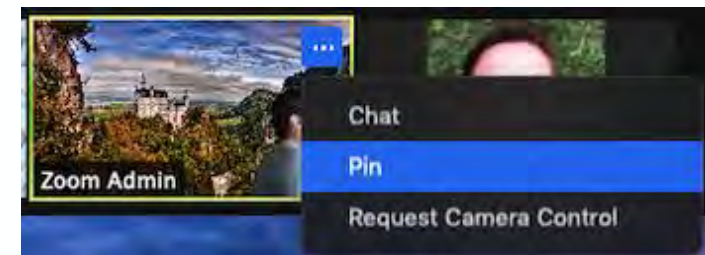
Uso de la interpretación de idiomas

- Hagan clic en el icono de interpretación
- Seleccionen "Spanish"
- Después de seleccionar "español", hagan clic "Mute Original Audio"



Using ASL

- To pin the interpreter, hover over the video of the participant you want to pin and click ...
- From the menu, click Pin.



About CPIR, RAISE & the RSA Regions

The [CPIR](#) provides universal technical assistance to the 90+ federally funded [Parent Centers](#) across regions in U.S. states and territories.



[RAISE](#) is housed at SPAN Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN) and provides technical assistance and support to the eight (8) [RSA Regions](#) in helping individuals with disabilities shift into adulthood.

Presenters

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ThinkCollege

UMASS BOSTON • ICI

Overview of Webinar

1. What is Think College?
2. What are inclusive postsecondary education programs for students with intellectual disability like?
3. Preparing students for college
4. Resources for families and students



What is Think College?

Think College is a national technical assistance, research, training, and evaluation center dedicated to developing, expanding, and improving higher education options for students with intellectual disability.

www.thinkcollege.net



At Think College, we help

- Develop college options for students with intellectual disability
- Improve existing college programs
- Assist students and families in preparing for college
- AND MORE!!

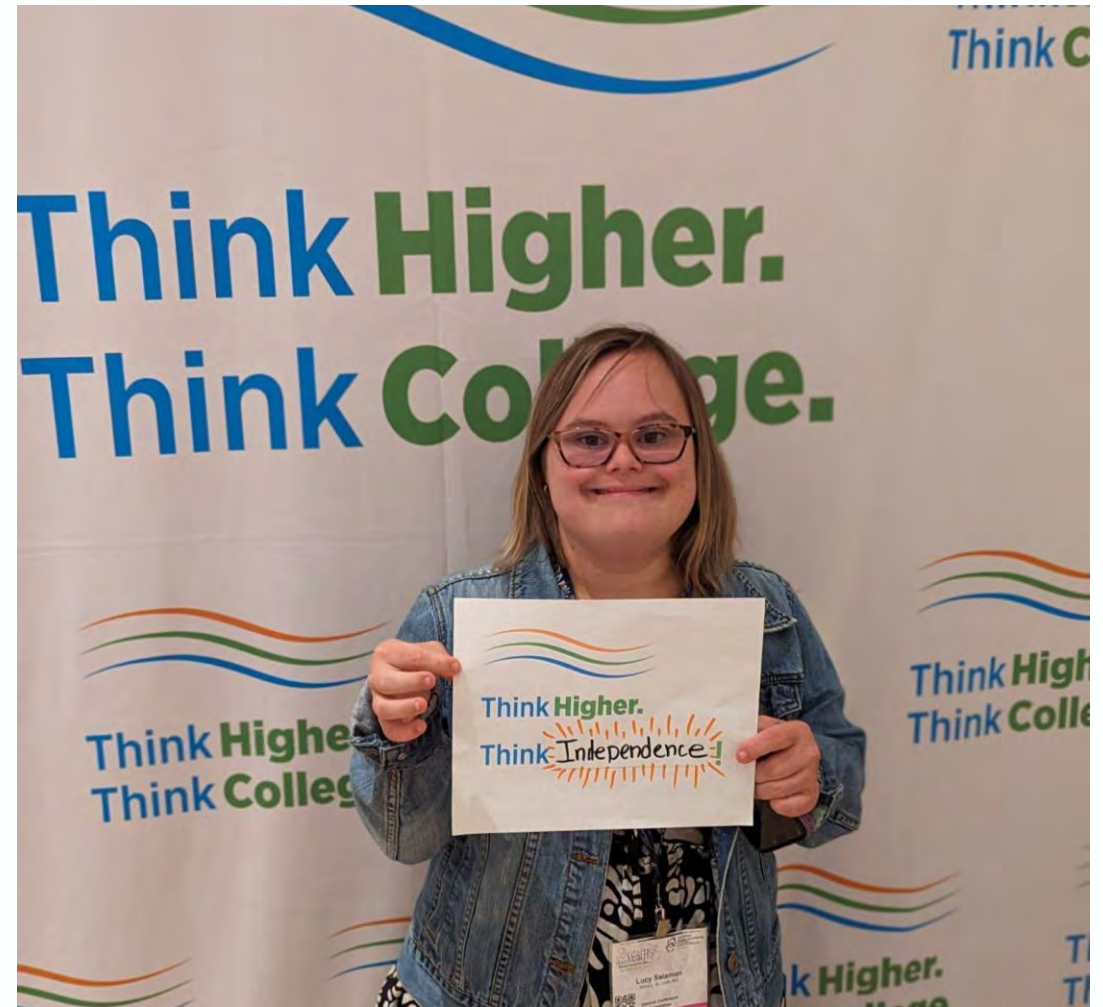


National Coordinating Center: What We Do

- 1. Provide technical assistance (TA) & support**
 - for colleges, educators, families, & students nationwide
- 2. Use data to drive improvement**
 - Identify effective practices & use findings to guide personalized support & create new tools and resources
- 3. Share knowledge & resources**
 - Increase awareness of college options for students with intellectual disability
- 4. Promote quality & sustainability**
 - Strengthen accountability & long-term program success & lead national gatherings to promote collaboration & sustainability



Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability



What are Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) programs?

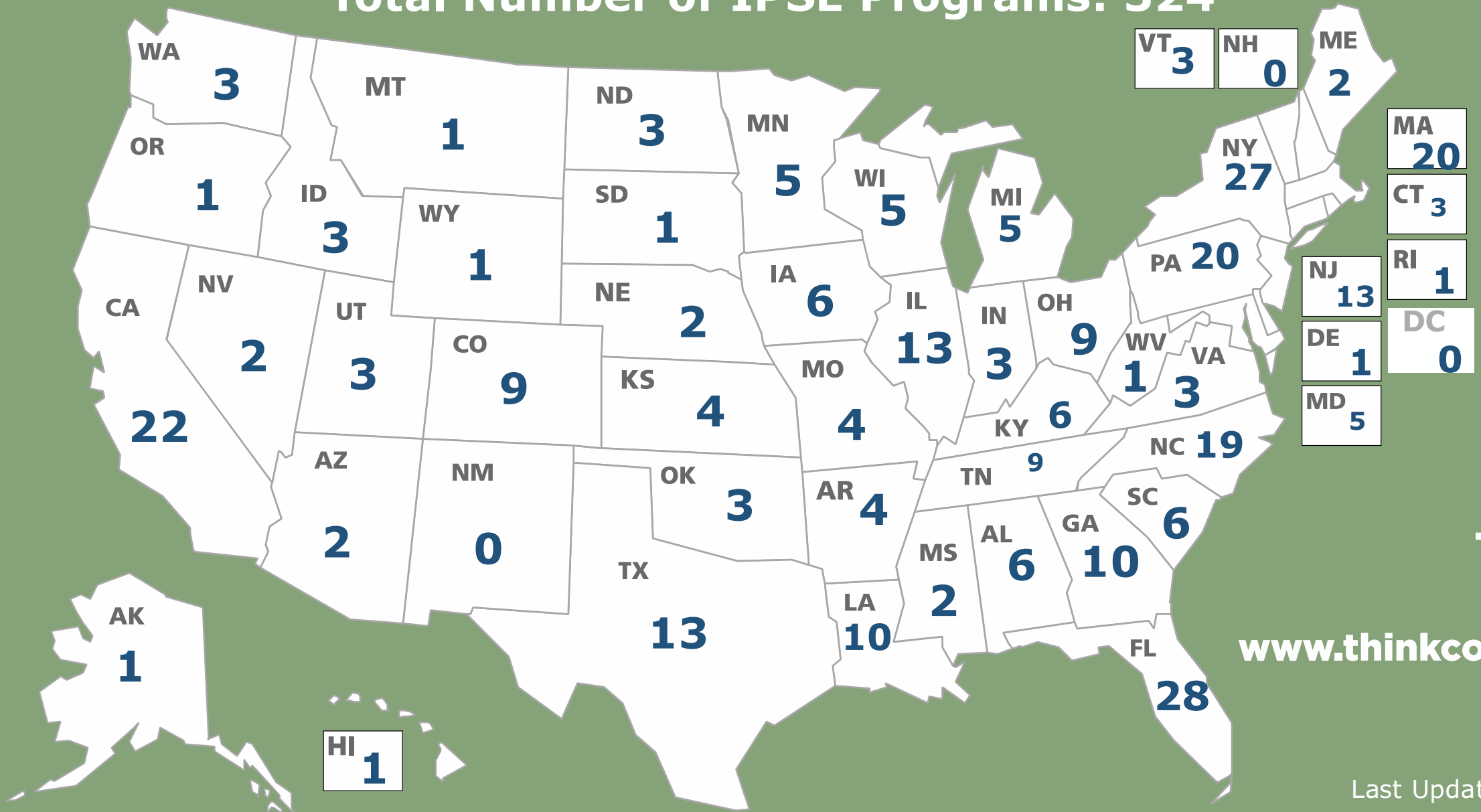
An IPSE Program is a program in which students can take typical college classes at an accredited institution of higher education

