



Opportunities for Ohioans  
with Disabilities

# **Consumer Guide to Postsecondary Educational Training**

**[www.ood.ohio.gov](http://www.ood.ohio.gov)**

**800. 282. 4536**



***The Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Agency assists Ohioans with disabilities in getting the training or postsecondary education they need to participate in the workforce.***

When you receive assistance from the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Agency (OOD), you will prepare an individualized plan for employment (IPE). At that time, you and your professional OOD counselor will work together to identify services that will help you select a successful career path consistent with your strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities and interests.

Because you are interested in postsecondary educational training to reach your career goal, OOD has given you this Consumer Guide to Postsecondary Educational Training booklet to explain related policies.

As a state agency, OOD is required to follow state policies pertaining to the purchase of goods and services, which includes educational programs. This guide will help you better understand these policies and requirements when you seek postsecondary educational training services. If you have questions after reading the guide, please discuss them with your counselor.

Postsecondary educational training may be provided at universities, colleges, community/junior colleges, career technical centers, technical institutes, schools of nursing, rehabilitation facilities and other appropriate training sites or programs. Educational expenses include tuition, fees, books and supplies.

## ***OOD'S POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL TRAINING POLICIES***

### **Applying for financial aid**

All persons pursuing OOD financial support for postsecondary training must apply for financial aid by completing and submitting the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The annual FAFSA deadline is February 1 or the deadline established by the educational institution. When completing the FAFSA, it is acceptable to use an estimated income tax if final tax forms will not be available by February 1 or the deadline.

Filing the FAFSA generates a Student Aid Report (SAR) and this form must be given to your counselor. The SAR lists what, if any, federal and state grants you will receive as well as any institutional financial assistance you have been awarded. The SAR also lists your "expected family contribution (EFC)" that is the amount you and your family are seen as being able to contribute to your postsecondary training.

### **Determining OOD's level of support for your education**

When you and your counselor have decided on which postsecondary institution you will attend, OOD's contribution towards your education is determined. OOD calculates the costs for tuition, books, and fees at your chosen institution then deducts your EFC and any comparable benefits for which you qualify. Comparable benefits include assistance such as the federal Pell Grant, the Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG), and the federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant.

### **OOD's least-cost principle**

When OOD provides postsecondary educational training, "least-cost" is the method it uses to determine options consistent with those required to reach your career goal. This least cost principle applies to all consumers and all types of postsecondary programs.

During one's first two years of schooling, the determination of least cost for college training must include consideration of enrollment in an appropriate Ohio two-year college/educational institution, if it offers the coursework needed to meet your vocational rehabilitation goal. You may choose to attend any postsecondary institution; however, OOD will only pay at the level of the least cost school.

After completing the freshman and sophomore years, OOD will pay for the remaining years of education at the cost level of the least-cost four-year postsecondary educational institution that is closest to your home location.

## **Grades**

To continue to receive OOD funding as an undergraduate student, you must maintain a cumulative "C" average (or equivalent). If you are a graduate or professional student, the standard will be the school's grade requirement for graduation. If you are a student in any other training program, you must maintain the grade standard established by the program.

## **Duration**

You have a maximum of 18 consecutive months to complete each academic year of postsecondary educational training as defined by the degree program. If you need to extend the time limit on your IPE, you should immediately contact your counselor and discuss the reasons for extending your postsecondary training program.

## **Living on Campus**

When considering room and board for a consumer, if the closest state-supported school or local training program is able to meet the disability and training needs of the student, and the student does not need room and board due to the disability, OOD will not pay room and board. If the consumer needs room and board due to the disability to attend the closest state-supported school or local training program, but chooses to attend a private school, an out-of-state school or an in-state but non-local school, OOD will pay the cost of room and board which would be paid at the closest state-supported school or local training program, but not to exceed the actual costs.

## **Training supplies and equipment**

OOD will provide training supplies and equipment only when the training program requires them for all trainees, or when you need them to overcome limitations imposed by a disability. Any training tools and equipment that OOD helps you pay for will remain OOD's property until released to you in writing.

## **Scholarships and other assistance**

Besides the resources referenced to in this guide, your OOD counselor will share a list of potential scholarships and other assistance. If you receive Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Insurance, or if you are an injured worker who will receive services under OOD's agreement with the Bureau of Workers' Compensation, you are provided with postsecondary educational training without consideration of your expected family contribution. However, you must submit the FAFSA to secure any available comparable benefits.

