

A red paperclip is attached to the top edge of a piece of white lined paper. The paper has several horizontal blue lines. The text is written in black cursive script. The paper is slightly curled at the bottom and is set against a plain white background.

Shopping for a
Program ✓
checklist

A Guide to Choosing a Post-Secondary
Education for Your LD Student

Shopping for a Program

If you are shopping for a program for an autism spectrum or learning differenced student, use this comprehensive list to make sure you are asking the right questions. Discerning which program is appropriate, the services that exist and the quality and amount of staffing available is critical. The following questions will provide you with a template for your decision process.

General Program Questions

- What kind of program would provide the best opportunity for academic success?
- What is the general location of the program (i.e. city, rural)?
- What is the program's mission and overall goals?
- How long has the program existed?
- Ratio of students to employees?
- What credentials do employees have?
- What's the average length of stay?
- Is there an orientation process?
- Is there assistance for improving a student's social competencies?
- How is the student assessed in the different areas of the program (i.e. executive functioning, vocationally, academically, clinically, residentially, financially)?
- Are progress reports sent during the year? How many?
- Does the program provide meetings with relevant staff to discuss a student's progress? How often?
- Does the program have an active student senate participating in developing leadership, community service and recreational outlets?
- Does the program offer a Parent Weekend with optional parent workshops?
- What happens during the summer months?
- Do students learn public transportation?
- Is there an Awards Convocation at the end of the year?
- What do students do once they leave the program?
- What are the additional costs above the tuition?

Academic Supports

- Does the program have liaison with the Colleges and Universities?
- Is tutoring is available? What kind? How often?
- Does the program offer study groups or supervised study halls?
- Is there a specific Asperger's/Nonverbal curriculum, separate from the main curriculum?
- Does the program offer specific classes in Executive Functioning and Theory of Mind?

Social Supports

- Does the program offer Social Thinking Groups?
- Are there Masters or Doctoral Social Mentors to work with the students?
- Is there a process and curriculum for Social Mentoring?

Advising Supports

- Will the student have an advisor that they meet with once or twice a week?
- Does the advisor keep regular contact? What information is given?
- Does the advisor assist the student with their personal budget and banking?
- Does the advisor assist the student with a self-assessment and setting weekly goal?
- How will the advisor assist the student in developing a Person-Centered Plan?

Residential Supports

- What is the ratio of residential staff to students?
- Are live-in staff available for emergencies throughout the night? How many?
- Does the program provide individualized cooking instruction?
- Is there a menu planning and shopping process?
- Is there training in cleaning, laundry and maintaining the apartment?

Residential Supports (continued)

- Do the residential staff work with implementing executive functioning checklists and assist the student in learning personal organizational skills?
- How are problems between roommates solved?
- Are roommates matched by similar interests and characteristics?
- Does the residential program offer a life skills class?
- Does the program provide driver's education?

Recreational Supports

- Will the student have a personal fitness plan?
- Does the program offer a fitness facility for students to attend?
- Is attendance mandatory? Supervised? Instructed? How are attendance problems handled?
- Does the program offer a variety of weekend and evening activities for students to attend? What about wellness classes such as art, dance, yoga, etc.?
- Are students required to attend a certain number of activities?
- Does the program offer a supervised travel program during spring breaks?

Sensory/Wellness Supports

- Does the program provide a sensory assessment?
- Does the program provide an Occupational Therapist to analyze this information and create a sensory diet for the student?
- Does the residential staff work in conjunction with the Occupational Therapist implementing sensory diets and a sensory profile?
- Is there a sensory integration class offered as part of the curriculum?
- Do students have a nutritional assessment with recommendations provided?
- What does the program do to reinforce wellness and good nutrition with the students?

Career Supports

- Does the program have a Career Coordinator who does assessments with the student?
- Is there a career class taught?
- Is community service required?
- How about assistance with students finding and keeping internship positions?
- Does the program assist students in finding employment?
- Is career counseling provided?
- Are internship support groups provided?

Clinical/Medication Supports

- Does the program offer individual therapy on site? Is this part of the tuition?
- What type of therapy is used?
- What are the clinician's qualifications?
- Is there liaison with the student's psychiatrist?
- Is there a Medication Coordinator available to assist the student with setting up and ordering their medications?
- Does the program provide access to any supplementary services? (i.e. neurotherapy, hyperbaric therapy, etc.)
- How does the program handle outside services (i.e.: personal trainers, etc.)

These are all important topics to cover when looking into a precollege, college, transitional, or independent living program. This list was created by the College Internship Program.