- 2 and 4-year colleges, tech schools, dual enrollment
- Class, campus, & work in inclusive settings
- Focus on Academic Growth, Career Preparation, Independent Living, & Community Engagement

Students take classes for **audit or credit** and work toward earning a **certificate or credential**

College Options for Students with Intellectual Disability

Total Number of IPSE Programs: 324



Think College

www.thinkcollege.net

Last Updated: 7/27/2026

Key Features of College/University Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability

- Unique admissions process & requirements
- Accepts students who are non-degree seeking
- Vary in length from 1 to 4 years
- Vary in level of inclusion
- Vary in levels of support
- Students earn a certificate, not a degree
- May offer federal student aid (not loans)
- May offer campus housing



Types of College Programs

Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID)

Model Demonstration projects funded by the US Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education

GRANTS

Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary (CTP) Programs

Programs that have been through an approval process and can offer access to federal financial aid

FINANCIAL AID

College-Based Transition Program

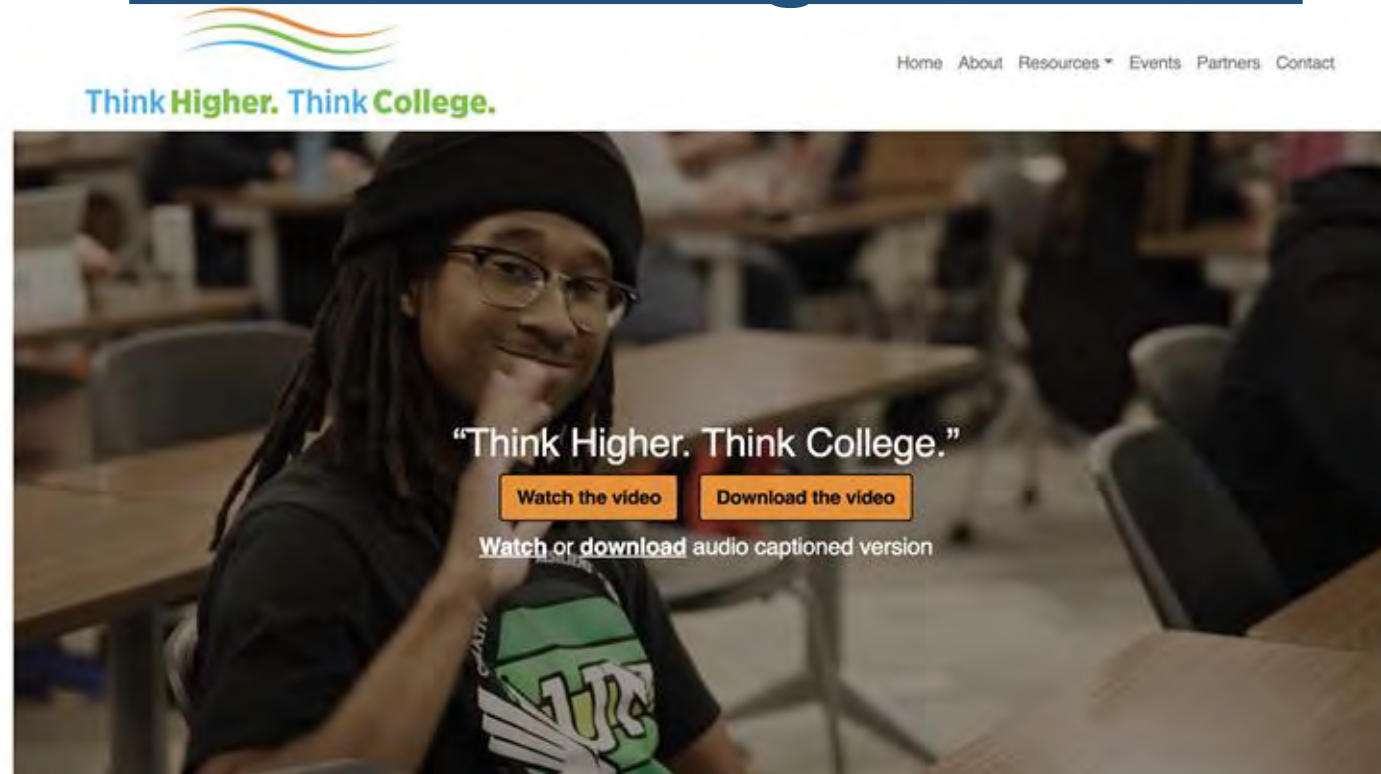
Programs that serve students while still in high school, typically a partnership between a school district and a local college

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICE

Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary (CTP) Programs

- Approval process (defined in federal law)
- Students can access federal financial aid:
 - Pell Grants
 - Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants
 - Federal Work Study
 - Not loans
- Not all IPSE programs are CTPs

Watch & share campaign video, find new resources, view recordings & learn more at www.thinkhighered.net



Components of IPSE Programs

Academics

- Students may enroll in college courses for credit, audit, or continuing education
 - If auditing, modifications are allowed
- Student success services are made available
- Students may have specialized classes just for students in the program

Employment

- Career development activities
- Internships/work-study
- Paid jobs on and off campus
- Support to find paid work after graduation

Housing

- Dorms/On-Campus Housing
 - Sometimes with another student in the program
 - Sometimes with a student outside of the program
 - Supports based on the needs of students
 - Some expectation for independent skills is typical
- Off-Campus Housing
 - A house or apartment complex with other students in the program

Student Experience

- Social support from peer mentors/coaches
- Participating in campus organizations
 - Student Government, Greek life, Intramural Sports
- Developing independence on campus

Peer Mentors

- Build social connections
- Support academic success
- Promote independent living skills
- Explore employment opportunities
- Navigate transportation
- Provide support in other areas



Why IPSE?

Think College's most recent annual report shows:

- 65% of exiting IPSE students from our data collection sites, had a paid job one year after completing a program. 67% after two years, and 68% after three years.
- 73% of exiting students completed their program
- 62% of exiting students who completed their program were working in a paid job at exit or within in the first 90 days.
- 85% of respondents reported they were happy or very happy with their social life.

Data obtained from: Grigal, M., Papay, C., Bukaty, C., Choiseul-Praslin, B., Weir, C. & Lazo, R. (2025). Highlights of the annual report of the Cohort 3 TPSID Model Demonstration Projects (Year 4, 2023–2024). University of Massachusetts Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion.