## **Other OOD services for postsecondary consumers**

Some circumstances may preclude OOD from paying for your postsecondary educational training services. However, OOD may still provide you with other helpful services. Talk with

your counselor about accommodations for your disability that may enhance your success in training and subsequent employment.

## Refunds

If you receive a refund of any training fees for which OOD has paid, you must return that refund to OOD.

## Other considerations

You and your OOD counselor must evaluate and agree upon the following factors as you choose a training program:

- Does the program have appropriate accreditation?
- Is the program the least-cost alternative?
- Will your degree be marketable to employers in the area where you plan to seek employment? (*This can be determined through information interviews.*)
- Do you understand the program demands? Can you structure your time to fulfill these demands?
- Do you have the financial means to support yourself while you are in the program?
- Do you understand how wages, school stipends and other income will affect your existing social service benefits? Other income will also impact your financial aid benefits.
- Have you defaulted on any student loans? If so, you must inform your counselor and submit documentation of your communications with the lender regarding arrangements for repayment before your plan is generated. Generally, OOD will not fund college training if you are currently in default of student loans.
- Are you willing to indicate on the FAFSA application that you want to be considered for student loans? That will determine the student loans you are eligible to receive. Student loans and non-tuition based scholarships may help you meet your EFC.
- Student loans are used at your discretion. How will repaying these loans affect you financially after graduation? Have you considered the additional costs you may face, including disability-related expenses?
- Are you willing to sign a release permitting the school to share information with your counselor regarding financial aid awards/changes, billing issues and your academic progress? Your agreement to do so is considered a positive contribution to your training program.
- Are you willing to access the office of disability services, or similar program, at your future college? Many schools offer services to assist students who have disabilities.
- Do you believe that your EFC indicates your true ability to contribute to your training? If not, you have the right to ask your school's financial aid office to revise your financial aid package. Staff there will assist you in this process, taking into consideration any disability-related issues or other circumstances that may not have been considered when you completed your FAFSA. *It is your responsibility to provide the school's financial aid office with the appropriate documentation for adjustment of your EFC.*

## ***RESOURCES***

OOD shares Internet resources, phone numbers and addresses to help you get information on financial aid, other comparable benefits, and other sources of assistance. OOD does not own, control or maintain these sites, or guarantee the validity of their content. Any questions concerning a Web site, phone number, or address should be directed to that source.

To access any listed Web site, first open your Internet browser. Then, enter one of the following underlined site addresses in the "address" box at the top of the screen. Select "go" or press the "enter" key to move to that site. If you are reading an electronic version of this document, simply click on the address to directly access the site.

### **OHIO RESOURCES ON POSTSECONDARY INFORMATION AND FINANCIAL AID**

#### **OHIO HIGHER ED, UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF OHIO**

**[WWW.OHIOHIGHERED.ORG](http://WWW.OHIOHIGHERED.ORG)**

Web site contains a guide with facts and statistics about Ohio colleges and universities. There is also a listing of state grants and scholarships.

#### **COLLEGE ACCESS INFORMATION, AND STATE GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS HOTLINE AT THE OHIO BOARD OF REGENTS**

**800-233-6734 OR 800-AFFORD-IT**

This toll-free number connects you with an information specialist who has information on college preparation; admission requirements; transferring credits; facts about applying to Ohio colleges and universities; and information on Ohio specific student financial aid, on federal campus and private student aid sources. One may also get information about alternative financial aid resources. Available 9:00 - 11:30 am and 1:00 - 5:00 pm Monday-Friday.

#### **OHIO COLLEGE ACCESS NETWORK (OCAN)**

**614. 947. 3505**

**[WWW.OHIOCAN.ORG](http://WWW.OHIOCAN.ORG)**

OCAN is a college access system that works mostly with first-generation college and economically disadvantaged individuals to increase their participation in postsecondary education. It provides financial aid counseling, "last dollar" scholarships and help with completing college applications.

#### **OHIO ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS (OASFAA)**

**[WWW.OASFAA.ORG](http://WWW.OASFAA.ORG)**

Web site provides state and federal student financial aid information, links, resource materials and downloadable handouts for students and parents. Go to the link "Students and Parents."

