



# A Note to Parents, Caregivers, and Advocates

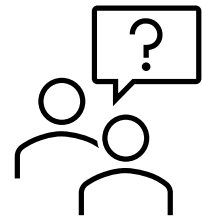
This note is intended for parents, caregivers, guardians, and advocates of students with disabilities who are entering college for the first time.

## Supporting Students

Navigating a new institution and new systems can be challenging and you are welcome to be involved in helping your student get started. Students can attend their meetings with a support person, parent, or advocate if they choose. Further communication with either of these parties will require a “third party consent form” to be completed by the student.

## Student “Point-Person”

When a student registers with Accessibility Services, they are assigned an “Accessibility Services Coordinator.” Their job is to help students with disabilities navigate all aspect of student life, including co-developing an Accommodations Plan that is personalized to the student’s specific needs. The Accessibility Services Coordinator will be a “point person” available at any time for questions or help. This means that you, as a parent/guardian/advocate, can step-back knowing that your student will be well supported during their time at Okanagan College.



### Important points

- For parents/advocates to have access to student information, the student will need to complete a “Consent to Release Information to a 3<sup>rd</sup> Party” form.
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> party consent form needs to be completed and signed by the student.
- The student can visit or email Accessibility Services to obtain the consent form.



## Student Independence

We also recognize that College is a time to build independence and we encourage students to practice self-advocacy skills as early as possible. The following suggestions will give a great starting point for new students:

### Suggestions:

- Suggest they write a letter to their Accessibility Services Coordinator introducing themselves, what they are studying, and what some of their learning supports have been in the past.
- You can also encourage your student to look at their class schedule, learn their instructors' names and reach out early on to start a dialogue around accommodations.
- Although advocates are welcome to join, students are encouraged to attend their intake appointment with Accessibility Services on their own. They will be guided through the process with the help of their Accessibility Services Coordinator. Attending on their own will give the student space to find their voice and express themselves.

## Parent to Parent Letter

Some of the best advice for parents of students with disabilities comes from other parents. Follow the below link to read a fantastic open letter written by a woman who worked in Accessibility Services for over 30 years and who had a child with a disability attending college for the first time. Her experience and wisdom may be helpful to those supporting new students.

Link: <https://daisclasses.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/OpenLetterParents.pdf>



### Important Point

- Communication is at the center of self-advocacy; it all starts with a couple small steps.
- Communicating with Accessibility Services and Instructors should start before the semester begins.