Other Outcomes of Higher Education

How to access desired knowledge

How to balance your life & schedule

How to handle failure

What works, what doesn't work

What might be your next step

Broader Landscape of IPSE: Developments in Program Accreditation

**Inclusive Higher Education Accreditation Council
established**

Accreditation pilot process launched

Four programs have been accredited

- Western Carolina University
- University of Colorado- Colorado Springs
- Virginia Commonwealth University
- University of Alabama (Crossing Points Program)

**Accreditation readiness resources available
through Think College and IHEAC**



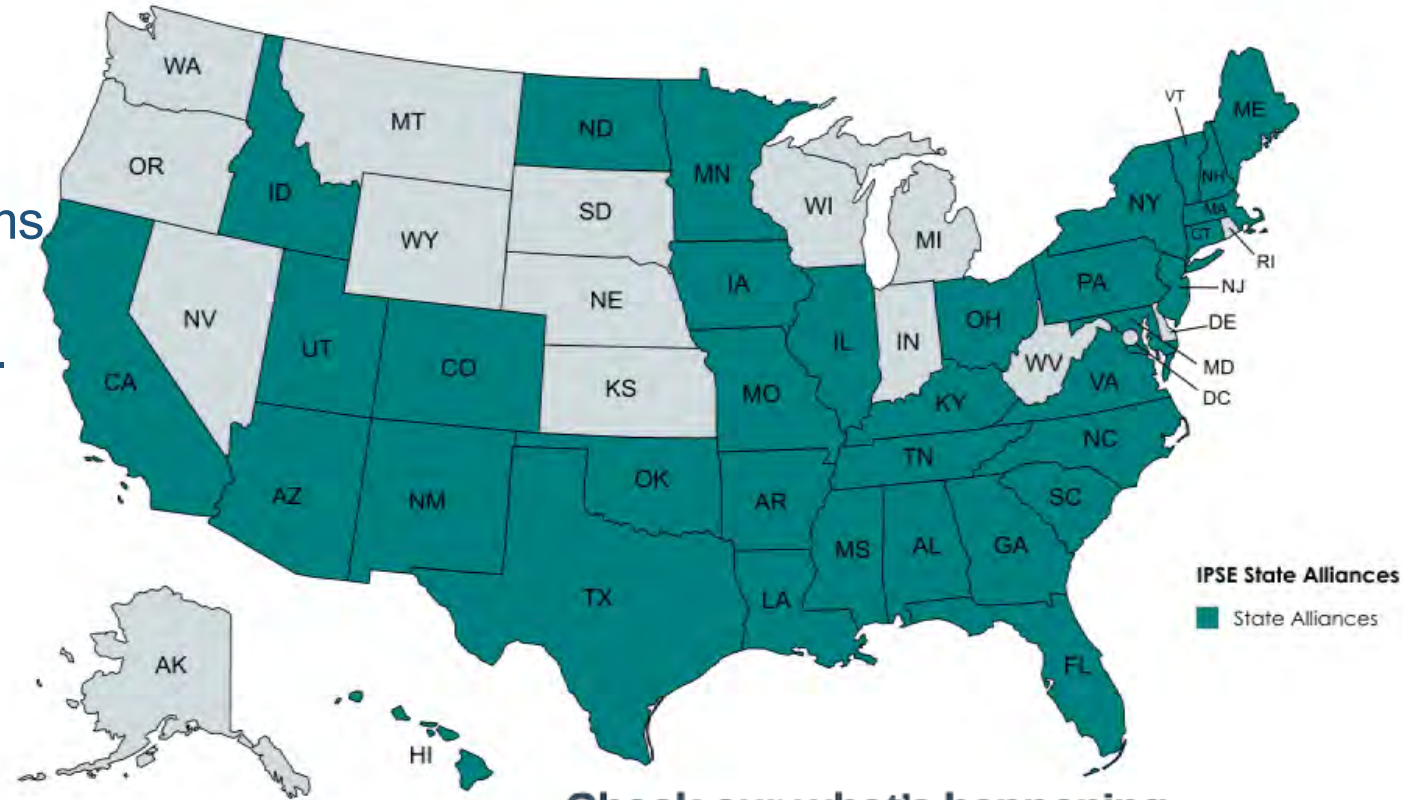
Broader Landscape of IPSE: State Alliances

Include representatives from college programs and may also involve state agencies, organizations, parents, alumni, and students.

Goal: Expand access to IPSE through

- systems change,
- policy advocacy, and
- public awareness.

Alliances often help secure state funding, coordinate grants, influence policies that support IPSE growth, and connect stakeholders.



Check out what's happening
in your state!

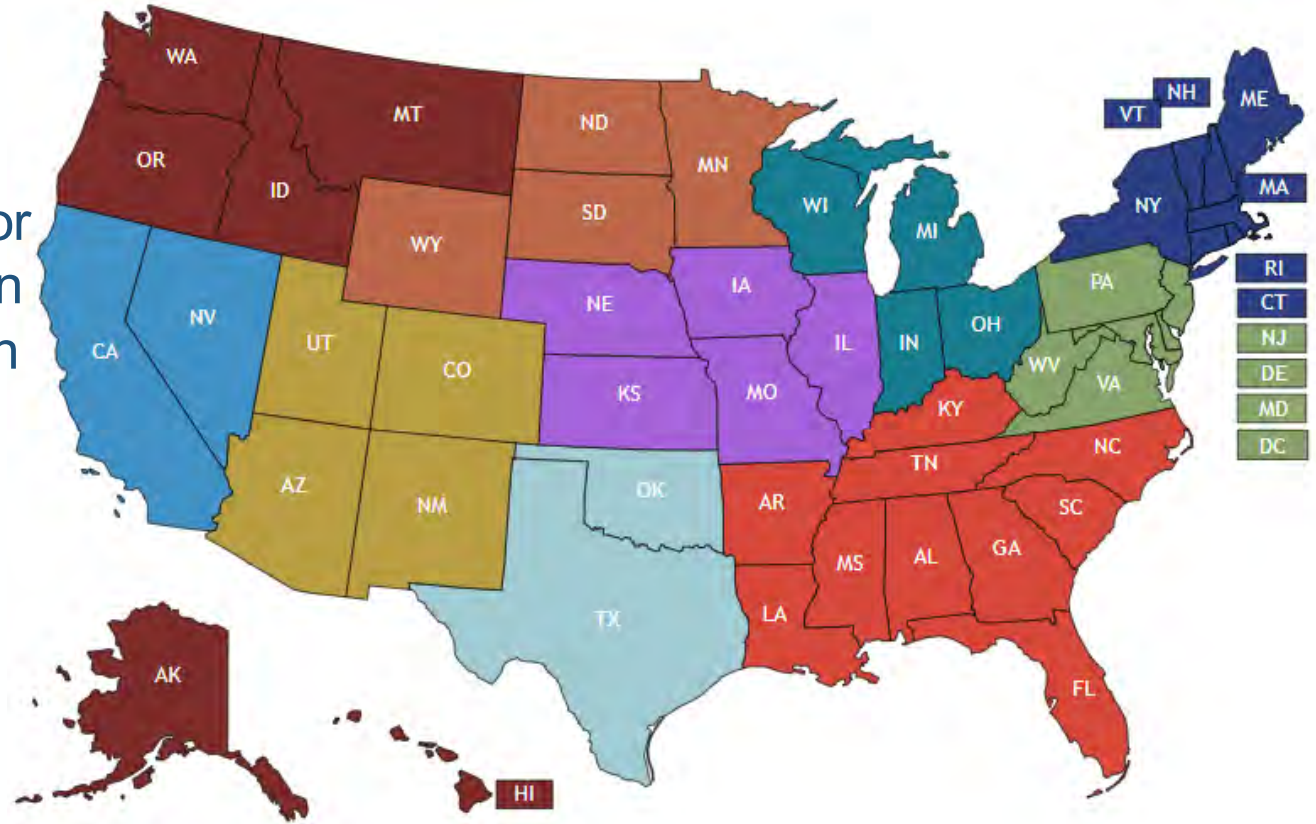


Broader Landscape of IPSE: Regional Alliances

Promote access to quality IPSE opportunities for students with intellectual disability in their region through a shared focus on collaboration through program development, research, and public policy.

A region consists of two or more neighboring states that may have similar demographic or political characteristics.