#### **OHIO LABOR MARKET INFORMATION (LMI)**

**[LMI.STATE.OH.US](http://LMI.STATE.OH.US)**

LMI is a source for reports and data about employment levels, unemployment rates, wages and earnings, employment projections, jobs, training resources and careers.

### **FEDERAL RESOURCES ON POSTSECONDARY INFORMATION AND FINANCIAL AID**

#### **HOW TO APPLY FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID**

1. Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). There is an online version (FAFSA on the Web) or the paper FAFSA. For FAFSA on the Web, go to **[WWW.FAFSA.ED.GOV](http://WWW.FAFSA.ED.GOV)**. Paper FAFSAs are available from high school guidance offices, college

financial aid offices and local public libraries. You may submit a FAFSA beginning January 1 of any year. You should submit your FAFSA as early after January 1 as possible. Schools and states often use FAFSA information to award nonfederal aid. Most school's deadlines are early in the year. State deadlines are posted at FAFSA on the Web or on the paper FAFSA. Check with the schools you are interested in for their deadlines.

2. Review your student aid report (SAR). After submitting the FAFSA, you will receive a SAR which usually includes your expected family contribution (EFC). The EFC is a measure of your family's financial strength and is used to determine your eligibility for federal student aid. The schools you list on your FAFSA will get your SAR automatically.
3. Contact the financial aid office at each school you are interested in attending to certify it has all of the information needed to determine your eligibility for financial aid. If you are eligible, you will receive an award letter that outlines the amount and types of aid the school will offer. Aid might include grants, scholarships and student loans. You can compare award letters from the schools to which you applied and see what aid you can receive from each school.

### **FEDERAL STUDENT AID INFORMATION HOTLINE**

**800. 433. 3243 OR 800. 4. FED. AID; TTY USERS MAY CALL 800. 730. 8913**

Use these numbers for checking application status, ordering a duplicate SAR, adding or changing colleges listed on SAR, provide a change of address, help in filing applications and general information on aid eligibility. Customer service representatives staff these numbers from 8:00 am - 11:00 pm (Eastern Time) Monday-Friday and 8:00 am - 5:00 pm on Saturdays. There is no charge for the services provided.

### **FEDERAL STUDENT AID INFORMATION ON THE WEB**

**[WWW.STUDENTAID.ED.GOV](http://WWW.STUDENTAID.ED.GOV)**

This Web site contains information on federal student aid and sources of nonfederal aid. One may submit a FAFSA online by going into this site. You may get information to help you decide on a career and locate schools offering majors in that field. You can apply to various schools online without leaving the site. One may also look for scholarships using a free search service.

### **GENERAL INFORMATION ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

#### **HEATH RESOURCE CENTER ONLINE CLEARINGHOUSE ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES**

**[WWW.HEATH.GWU.EDU](http://WWW.HEATH.GWU.EDU)**

Heath is an online clearinghouse on postsecondary education for individuals with disabilities. The Resource Center has information on disability support services, policies, procedures, financial assistance, scholarships and materials that help students with disabilities transition into college, university, career-technical schools or other postsecondary programs.

#### **COLLEGE: YOU CAN DO-IT! (DO-IT=DISABILITY, OPPORTUNITIES, INTERNETWORKING AND TECHNOLOGY)**

**[WWW.WASHINGTON.EDU/DOIT/BROCHURES/ACADEMICS/COLLEGE.HTML](http://WWW.WASHINGTON.EDU/DOIT/BROCHURES/ACADEMICS/COLLEGE.HTML)**

This resource helps students with disabilities prepare for college and develop a plan of action.

#### **MOVING ON: THE TWO-FOUR STEP. ADVICE TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES ABOUT TRANSITIONING FROM TWO- TO FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES**

**[WWW.WASHINGTON.EDU/DOIT/BROCHURES/ACADEMICS/24.HTML](http://WWW.WASHINGTON.EDU/DOIT/BROCHURES/ACADEMICS/24.HTML)**

This resource from DO-IT provides planning information for students with disabilities who are, or who will be, transferring to a four-year institution. It also offers a companion video featuring students who offer their insight on transferring to a four-year school.

