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THOUGHTS ABOUT COLLEGE READINESS for Autism

Your son or daughter may have been one of those kiddos, graduating from high school this year. It is also possible that due to CORONA VIRUS they may not be able to attend right away, so there are still preparations that could take place for a successful transition to college.

Yes, of course, some students with autism have been able to obtain a high school diploma. They have completed the required number of courses. They have passed exams. Now, they may have had some reminders about completing their homework assignments. They may have required some organizational support to get ready in the morning, break their assignments down into manageable chunks and prepare for test taking. They may have also had tutors; speech therapists and occupational therapists provide consultations to help with the successful outcome of high school completion.

Some students may have even been held accountable for completing self-help, hygiene and daily living tasks that will be required of them, if they are to live on a college campus, but many may not have. Some students may have had their parents lining up after-school activities, social engagements and taking them where ever they may have needed to go but if they are transitioning to college life how will these areas of need be met?

So, here is a check list for you, parents do go through with your son or daughter and perhaps lay out a plan of action.

- Has your student toured the campus, obtaining a MAP of the site and perhaps circling or underlining key sites for access? Maybe color code sites.
- Has your student met with the Disability Service Office and identified a key contact for them? Have you identified a positive and consistent contact for yourself?
- Does your student know where the laundry is on campus? Does he/she know how to use laundry equipment? Does he/she know how to obtain food on campus?
- Do they know where public phones are located in case something happens to their cell phone?
- Do they have a list of important phone numbers (doctors, parents)
- How do they plan on getting around the college campus? Do they know what to do if they get lost?
- Do they know how to get to each of their classes? Have you discussed safe walking at night?
- If they have a bike, do they know how to lock them up or how to obtain maintenance?
- If they drive, do they know how to keep up their driver's license and find parking on site?
- If they are going to take a bus or train, do they have schedules and have they practiced, so they can arrive on time?

- If your student has a problem sitting with large groups have them talk to instructor and found a way for them to have a specific seat near the back? Could they leave earlier or late to avoid crowds.
- Does your student know about their strengths and challenges related to autism? Do they know how to ask for accommodations? Do they have a plan/goal(s) for college? Do they know what types of courses they want to take?
- Can they identify learning and memory challenges?
- Can they identify attention and organizational challenges?
- Can they identify Communication challenges?
- What sensory needs to they have? What strategies are in place for them?
- What social areas will they need help in? Connect to social clubs on site?
- Do they have strategies for their emotional well-being?
- If they have any medical issues or take medication, do they know how to do this independently and also obtain refills? If they are seeing a counselor, physician for on-going support are they prepared to continue and maintain without your support?

With colleges not knowing how they will open, when they will open and how they will accommodate students, there is still time to go through the above questions and begin to develop a plan to address each of those areas key to the success of your son or daughter.

Check out the book, Students with Asperger Syndrome: A guide for College Personnel by Wolf, Brown and Bork published by AAPC www.aapcpublishing.net for some tools.