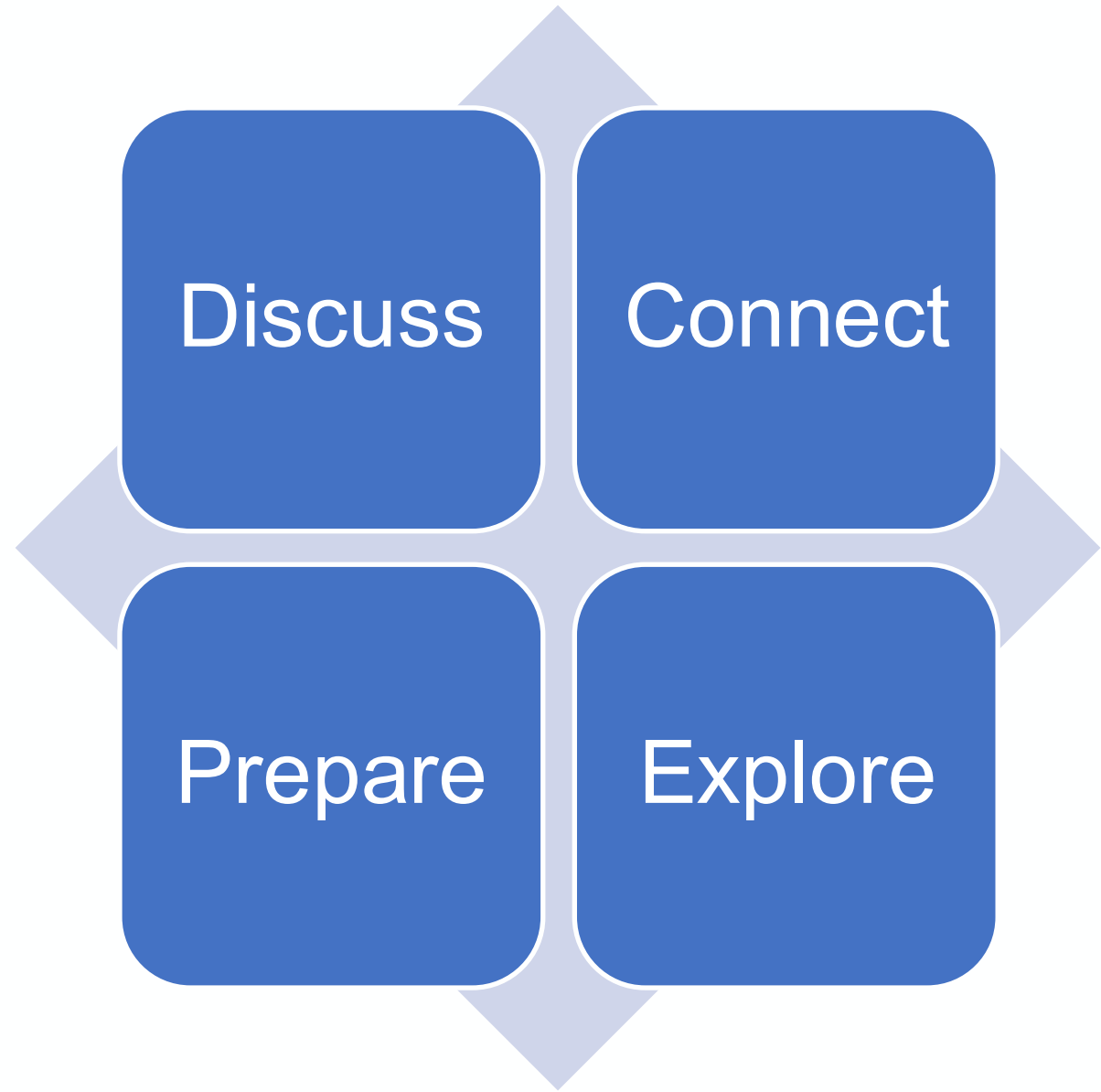
Scan this to find your
regional alliance!



Regional Alliances

NWIPSEA SEPSEA GLIPSEA MIPSAs
Upper Midwest RRHEA NEPSEA MIDA Four Corners Western States

**How can families
help students
prepare for
college?**



Getting Ready for College: Attitudes

- The role of family will change over time
- Be future-focused
- Have high expectations
- Let your child take chances and make mistakes
- Allow voice and choice
- Inclusion is essential
- When the time is right, get a job!
- Take advantage of natural supports
- Share success stories

(Adapted from Westling and Kelley, 2015)

Discuss

- Talk with your child about their college dreams and questions
- Ask your child's teacher which college preparation and exploration activities can be included in the transition planning process or IEP
- Share the importance of college exploration for students with intellectual disability with your high school's principal and other administrators



Connect

- Meet other families who have supported their college student with an intellectual disability on the Families Think College Facebook group
- Share www.thinkcollege.net with
 - teachers,
 - transition coordinators,
 - guidance counselors and
 - administrators at your school



Prepare

- Learn about the differences between high school and college
- Start practicing now!
 - Build opportunities to plan travel to/from school
 - Build in opportunities to move about independently- increase duration, locations, time limits
 - Discuss accommodations and supports with teachers
 - Build and follow own schedule with reminders
- Fade supports to build independence



Getting Ready for College: 10 Strategies for Families

Overnight camp

Use of public/ADA
transportation/ ride
share options

Be future-focused
– build
expectations for
college

Have high
expectations

Let your child take
chances & make
mistakes

Allow voice &
choice

Visit college
campus

Help students get
a paid job asap

Financial literacy
including use of
ATM card

Use of cell phone
& scheduling apps

Adapted from Westling & Kelley, 2015

Explore the Options

Know the
options

Plan and
conduct
your search

Dig deeper
and ask
questions

Visit and
apply



A national directory of college and university programs enrolling students with intellectual disability

Searchable by:

- State
- Housing
- Financial aid availability/CTP
- Length of program
- Type of school

And more!

READY TO LOOK FOR COLLEGE PROGRAMS?

This video highlights the features of the College Search Tool and how to use this resource to find the program that is right for you.

Where do I start with my college search?

1:50

IPSE PROGRAMS

CLEAR

SEARCH

Program or keyword

LOCATION

Select All

☐ Alabama (6)

☐ Alaska (1)

☐ Arizona (2)

☐ Arkansas (4)

☐ California (22)

▼ Show more states

☐ Remove Programs That ONLY Serve Students In High School*

*Programs that are only for students in high school are typically only for students in certain high schools

STUDENT HOUSING

☐ Offers Housing

☐ Does Not Offer Housing

FINANCIAL AID

☐ Offer Financial Aid (CTP)

College Search Tool

The College Search Tool

The Think College Search Tool offers a searchable directory of **324 inclusive postsecondary education (or IPSE) programs** and **51 other programs** for students with intellectual disability connected with colleges and universities.

An IPSE Program means a program where students with intellectual disability can take typical college classes at an accredited institution of higher education. Classes are taken for credit, audit, or continuing education.*

Frequently Asked Questions

Read through the most **commonly asked questions** about college options for students with intellectual disability and how to use this directory.

Conducting a College Search

Conducting a College Search: Questions to Ask College Programs, features over 60 different questions to ask colleges during your college search.

New in 2026: A **Student's Guide to Finding the right College**, designed specifically for students. Check it out!

There are some programs that only serve students who are still receiving services from their high school. To remove these from your college search, simply check the "Remove Programs that ONLY Serve Students in High School" box on the left side of this page.

Legend: 1-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10+

Student Resource: How to Conduct a College Search



Every year, thousands of students with intellectual disability finish high school and head off to whatever is next. Some have been planning since elementary school to go to college, while others have recently made the decision. Regardless of where you are on this journey, Think College has many tools and resources to help make the process easier.

Did you know there are over 300 inclusive postsecondary education programs around the United States specifically for students with intellectual disability? Each one is a different size, and students take different

WHAT IS AN INCLUSIVE POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAM?

An inclusive postsecondary education, or IPSE, program is a program where students can take typical college classes at an accredited institution of higher education, which means a college or university has met certain standards of quality, as determined by the U.S. Department of Education. Classes that students take are for credit, audit, or continuing education.



College Mapping Tool



WHAT MY CHILD WANTS TO DO:

Go to college with my friends
Get better at writing
Look at 2-year programs

WHAT I WANT MY CHILD TO DO:

Become more organized
Get a decent paying job
Be close by

WHAT IS AVAILABLE?