### **JOB ACCOMMODATION NETWORK (JAN)**

**800. 526. 7234; TTY USERS MAY CALL 877. 781. 9403**

[WWW.JAN.WVU.EDU](http://WWW.JAN.WVU.EDU)

JAN is a free service of the Office of Disability Employment Policy at the U.S. Department of Labor. JAN is designed to increase the employability of people with disabilities by providing individualized worksite accommodations, providing technical assistance regarding the ADA, and educating callers about self-employment options.

### ***WEB-BASED SCHOLARSHIP SEARCH SITES***

The following Web sites advertise themselves as free college scholarship search sites. Some focus on disability types and some are general search sites. On these sites, users are asked to create a personal profile that targets scholarships according to one's demographic categories, academic interests and extracurricular interests. You should not have to pay to search for college scholarships, so beware of any site or service that charges a fee to search for them. Your OOD counselor also has access to a database of scholarships that is organized by monthly deadline dates.

#### **FINAID**

[WWW.FINAD.COM](http://WWW.FINAD.COM)

Web site enables user to search for different kinds of scholarships and financial aid.

#### **FINAID**

[WWW.FINAID.ORG](http://WWW.FINAID.ORG)

This website is a guide for students on obtaining student loans, scholarships, military aid, and other kinds of financial aid. There are links to scholarship databases.

#### **U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

[WWW.STUDENTAID.ED.GOV](http://WWW.STUDENTAID.ED.GOV)

U.S. Department of Education's Web site contains links to scholarships.

#### **KSG SCHOLARSHIP CENTER**

[WWW.KSGINFO.ORG/SCHOL.HTML](http://WWW.KSGINFO.ORG/SCHOL.HTML)

A large database of scholarships is categorized by disability groups and academic interest groups.

#### **FAST WEB SCHOLARSHIP SEARCH**

[WWW.FASTWEB.COM](http://WWW.FASTWEB.COM)

A large scholarship search site that has a reputation for accuracy. It has over 25 million users and is the most frequently updated site.

#### **THE COLLEGE BOARD FUND FINDER**

[HTTPS://BIGFUTURE.COLLEGEBOARD.ORG/SCHOLARSHIP-SEARCH](https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search)

Lists scholarships, internships and other types of financial aid programs from over 2,200 national, state, public and private sources. Database is updated annually.

#### **SCHOLARSHIPS.COM LLC**

[WWW.SCHOLARSHIPS.COM](http://WWW.SCHOLARSHIPS.COM)

Database has good coverage of awards and makes good matches but some users claim scholarships may be outdated.

## **COLLEGE CONNECTION**

[WWW.COLLEGESCHOLARSHIPS.COM](http://WWW.COLLEGESCHOLARSHIPS.COM)

Features a list of scholarship opportunities which is updated monthly.

## **BLACK EXCEL SCHOLARSHIPS FOR MINORITIES**

[WWW.BLACKEXCEL.ORG](http://WWW.BLACKEXCEL.ORG)

Offers a list of free scholarships for minorities which is updated yearly.

## ***YOUR IPE AND RESPONSIBILITIES***

Ultimately, your success depends on you. Continued OOD support is contingent upon your compliance with responsibilities listed on your IPE and spelled out on the next page.

### **Responsibilities listed on IPE**

- Because of OOD's least-cost policies, I will consider attending an appropriate Ohio two-year educational institution, if the coursework I need is offered there and it meets my vocational rehabilitation needs.
- I will apply for financial aid by the school's annual FAFSA deadline (often as early as Feb. 1) and give my counselor a copy of my student aid report (SAR) and college award letter for each academic year. Authorizations for degree-granting programs can be completed only after the results of my financial aid application are known.
- I will apply for two or more scholarships before and during each academic year. I will also apply for alternate college funding sources that are available to me. This may be done at the same time that I apply for federal financial aid. If the counselor gives me a list of scholarship resources, I will provide him/her with documentation of my application and resolution on these. Scholarships that I receive will be applied to the portion of my payment of the expected family contribution, and I will also contribute my required EFC amount.
- If I receive a refund of any training fees, I will return that refund to OOD.
- I will maintain a 2.0 cumulative grade point average - or the minimum required for my major - and will achieve satisfactory progress throughout my educational process.
- I will give my counselor a copy of my official grade report at the end of each grading period, preferably within two weeks of its availability.
- I will complete each year of study within 18 consecutive months or sooner. I understand that the 18 months may be extended if some unforeseen situation occurs such as a major illness, injury or hospitalization; a catastrophic event or the death of an immediate family member; or if it is beyond my control to attend or complete the required coursework because of the course availability or a class waiting list. I understand that dropping a class or changing a major will not extend the 18 month requirement.
- I will communicate with my counselor as agreed upon through completion of reports, via e-mail or by other methods, and will report major health concerns and changes that may significantly impact my performance in training or work. I understand that my counselor will assist me when appropriate and necessary.

