

AIM And Transition: What VR Counselors Need To Know

Maine AIM Program

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Presenter

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Objectives

Participants will understand

- The typical challenges that students experience during the transition to college.
- The process for receiving accommodations in college.
- The relationship between Alternative Format in postsecondary settings and Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) in K-12.
- Preparing students to request and use an Alternative Format accommodation in college.

Transition: Changes Ahead

Regardless of the postsecondary path a student with a disability takes, it is likely that less intensive and less frequent supports will be available. To prepare students for this transition from high school, they will need to be given opportunities and practice for independence, responsibility, self-awareness, self-sufficiency, and flexibility.

“Transition services” is defined in IDEA 04: Transition services means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that: is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child’s movement from school to post school activities, including post- secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation; is based upon the individual child’s needs, taking into account the child’s strengths, preferences, and interests; and includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post school adult living objectives, and if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and provision of a functional vocational assessment. Transition services for children with disabilities may be special education, if provided as specially designed instruction, or a related service, if required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education. [34 CFR 300.43]

Typical Challenges of Transition to College

- The laws that apply to postsecondary settings are different from those in K-12. In K-12, special education law guides support and services, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA provides for “free appropriate public education (FAPE)” and the Individual Education Program (IEP). The IDEA does not apply to postsecondary settings; rather, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is the guiding law. The ADA guarantees protection against

discrimination for individuals with disabilities. This means that “otherwise qualified” individuals with disabilities are guaranteed equal access to programs and services. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act applies to both K-12 and postsecondary settings.

- Students transitioning from high school to postsecondary settings may not have a lot of experience with advocating for themselves. Self-advocacy, however, is key to success as students self-identify as having a disability and seek out required support and services.
- Through high school, parents are accustomed to initiating services for their children and advocating on their behalf. In postsecondary settings, confidentiality typically limits the information that can be disclosed to parents.
- Finally, academic and performance expectations are frequently higher in postsecondary than in high school. Students that haven’t been sufficiently prepared with the necessary strategies and skills often struggle to succeed.

Resource: [Transition of Students with Disabilities to Postsecondary Education: A Guide for High School Educators](#) from the U.S. Department of Education

Process for Receiving Accommodations in Higher Education

Each higher education institution has a variation of the following procedure for determining reasonable accommodations:

- Student self-discloses a disability to the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD)
- OSD asks the student to complete a request for accommodations form and provide documentation of the disability
 - OSDs have guidelines that are specific to disability categories (e.g., physical, learning, mental health)
 - IEPs/504 Plans are useful but most often not sufficient
 - Summary of Performances (SOPs) can be more useful if of high quality
- OSD schedules an intake meeting with the student to:
 - Gather additional information
 - Determine reasonable accommodations
- OSD provides student with a Letter of Accommodations to share with faculty
- OSD orients students to procedures for using accommodations

Examples of College Accommodations

Accommodations in postsecondary settings are determined on a case-by-case, individual student basis. In general, however, the following accommodations are considered common:

- Audio recording of lectures
- Peer note taking service
- Course materials in alternative format
- Accessible classroom furniture

- Extended time on exams
- Distraction-reduced exam setting
- Use of assistive technology (AT) for exams
- “In conjunction with faculty...”
 - In certain situations, it may be reasonable to provide an accommodation whereby the student is granted flexibility with course attendance, assignment due dates, etc., in conjunction with faculty consultation and approval. An example of a disability for which this accommodation may be considered reasonable is a chronic health condition.

Course Materials in Alternative Format

An accommodation for course materials in alternative format means that students are provided with textbooks and other standard print materials in one of four alternative formats:

- Digital text
- Audio
- Large print
- Braille

This accommodation is considered reasonable under a combination of factors, such as the student:

- Has a disability that impacts the ability to access standard print materials
 - Learning disability in the area of reading
 - Blindness/low vision
 - Physical disability
- Has a history of using materials in alternative format, such as in K-12 education
- Has not used alternative format in the past but documentation, self-report, and interaction with the student indicates need

Question

So how can a qualifying high school student be prepared to use an alternative format accommodation in college?

Determine The Student’s Need

Determining if a student needs alternative format requires consideration of his/her functional abilities.

For example:

- From a standard print book, can the student:
 - See text on the page?
 - Hold the book and turn its pages?
 - Read with comprehension and fluency?
 - Read for necessary lengths of time without fatiguing (e.g., sit upright, stay alert)?