Programs:

We have two kids in college now. Maybe we can start at the local junior college. They have a summer bridge program for students with disabilities
College needs to be near a bus line as Juan doesn't drive.

Time:

We both work full-time and take care of my mom, so we are balancing a lot right now.

Money:

Our other kids got Pell grants. We could look the FAFSA.

SHORT-TERM PLANS:

Complete FAFSA
Visit SB Jr. College
Call Bridge program
Explore trade certificates

LONG-TERM GOAL:

Get a vocational certificate that will help Juan get a good paying job.

Visit and apply!

Visit your top choices to see the campus and meet the staff, faculty, and students.

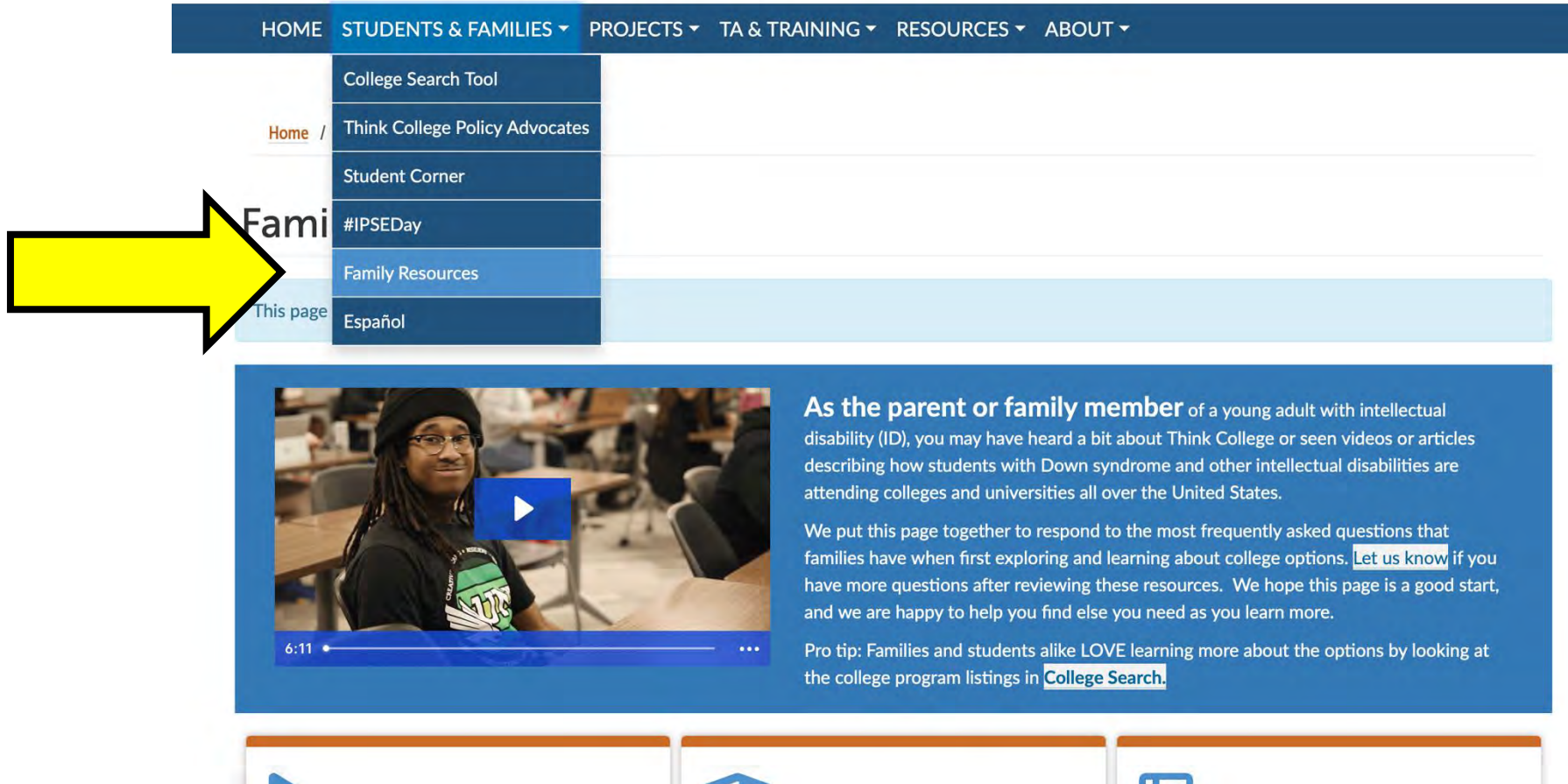
Visit the disability services office to see how involved that office is with the program.

Connect with alumni and their families to learn about their experiences at college and what they're doing now.

Apply!

Resources for Students & Families

Students & Families Section of Website



HOME STUDENTS & FAMILIES ▾ PROJECTS ▾ TA & TRAINING ▾ RESOURCES ▾ ABOUT ▾

Home /

Fami

This page

- College Search Tool
- Think College Policy Advocates
- Student Corner
- #IPSEDay
- Family Resources
- Español

As the parent or family member of a young adult with intellectual disability (ID), you may have heard a bit about Think College or seen videos or articles describing how students with Down syndrome and other intellectual disabilities are attending colleges and universities all over the United States.

We put this page together to respond to the most frequently asked questions that families have when first exploring and learning about college options. [Let us know](#) if you have more questions after reviewing these resources. We hope this page is a good start, and we are happy to help you find else you need as you learn more.

Pro tip: Families and students alike LOVE learning more about the options by looking at the college program listings in [College Search](#).

www.ThinkCollege.net



Getting Started

If you're not sure where to start, this box is for you! The resources in this box are a good starting point to learn more about inclusive postsecondary options.

- Read our introductory [Guide for Inclusive Postsecondary Education \(PDF\)](#).
- Listen to a [Think Inclusive episode \(audio\)](#) interview with College staff.
- Watch [Rethinking College \(video\)](#) film about college students with intellectual disability.



Is College Possible?

These resources illustrate students with ID who have successfully attended college.



How to Prepare

Students in middle school and high school can prepare for college by taking certain courses and activities.



How to Apply

When students are applying to attend a college program for students with ID, there is typically a more complex process than seeking admission to a college. Applying to college often requires a regular ACT score, need documentation, and support from a college advisor.

- For more information, read the [College Application Process \(PDF\)](#).
- Check the [College Application Checklist \(PDF\)](#) for more information.



Can I afford it?

College is expensive, and paying for it is never easy. The good news is that there are many ways to pay for college.



How do we find the right college?

Finding the right college can take time. Here are some tips to help you find the right college.



Differences Between High School and College

The transition to college is a big one – here are some resources to help you understand the most important differences.

- Identify the main [Differences Between High School and College](#).
- Review ten tips for [Transitioning to College \(PDF\)](#).
- Listen to [Parents Discuss the Differences between HS and College \(video\)](#).



Student Rights

When a student turns 18 and/or enters college, some key changes may occur with their rights and privacy. It is important to learn about these early so your family can make informed choices.

- Understand the impacts of [Guardianship and Alternatives \(PDF\)](#) on decision-making.
- Learn about parent communication with colleges under the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(PDF\)](#).



Raising Awareness

After learning about these options, many families ask us how they can share more with people they know. In addition to any resources on this page, here are a couple of others that can help raise awareness about inclusive college options.

- Download and print a flyer for families on [Exploring College for Students with Intellectual Disability \(PDF\)](#).
- Visit [Share our Campaign \(webpage\)](#) for a social media toolkit and shareable video clips.

www.ThinkCollege.net
Family Resources page

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- › What are the different types of college programs that serve students with intellectual disability?
- › What areas of study, majors, or certifications are available for students with intellectual disability?
- › How do we find the right college?
- › What are admission requirements for programs for students with ID?
- › Do students take college classes with other students without intellectual disability?
- › What does it mean to “audit” a college class?
- › How can students with intellectual disability prepare academically for college level work?
- › Do these programs offer campus housing?

Student Corner

COLLEGE IS FOR YOU!



Think you can't go to college? Think again! Check out this video of [Students Realizing the Dream!](#) This video is about students going to college in Florida, and they talk about classes and careers. Johnny is taking automotive classes. Angie is preparing to work at a hospital. Aarushi is getting ready for a job in fashion and design.