## Responsibilities that *may be* listed on my IPE

- I understand that any developmental coursework necessary for my enrollment in a postsecondary educational training program will count toward the requirement to complete each academic year within an 18 consecutive month time frame.
- If I must drop a course, I will first discuss it with my counselor. I understand that tuition fees are charged for dropped courses after withdrawal deadlines and that I may be responsible for these costs. Generally, OOD does not pay to retake a failed course nor does it pay forfeiture fees for a course I do not attend.
- If I decide to change my major or employment outcome, I will ask my counselor in advance for approval to do this so that an IPE amendment may be prepared. I understand that any change to my plan without coordination and agreement between me and my counselor might increase my financial contribution during the grading period in which they occur.
- OOD will pay only for courses required for my degree. If I choose to register for additional electives that might enhance my vocational success after graduation, I realize that paying for those classes is my responsibility. Each term, I will submit my course schedule and college bill to my counselor so that my tuition and fees get authorization.
- Because OOD does not routinely authorize for summer school enrollment, I will discuss any need to attend summer school with my counselor in advance. I understand that summer school must have my supervisor's approval before an authorization can be issued. I also understand that I must apply for financial aid to attend summer school. I realize that OOD strongly encourages summer work experiences, preferably in my field of study.
- At least once each year, I will meet with my counselor to review my progress in my plan. I will come to these appointments prepared and understand that my counselor has the right to make copies of my curriculum plan, school transcripts, invoices for payment and financial aid information.
- I will notify my counselor as soon as I receive any equipment or aids that OOD purchases for me.
- I will purchase used books (if available) for coursework. I understand that OOD will fund only the books I need for my classes as outlined in each course syllabus.
- As I near the conclusion of my program (the end of my junior year) I will meet with my counselor to discuss my job search plan, which includes working with college career services and attending job fairs.
- I understand that I have rights as a student and can access the office that provides disability services at my college or university. I will accept guidance and direction from my counselor in coordinating services through this resource.
- I understand that when OOD policy changes, my plan may need to be amended, according to the new policy.
- When I get a job, I will notify my counselor immediately!

## ***BEGINNING THE CAREER EXPLORATION PROCESS***

### **The information interview**

An information interview is one of many tools to help you and your counselor determine the appropriateness of your desired employment goal. It will confirm or may alter your interest in a particular career by providing you with a greater understanding of the nature and demands of the work. Information interviews help you evaluate whether or not you will be able to perform the work and decide if you need postsecondary education. OOD's "Information Interview" helps you with this step. Ask your counselor for a copy.

You will be expected to complete three informational interviews in each vocational area for which you are interested in receiving college training. Your counselor can help you determine the appropriate employers to contact for this activity in your geographic area. You are responsible for arranging and conducting the information interview.

Information interviews must be completed before your employment outcome is decided and when you are changing your major.

### **Training**

Training, including a college education, will only be included in your plan when it is required for you to reach your agreed-upon employment outcome. Many resources are available to help you obtain the latest information about jobs in your area.

### **Guidance and counseling**

Your counselor has many other ways to help you assess and define the job match that is best for you. Much of the time that you spend with your counselor will focus on developing your individual plan for employment.

College training is only one path leading to a job or fulfilling a career goal. You will explore several options with your counselor before your IPE is finalized. Discuss with your counselor the information you gather after you have researched the Web sites included in this booklet. Also, ask the counselor about the Ohio Career Information System (OCIS), another resource available through OOD offices via the Ohio Department of Education.



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The Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Agency does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, genetic information, military status, veterans' status, national origin/ancestry, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation.

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