

Choosing the **RIGHT** college is one of the biggest decisions anybody will make, let alone someone who's a cancer survivor. You may face some additional challenges that your peers might not – but, don't worry! Similar to treatment, a little preparation goes a long way. This guide will help familiarize you with the challenges you may face, as well as the resources to help you get through them.



RIGHT Terms

What is a disability or late effect
...and do I have one?

As cancer survivors, many of us often experience late stage effects that impact our lives long after treatment ends. Sometimes these are visible: prosthetics, wheelchairs, etc. For others these might be internal, such as learning disabilities. Your best bet in college is to know yourself and be your own biggest advocate!

It is always better to make accommodations with your school up front for services you might never need, rather than wish you had them when it's too late. Know what you need to succeed and fight for it!

Here at The National Children's Cancer Society (NCCS), we believe that a strong support network is key – to treatment and to college. Whether it's finding the school that's perfect for you, academic and social concerns, and/or helping you self-advocate – the NCCS is here for YOU.

RIGHT School

Be sure to talk to your high school guidance counselor about finding the school that's right for you — they will have ways to narrow down the field fairly quickly. Here are some things to consider:

1. Location – where is the school in relation to your home? Is it important for you to be close to your family? Will you need to travel frequently back and forth for treatments or checkups or will you schedule all your visits when you're home on breaks? Is there a hospital near your school and an easy way to get there should you need it? Consider your interests – are you an urban person, a rural person, or somewhere in between?

2. Major – has your treatment affected your career goals? Does your school have a good program in your area of interest? Ask your high school guidance counselor to help you narrow down schools with good programs in your interest areas – and if you aren't sure what you want to study yet, that's okay! Make sure your school allows some time to be undeclared so you can try new things and see what interests you.

3. Medical Needs / Resources – see if the school has a Disability Resource Center (DRC) or Academic Resource Center. Send an email to these offices to find out the following: How do

professors handle missed classes because of medical needs? Do they offer priority scheduling? How accessible is the campus? How are medical emergencies handled? These offices can be a great resource for you.

NOTE: As always, the NCCS is here to help you self-advocate. Feel free to reach out to us for advice about how to approach school officials or even your high school guidance counselor.

4. Social Activities – if you're taking a campus tour, speak up! Ask your tour guide about the social scene on campus and about clubs or organizations you're interested in. If you'd like to be involved in a group that raises money for cancer-related causes, don't be afraid to ask if the school has any. (Many schools also have ways for students to start new groups, if what you're looking for doesn't exist).

5. Transportation – do you get fatigued easily? What kind of transportation is available on campus and off campus? Does your school allow students to keep cars on campus? If necessary, talk to the DRC to make any necessary accommodations.

RIGHT Start

You've just gotten into college
...now what?

1. Scheduling – know the deadlines for class registration. Many schools allow priority scheduling if you're experiencing fatigue. Be sure to schedule your classes around the times you are most awake and alert.

2. Professors – send them an email asking to meet with you ahead of time if you require any special accommodations. Be sure to select teachers who compliment your learning style. If you see on the syllabus that the class requires a lot of writing and writing isn't your strong suit, consider a different course!

3. Plan of Action – sit down with your dean and plan a four-year track (some colleges require you do this anyway). Keep in mind that four years works for some, but not all – especially if medical events come up that require you to take unplanned time off. Work out a schedule that's right for YOU . . . not for your friend or roommate.

4. Class Locations – take an afternoon before classes begin and do a walk-through of your school day, making sure you know where all your classrooms are located. Don't underestimate first-day jitters or how confusing some campuses can be! This is especially important if late effects impact your mobility – be sure not to schedule classes back-to-back if you need to transfer between buildings or around campus.

5. Disability Resource Center – if you haven't contacted them yet, do it now. Especially if you think you'll need to request additional accommodations. Creating a relationship when you're first on campus will make your life easier if anything new comes up.



The
National
Children's
Cancer
Society

Making the **RIGHT** Transition into College

From Picking a School to Paying for it – A Guide for Cancer Survivors



RIGHTFunding

There are many forms of financial aid based on need, merit, talent, or other qualifications. Your high school guidance counselor is a great resource for the kinds of financial aid you may qualify for. Know your deadlines.

As a cancer survivor, there are dozens of funding opportunities available to you. In addition to FAFSA (federal student aid), loans and work study, you may be eligible for a variety of highly specialized scholarships and grants available only to survivors. These can be general, such as NCCS's "Beyond the Cure Ambassador Scholarship" or specific to certain types of childhood cancers. Do your research – there are plenty of funding sources to which you can apply. In addition to cancer related

scholarships, you may want to think outside the "cancer box." When applying for a cancer related scholarship you're competing against hundreds of cancer survivors. Consider a scholarship in an area of interest such as band or a local community based organization that is not cancer related; your survivorship story may stand out.

Each application will request different information – know the organization, know your deadlines, include all the information requested and take your time completing the application. When submitting an essay, tell your survivorship story in your own words and have someone proof what you wrote.

RIGHTInformation

Being your biggest advocate starts with knowing your rights and your records. If you identify as having a disability, or a late effect that may impact your learning, you have rights! Talk to your doctor to see if you qualify. Some of the laws that protect you are listed below; for more information, talk to your high school guidance counselor or contact NCCS.

Your Laws

1. **Rehabilitation Act of 1973**
2. **Americans with Disabilities Act**
3. **Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

Your Records

For all students entering college, it's important to have your records in order. These include high school transcripts, SAT and ACT test scores and letters of recommendation (plan ahead for these – be sure to allow at least four-six weeks for letters to be written).

As a cancer survivor, you will also want to have copies of your medical history on file. Talk to your doctor to obtain the necessary documentation in case you choose to file for extended time, other disability-related services at college or in case a medical situation develops.

NOTE: If you have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan, disclosure is NOT required unless accommodations are requested. Before you graduate, request an up-to-date copy of your IEP as well as a current assessment – it's always better to have an IEP or 504 plan in place and up-to-date (even if you're not receiving services) than to back-track once in college.

RIGHTResources

Surviving cancer was tough. Surviving the transition into college is, too. Finding your place on campus is something that will take time; go at your own pace, and expect a few stumbles, but be sure to enjoy the ride along the way. The transition may be tough, but college will be the time of your life - trust us!

And remember – the NCCS is here to help! Reach out to us about anything at any time. We're here for you on the good days, the bad days and the "I just need to talk" days. We have your best interest in mind and want to see you succeed!

Visit theNCCS.org for additional resources and information.

The National Children's Cancer Society
www.theNCCS.org
314.241.1600

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