What we are doing at Easterseals?

Identifying the problem

+ Looking at unmet needs

The creation of our College Navigator program
Students with Disabilities in Higher Education

80% of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder drop out
86% of students with psychiatric disabilities drop out
94% vs. 17%
High school vs. college students with learning disabilities who receive academic assistance

<41%
of students with disabilities who enroll in college graduate within 8 years

67%
of students with disabilities enroll in post-secondary education
Goals of College Navigator Program

- Help identify potential barriers and problem solve around them with college staff
- Advocate with the student on identifying their needs and being able to explain them to college staff
- Create a supportive environment between the college and student to ensure success
- Improve outcomes for students with disabilities completing higher education
Services offered

- Setting personal schedules (time and organizational management)
- In-depth orientation & mobility
- Assistive technology integration
- Academic redirection and focus
- Collaboration with disability services
- Develop an action plan for each semester of college
Desired Outcomes

- Lasting higher educational commitment leading to graduation
- Social experiences leading to lifelong relationships
- Matriculation among peers with and without disabilities contributing to the average norm
- Higher employment potential
College: How it’s different from high school

College students must...
- Meet academic criteria and qualifications for initial and continued enrollment
- Monitor their own progress
- Be their own advocate
- Give consent for the college to speak with their parent/guardian

College students are...
- Responsible for their own success
- Not entitled to the same services and supports that they received in high school
Higher Education Options

- Two year college
- Four year college
- Dual enrollment
- Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative
- Auditing courses
- Online courses (some specific to students with disabilities)
- Trade school
- Colleges with specialty services (U of I, Landmark, etc.)
Accommodations in College

• The student’s responsibility
• Do not transfer from high school
• Type of documents needed range
• Have to be considered “reasonable”

Young Adults with Learning Disabilities: Only 17% received accommodation and supports in college because of their disability, compared to 94% in high school.
(National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2014)
Well, what is considered “unreasonable?”

Any accommodation that…

• Fundamentally alters the nature of a program
• Lowers or waives essential academic requirements
• Results in undue financial or administrative burdens
Examples of Accommodations

In the classroom:
- Copies of notes
- Use of assistive technology
- Reduced barriers for physical access to classroom

For exams:
- Extended time
- Separate testing room
- Readers
- Scribes
- Use of computer for essay exams

In general:
- Reduced course load
- Priority registration
- Waiver from foreign language requirement
Why aren’t students disclosing?

- Want to distance themselves from the “label”
- Unaware of the resources available
- Accommodation process is difficult or unclear
- Assumption on the quality and usefulness of services
- Negative previous experiences
Challenges freshmen are facing…

- Adjusting to independence and freedom
- Less institutional support
- Weak executive functioning skills
- Resistance to change
- Lack of knowledge of resources on campus
- Navigating accommodation process
- Unable to self-advocate
Our Approach

- Individualized on campus support
- Establishing routine and accountability
- Connecting student to on-campus resources
- Assistive technology
What some colleges are implementing

- Classes for study skills/time management
- Transition programs
- Tutors for learning strategies
- Peer mentoring
- Workshops on study skills and time management
How to help students

| Educate students about the transition to college | • Rights and disability laws  
• Campus resources  
• Using accommodations |
| Build skills | • Self-advocacy, time management, organization etc. |
| Encourage self-awareness | • Understanding their own diagnosis and how to explain it to others  
• Ability to identify the help needed for them to be successful |
### Stanley’s Background

#### Early Education
- Speech delay
- Early intervention classroom age 3
- Integrated private school age 5

#### Elementary and Middle School
- Attended local Massachusetts public elementary school
- Attended Amherst Regional Middle School

#### High School
- Took classes and work seriously
- Explored art courses
- Graduated as valedictorian
COLLEGE
## Stanley’s College Adjustments

### Challenges
- New environment
- Lack of social support
- Biases in college staff and limited accommodations

### Goals
- Becoming a better advocate
- Joining social groups
- Reminding me to follow up

### Emotional Support
- Nice checking in weekly
- Encouraging and understanding
- Talking about serious issues
Victoria’s College Adjustments

Challenges
- New environment - barriers for parents
- Biases in college staff and limited Communication
- Being weary

Goals
- Becoming a different kind of advocate
- Getting support
- Ensuring Stanley is successful
- Ensuring others are successful

Emotional Support
- Someone to bounce ideas off of
- Encouraging and understanding
- Talking about serious issues
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