FINDING A PROGRAM



With over 350 college programs across the United States, it can be tricky to know where to start. This video can help! It's called "[Thinking College: A Conversation Between Ewidji and Lounes.](#)" In this video, two students talk about how they started looking for college programs and what helped them figure out what would work for them.

USING OUR COLLEGE SEARCH TOOL

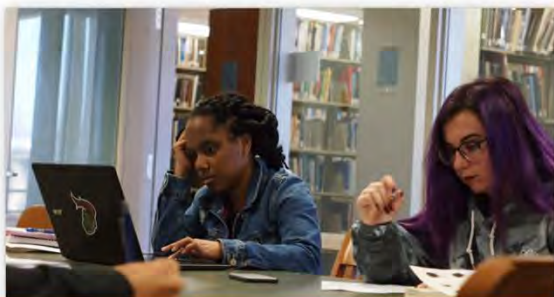


The only directory of its kind, the [College Search Tool](#) features information on the over 350 college programs for students with intellectual disability. Search for schools by state, housing options, financial information, and more. Pro tip: Use our [Conducting A College Search resource](#) to help guide you through the process. You got this!

Resources by Topic

Resources by Topic

Here you will find curated resources on some of the most critical topics in inclusive postsecondary education. Each page features selected key resources, a link to additional resources we have on the topic in our Resource Library, related external links and Frequently Asked Questions on the topic. We see these pages as a great place to get started when exploring a topic. We welcome feedback and suggestions for additional resources or FAQ.



Academic Access

Resources to support meaningful inclusive academic access for students attending college programs for students with ID.



Accreditation

Resources related to the accreditation of college programs for students with intellectual disability.



Advocacy and Outreach

Resources to guide and inform users about local and national advocacy and outreach efforts.



These pages feature curated resources and information on some popular topics <https://thinkcollege.net/resources/resources-by-topic>

Resources by Topic

Web Pages

17 topics, including

- Academic Access
- Accreditation
- Campus Life
- CTP Programs
- Paying for College
- Peer Mentors
- Preparing for College
- Student Credentials
- Technology
- Understanding VR

and more!

Home / Resources / Resources by Topic / Campus Life

1 Campus Life

This page offers a variety of resources related to campus housing and campus life that will assist programs to develop the appropriate supports and structures to establish collaborative and effective supports for university/college housing and to ensure that students in their program have access to campus life resources and the support they need to truly benefit from all the campus has to offer.

3 FEATURED RESOURCES

NEW  [Creating Pathways into Greek Life for Students with Intellectual Disability](#)

 [Navigating Independence: What Works to Teach Campus Navigation](#)

 [Navigation Support for Students with Intellectual Disability Using Mobile Devices](#)

 [Supporting College Students with Intellectual Disability through Living and Learning Communities](#)

 [Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs and Centers for Independent Living: A Partnership Worth Pursuing](#)

1 2 3 4 Next ›
Last »

[View All >>](#)

5 QUICK LINKS

 [Campus Life: What to Expect](#)

4 NEWS & FEATURES



Addressing Policy Barriers to Campus Membership

Removing Barriers to Full Campus Participation

Many college programs work with the administration at their campus to alleviate as many barriers to participation as possible to the non-degree seeking students attending their program. ...[Read more](#)



CAMPUS HOUSING
WEBINAR RESOURCES

Residential Life Focused webinars

Think College recorded webinars page features two excellent webinars on the operation of inclusive campus housing. Check them out for helpful guidance and actionable strategies for residential life services in your own program. ...[Read more](#)



EMBRACING DIGNITY OF RISK IN INCLUSIVE POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Embracing Dignity of Risk in Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs

College students in general have an immense amount of freedom to take emotional, physical, and intellectual risks. ...[Read more](#)

6 CAMPUS LIFE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- › How can students get involved with student life on campus?
- › Why is it important for students to make connections on their campus, outside of the classroom or academic settings?
- › What are some of the benefits and risks to consider for students with ID when living on a college campus?
- › What are some proactive strategies college programs can initiate to ease liability concerns and safety for students with intellectual disability?

Resource by Topic - Preparing for College

FEATURED RESOURCES

NEW  [The College Search Tool: A Reflection of the Evolution of Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs](#)

NEW  [A Student's Guide to Finding the Right College](#)

 [Summer Programs](#)

 ["Thinking College: A Conversation Between Ewidji and Lounes" Video](#)

 [Becoming College Bound](#)

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [Next >](#)

[Last »](#)

[View All >>](#)

Preparing for College

There are many things that students can and should do, with the support of their family and teachers, to get ready for the transition from high school to college. Resources on this page include ways to create an IEP that will best prepare students for college, information on important decisions such as guardianship, information on how college differs from high school, and more.

NEWS & FEATURES



[The College Search Tool: What's New?](#)

The College Search Tool is one of the most used resources from Think College, and there is an interesting history behind it! Think College staff recently took pen to paper and dove into how it was created, how it has been used over the years, and how it has evolved in our latest Insight Brief. [...Read more](#)



[Preparing for College](#)

Part of any adventure is planning and getting ready - and going to college is no different. This article shares a number of helpful resources that families and teachers can use to support students to be ready for college. [...Read more](#)



[Foundational Skills for College and Career Success](#)

A tool and process to help students work on important non-academic college and career skills. [...Read more](#)



SORT BY

Publication Date ▾

SEARCH

Resource or keyword

CLEAR

TOPICS

- ▶ Academics
- ▶ Campus Membership
- ▶ Employment
- ▶ IPSE Awareness
- ▶ Paying For College
- ▶ Policy And Legislation
- ▶ Program Operations
- ▶ Program Planning

Resource Library

Welcome to the Think College Resource Library

The library includes carefully selected resources on a wide range of topics related to postsecondary education for people with intellectual disability.

Use the filters on the left to narrow your search by topic, and click on Advanced Filters to refine by project, audience, media type, or publication type. If you are having trouble finding the resources you need, please contact us at thinkcollegeTA@umb.edu

Displaying 1 - 10 of 1038

NEW

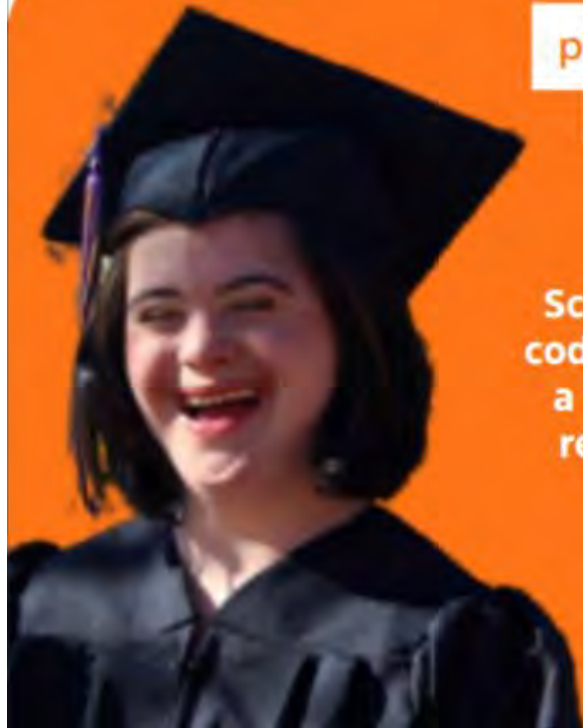
**Dream Careers: Inside the Minds of Georgia State's IDEAL Students**

In this episode of MCIE's Think Inclusive Podcast, Tim Villegas visits the IDEAL program at Georgia

- Over 1,000+ resources for download
- Searchable
- Can sort by publication date, alphabetical order, or relevance
- Advanced filters: media type, publication type, or Think College Publications only

Transition to College Resources

- ✓ Preparing for College
- ✓ Finding the right college/university
- ✓ Paying for College



FREE
DIGITAL
RESOURCES

TRANSITION TO COLLEGE RESOURCES

Topics include college planning, choosing the right college, paying for higher education, and more!