Try Materials in Alternative Format

If you suspect a need for alternative format, introduce the student to digital text and audio formats (students with blindness or low vision are typically supported by Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs)

with large print or braille). There are no cost tools across devices and operating systems that students can try:

- Digital text
 - On a Mac: Text to speech
 - On iPad: Speak Selection or Speak Screen or apps in the App Store
 - Google Chrome browser extension: Speak It
 - Google Docs: Read&Write for Google
- Human-narrated audio
 - LibriVox
 - Public library
- [Activating Text to Speech on Mac OS X Mavericks \(other versions of Mac OS X very similar\)](#)
- [How to have your iOS device read text for you](#)
- [SpeakIt from the Google Chrome Web Store](#)
- [Read&Write for Google Chrome](#)
- [LibriVox: Free public domain audiobooks](#)
- [OverDrive for downloading books from public libraries](#)

Request A Meeting

If you think the student needs materials in an alternative format, request a meeting with as many members of the student’s team as possible, as well as the student. In K-12, alternative format is known as Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM), which is included in Maine’s IEP Form (see Section 3D).

[Maine Special Education Forms & Reporting](#)

Discuss your concerns with the team and ask if they agree with your assessment that the student needs AIM.

Print Disability

In Maine’s IEP Form, the term “print disability” is used in Section 3D. This is defined as: “A condition related to blindness, visual impairment, specific learning disability or other physical condition in which the student needs an alternative or specialized format (i.e., digital text, audio, large print, or braille) in order to access and gain information from conventional printed materials.” – Maine AIM Community of Practice

Note that “alternative format” is referenced in the definition of print disability. AIM is another term for alternative or specialized format.

Question

It’s agreed that the student needs AIM. What next?

Know Where to Get AIM

Acquisition of materials depends on the format needed by the student.

- For digital text, [Bookshare](#) is the largest provider of K-12 materials.
- For audio, [Learning Ally](#) is the largest provider of K-12 materials.
- For large print and braille, [Catholic Charities Maine](#) is our state’s provider.

Support The Use of AIM

In order to access specialized formats of materials, students will need [assistive technology \(AT\) devices and services](#). All of the organizations listed in step 3 provide reading tools that are compatible with a wide range of computers, smartphones and tablets:

- Mac
- iOS
- Windows PCs
- Android
- Chrome

But to be successful with AIM, students, teachers, and families also need training and technical assistance on how to properly use the technology for various purposes and across multiple contexts and settings. Continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of the technology is also required.

Preparing Students for The Transition

Parents and professionals can prepare students to successfully transition from AIM in high school to alternative format in college by:

- Building independence, flexibility, and self-sufficiency in the use of AIM.
- Providing students with documentation that demonstrates a history of using AIM.
- Coaching students to self-advocate in the process of requesting accommodations, as well as other supports and services offered by the institution.

Preparing Students to Use Alternative Format After High School

- Allow students to choose the format that works for them, but to practice using another.
- Provide opportunities to use digital materials across a variety of devices (laptops, tablets, smartphones)
 - Bookshare and Learning Ally tools
 - Built-in accessibility features
 - Text to speech reading apps
 - OCR apps
- Facilitate individual memberships in Bookshare and Learning Ally, and teach students how to search and download their own books.
- Encourage students to read digital books through multiple sources, such as Amazon, Audible, public library, etc.
- Inform students that the college OSD will require proof of purchase before providing a textbook in alternative format (save receipts!).

Provide Students with A Record of Using AIM

- On the IEP Form: Mark “Yes” to the AIM question in Section 3D and clearly address AIM.
- In the SOP: Include AIM
 - Section II: Summary of Functional Performance
 - Section III: Recommendations to assist the student in meeting postsecondary goals
- Encourage students to develop their own “self-report” to articulate the historic link between their disability and the need for alternative format.

Prepare Students Beyond Alternative Format

- Make students active participants of their own educational teams, including understanding their plan and documentation
 - IEP/504
 - SOP
 - Neuropsychological/Psychoeducational Evaluation reports
 - Progress monitoring data
 - Medical/treatment records
- Role play to help students articulate their strengths, weaknesses, and need for specific accommodations

Key Points

The key points to take away from this webinar are:

- Significant differences exist between accommodations in high school and college.
- Alternative format is a typical example of a college accommodation for students with learning disabilities in the area of reading; blindness/low vision; and physical disabilities that impact accessing information from standard print books.
- To prepare students to successfully request and use an alternative format accommodation in college, they need to effectively use AIM by the time they complete high school.

Thank You

On behalf of the Maine AIM Program, thank you for attending this webinar. Please contact us for more information or technical assistance.

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