Scan this QR code to access a full list of resources! →



Or visit: →
tinyurl.com/TransitionTC

Example Resource: Tips for IEP Teams



Tips for IEP Teams to Help Students and Families Prepare for Inclusive Postsecondary Education

By Barb Ziemke, PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment

With about 300 postsecondary programs for students with intellectual disability across the country, more students are college-bound than ever before. The goal of high school and transition planning is to prepare students with intellectual disability for life after high school. How can Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams help prepare students for success in college? Use the checklist and related resources below to guide the selection of transition goals and activities that will likely be key factors in making the possibility of college a reality.

IDENTIFY AND EXPLORE OPTIONS

- ☐ Are the student and family aware of postsecondary options for students with intellectual disabilities and typical admission requirements?
- ☐ Have the student and family toured a postsecondary education program?
- ☐ Have the student and family learned about financial planning strategies to help pay for college?
- ☐ Has the family been connected to the IDEA-funded Parent Training and Information Center in their state for information and referral to agencies that may fund or provide adult disability services and supports?

Example Resource: IEP Goal Ideas

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN (IEP) GOAL IDEAS TO SUPPORT COLLEGE READINESS

By Kathleen Becht, PhD

This document is intended for secondary educators and families of students with intellectual disability when developing individual education program (IEP) goals for students who intend to transition to postsecondary education. The suggested goal ideas focus on the skills and knowledge necessary for students to be prepared for college. The ideas are organized into four areas: education, career and employment, community engagement and services, and independence. Each goal idea has a number of components to choose from and may be used in tandem or sequentially.

To begin, assess the student's skills, areas for growth, and support needs related to the listed goal areas. Next, choose goal ideas that align with a student's motivations, support needs, and present levels of performance. Then, develop each chosen idea into a measurable goal that is individualized to the student and specific to an activity.

The goal ideas and example components contained in this document are written to inform goal development. The goal ideas are not written as complete goals and should not be copied directly to an IEP.

Area 1: Education

Goal 1.1 Demonstrate increased independence/success in electronic communications through *(choose one or more)*:

- Initiating texts, phone calls, or emails
- Responding to texts, phone calls, or emails
- Identifying and deleting spam emails
- Deleting outdated emails

Example Resource: Prepare for the Expectations of College in High School

PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE	
College expectations	Middle & Secondary preparations
Independently Travel to/from college, employment, & internships	Teach public transportation and ADA/regional transit options. Plan travel to/from [school] and the time to be ready or to arrive. Plan contingencies.
Learn to Navigate campus independently	Enable independent navigation, allow for mistakes and problem solving in local community, on high school campus, allow natural consequences.
Maintain important personal information	Maintain personal identification (passwords, contact information. Learn and develop strategies for personal medication and medical information (e.g., insurance, medical conditions, allergies),
Uses strategies to manage use of funds	Develop strategies to keep money and banking information safe (manage funds, personal bank card), and make purchases within resources (e.g., buy beverages/snacks, pay for transportation, meals, books, personal items)
Self-identify & Self-advocate, as needed, to gain access to accommodations or success strategies	Develop understanding of personal disability and abilities. Learn about personal academic & support needs. Be able to share disability when needed (self-identify). Identify and tryout accommodations available at IHEs and decide which are a good fit. Identify and request academic, physical, or personal accommodations and strategies as warranted. Schedule time to meet with school counselor when changes to IEP needed.
Exhibit personal Agency & Self-determination	Identify & understand how and where to find resources and activities available to them. Students make choices & decisions (e.g., awareness of and choice in purchases, healthy choices, socializing at high school clubs, sports, and volunteer opportunities). Allow natural consequences for choices made.

Example Resource: College Planning Timeline

College Planning Timeline

Getting ready for college takes a lot of planning.

Use this timeline during grades 9 to 12 to get started on the process.



EVERY YEAR IN HIGH SCHOOL

BUILD YOUR COLLEGE READINESS SKILLS.

Take general education classes to make your academic skills stronger. These classes can also help you to explore your career interests. Understand your disability and your learning style so you can share this information with your college advisor and disability services specialist. Practice using accommodations in high school, so you'll be ready in college.

DEVELOP A PERSON-CENTERED PLAN.

Ask family, friends, and other people to help you figure out your goals for after high school.

EXPLORE AND COMMIT TO EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES.

High school is a great time to try different extracurricular activities, like clubs, to see which ones are most interesting to you. This is also a great chance to make new friends.

FIND SUMMER VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES/JOBS/INTERNSHIPS.

Summer is a wonderful time to earn extra money and explore different career fields. Check with your transition specialist for information about Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and work opportunities in your area.

MEET REGULARLY WITH YOUR IEP TEAM AND GUIDANCE COUNSELOR.

Make sure your goals and disability needs are included in your Individualized Education Program, or IEP, and your Transition Planning Form. It's important to speak up about your desire to go to college so your team has time to help you prepare.

JUNIOR YEAR

LEARN MORE ABOUT COLLEGE.

Start by talking with your family, IEP team, guidance counselor, and classmates. Research colleges online, and make a list of schools that match your career and personal goals. Use Think College's College Search to find options.

MAKE VISITS TO COLLEGE CAMPUSES NEAR YOU.

Go to open houses, take campus tours, and meet with disability services staff. These staff people can tell you about accommodations, and how they're different in college from what you've had in high school.

SENIOR YEAR (FALL)

PUT TOGETHER ALL APPLICATION MATERIALS.

Make sure you and your guidance counselor have all the materials you need for college admission. If you don't know what these materials are, ask your guidance counselor. If they've never heard of this, share this timeline with them.

HAVE UPDATED EVALUATIONS BEFORE

SENIOR YEAR (SPRING)

SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION.

Most colleges have due dates between January 1 and March 1 of each year. Check the websites of the colleges you're interested in to see what their exact deadline is.

SET UP AN APPOINTMENT WITH YOUR COLLEGE ADVISOR.

Share a current copy of your person-centered plan. It will help your college advisor get to know your interests, preferences, strengths, and needs.

SET UP AN INTAKE MEETING WITH YOUR COLLEGE'S DISABILITY SERVICES.

Work with your IEP team to get a current copy of your documentation of disability to

Paying for College

- Federal Financial Aid (grants, but not loans)
- ABLE Accounts
- Scholarships
- Federal and state support programs, such as Vocational Rehabilitation or Community Services
- Medicaid waiver services
- VA benefits

Note: These will vary depending on disability, state, family income, etc.

FEATURED RESOURCES

-  [Scholarships for Students with Intellectual Disabilities](#)
-  [Paying for College: Exploring Funding Sources for an Inclusive Postsecondary Education Program](#)
-  [Achieving a Better Life Experience \(ABLE\): Savings Accounts for People with Disabilities](#)
-  [New Federal Guidance on VR Supporting Out of State Services](#)
-  [Federal Financial Aid for Students with Intellectual Disabilities](#)

[1](#) [2](#) [Next »](#) [Last »](#)

[View All >>](#)

RELATED WEBSITES

Paying for College

One of the greatest challenges for college attendance is how to pay for it, and this can be particularly true for students with intellectual disability. But there are several avenues to explore for funding the cost of a college program. Students may be able to use vocational rehabilitation funds, scholarships, or federal financial aid. Resources shared on this page highlight a variety of possible strategies for paying for college.

NEWS & FEATURES



How VR May Help Pay for College

This article highlights how VR can support postsecondary education for students with intellectual disability through financial assistance and other services.

[...Read more](#)



Paying for College: A Webinar

Watch this recording of a one hour webinar that described and explained 10 different sources of funding that students and families can explore as they develop a plan for how to pay for college.

[...Read more](#)



Paying for College: Resources

A list of resources on sources of funding for college, including VR, to help students and families learn more about the available options.

[...Read more](#)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- What are the general costs associated with attending a postsecondary program? For example, the cost of tuition, books, room & board, and general fees?

Paying for College Resource

INSIGHT

A Think College Brief on Policy, Research, & Practice



ISSUE NO. 53
updated 2025

Paying for College: Exploring Funding Sources for an Inclusive Postsecondary Education Program

By Cate Weir

A college education is an investment in the future for every student who pursues one, but it does not come cheap! College expenses include tuition, fees, books, equipment, and room and board, if a student chooses to live on campus. These all add up, and every student must determine where the funding for college will come from.

Students with intellectual disability (ID) are likely to use many of the same resources as other college students to pay for college. There are some resources specific to individuals with disabilities to consider as well. Students are using numerous approaches to pay for college, often braiding together several different funding sources to cover the costs.

Here is some information about a variety of

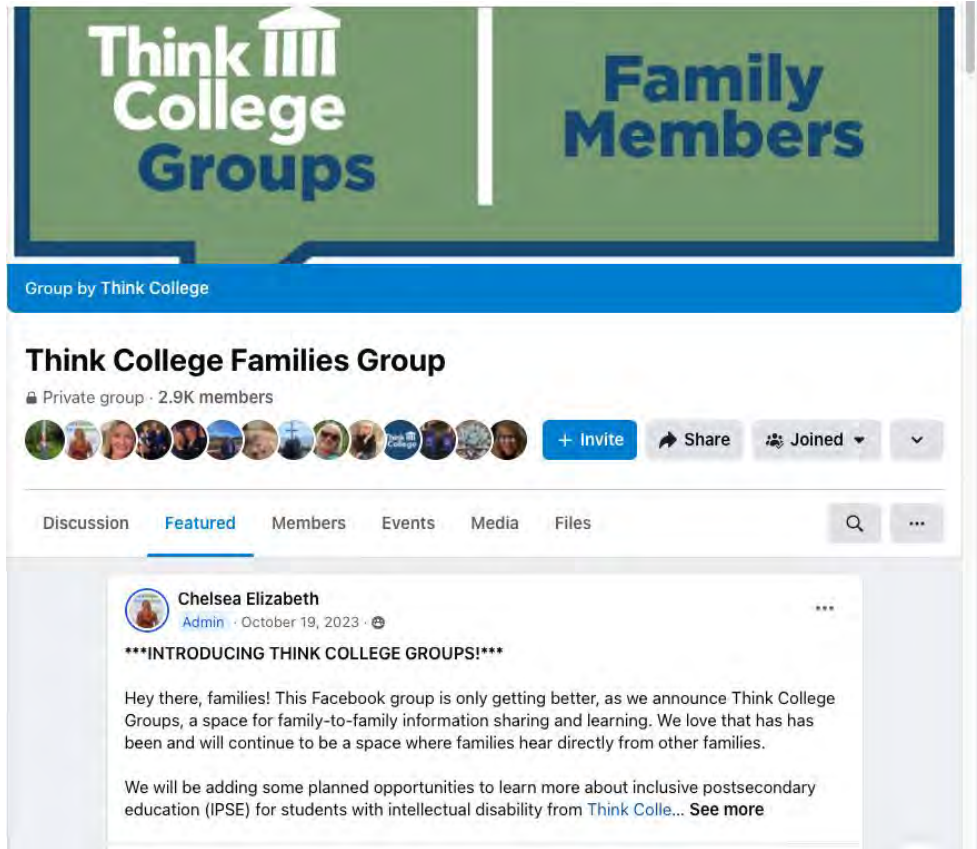
You can find a list of [current approved CTP programs](#) by using the College Search on the Think College website, and sorting by “offers Financial Aid.”

To access federal student aid, students will be required to complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA. This is the same form that all college students use to determine eligibility for aid. Learn more on the [FAFSA website](#).

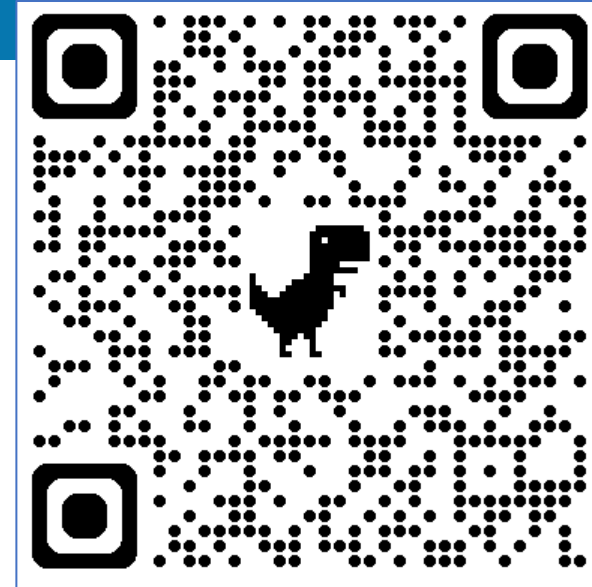
SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarships typically do not cover the full cost of attendance for any student, but they can be an important part of financing education. Think College publishes a [list of scholarships](#) (updated annually) that are possible resources

Connect with Other Families



- Formed over 8 years ago
- Now over 3,500 members
- Created so families can connect with each other
- Safe place to discuss college options



Public Awareness Information for You

www.thinkhighered.net

Videos, audience-specific downloadable information, posters, and more!



Think Higher. Think College.

Home About Resources ▾ Partners Share Contact

“Think Higher. Think College.”

Watch the video Download the video

Watch or download audio described and captioned version

COLLEGE IS FOR YOU!

Think Higher. Think College.

Exploring College for Students with Intellectual Disability: Families Make it Happen!

College is possible for students with intellectual disability! ✓

As students transition out of high school, they have many decisions to make about their future. Students with intellectual disability who go to college get a chance to make friends, try new things, take classes, and get jobs. Most importantly, they get the chance to broaden their lives to independence and figure out what they want their lives to look like. If you or your child with an intellectual disability have ever thought about college, here are some steps you can take to learn more about college options.

EXPLORE

- Browse the College Search Tool at www.thinkcollege.net to find details on hundreds of college programs across the country
- Attend a program's open house or virtual tour
- Schedule a campus tour and visit a program

DISCUSS

- Talk with your child about their college dreams and questions
- Ask your child's teacher which college preparation and exploration activities can be included in the transition planning process or IEP
- Share the importance of college exploration for students with intellectual disability with your high school's principal and other administrators

CONNECT

- Meet other families who have supported their college student with an intellectual disability on the Families Think College Facebook group
- Share www.thinkcollege.net with teachers, transition coordinators, guidance counselors and administrators at your school

QUESTIONS TO GET STARTED

Ask Teachers:

- How can we work together to prepare my student for college?
- How can I help my student decide if they would like to go to college?
- How do we decide which program may be the right "fit" for my student?
- How can we support my student in identifying career interests to consider when deciding where to go to college?

Ask Students:

- When you think of going to college, what is important for you?
- What college experiences would you like to have?
- Do you want to visit a college?

Are you a student with an intellectual disability? Have you ever thought about going to college? In college you can:

- Take classes
- Live in a dorm
- Get a job

Share and organizations need go work on campus with friends

Public Awareness: Students & Families Webpage

Students & Families



Think Higher. Think College.



Where to start? 🚩

If this is your very first time considering college for your child, welcome! [Start here](#) to get some basic information about preparing for college, selecting the right college, paying for college, and more.

Featured Resources

Exploring College for Students with Intellectual Disability: Families Make It Happen



Where to start? 🚩

If this is your very first time considering college for your child, welcome! [Start here](#) to get some basic information about preparing for college, selecting the right college, paying for college, and more.

Already know your child is headed to college? Use our [College Search Tool](#) and the [accompanying guide](#) to get started.

If your child wants to do some of their own research, they can visit the [Student Corner](#) on our website to hear from other students who've gone to college.

Families are critical for this to work! Read all the reasons why and get some guidance on how to get started with this [new resource](#).

Hey students! Do you know all the things you can do in college? [Find out](#) and learn how to talk to your family, teachers, and other people in your life.

What's happening in your state? 📍

Would it be helpful to know about policy and legislation related to inclusive higher education in your state? [Visit this map](#).

Have questions? 🗨️

We have a team of technical assistance providers waiting to answer your questions. Email us at ThinkCollegeTA@umb.edu.



Families help students with intellectual disability consider and explore college options. This resource offers strategies and some important questions to begin the conversation.

College is For You!



Gain valuable insights into college programs for students with intellectual

<https://thinkhighered.net/resources/stuc>



**What questions
do you have?**

**What will you use
from today's
session?**

Ask us anything – We're here to help

www.thinkcollege.net

Email anytime - Help Desk

ThinkCollegeTA@umb.edu



Scan to Join our
email list!



www.ThinkCollege.net