

HIGH SCHOOL STAFF and GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

REFERENCE FOR THE COLLEGE- and CAREER-BOUND STUDENT WITH SCD

Consider the student's growing need for autonomy: As high school staff members, you understand that students need to feel a sense of autonomy in their daily lives. It is the same for the student with a chronic illness, such as sickle cell disease (SCD). It is important to continue to foster a sense of independence in students with SCD as they prepare to move toward the next steps in their life paths.

How staff and counselors can help: During proactive planning meetings, we encourage the student to take initiative as an advocate for themselves during the development of their personalized action plan with their teachers. We ask that you continue to guide them in this process, ask prompting questions, and help the student take ownership of a plan that will allow them to maintain employment and academic success throughout the school year and beyond.

The special need for guidance with college and career planning: In addition to the information high school guidance counselors typically provide for college and career preparation, keep the following items in mind when working with college- and employment-bound students with SCD.

- Proximity to a SCD treatment center is a crucial component that students with SCD should consider when searching for colleges. Students are encouraged to attend colleges within a one-hour drive of a SCD treatment center in order to help them more easily manage their complications and be closer to care when needed.
- Location can play an important role in determining which college or where to seek employment. The student with SCD should research the location and consider whether they want to reside in a rural area, a suburb or a city and be mindful of the healthcare access related to the different settings. Size and layout of a campus or work setting can also be important. Some students with SCD have physical limitations that would make a great deal of walking or traveling through hilly terrain difficult.
- Weather can be a critical factor for those with SCD to consider when searching for employment or higher education. A student with SCD should be aware of typical weather patterns throughout the year to anticipate potential complications that may occur as a result of extreme changes in temperature.
- Access to and quality of public transportation can be an important factor in understanding how they will get to and around a work site or college.

Other Considerations

- **Encourage self-advocacy:** One of the major shifts students face when graduating high school and beginning college or seeking employment is learning to be a self-advocate. This shift is particularly important for students with chronic illnesses, like SCD, to understand. We encourage you to have open communication about the importance of self-advocacy with students, especially on the topic of whether or not to share their health history with employers, college personnel and other students.
- **Specific arrangements and health records:** Encourage the student to have conversations with their healthcare providers about any SCD-related accommodations they may need to help them remain healthy and active members of their college or employment communities. Remind them to create a comprehensive medical summary with medications, doctors' names and contact information, preferably on official healthcare provider letterhead, to support their needs, especially in an emergency.

- **Assistance in making plans for colleges:** Review the process for applying for accommodations and steps to take in identifying ways the college’s disability services can assist in securing appropriate accommodations, particularly regarding sharing this information with professors and residence life staff.
- **Assistance in making plans for the workplace:** The career-bound student should connect with the Human Resources office to secure appropriate accommodations at the employment site and to learn how to apply for Family and Medical Leave to protect their employment. In addition, discussing their needs with their direct supervisors can aid in the creation of a proactive plan to address concerns if the employee is unwell or needs specific SCD treatments during work hours.

Disability Law

- **Possible need for more information:** Students with SCD who have Individual Education Plans may need more information about the shift in education law from being covered under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) once they graduate high school.
- **The need for additional guidance:** Work with these students to help them better understand that IEPs do not “follow” them to college and offer information on how to apply for accommodations through the college disability services center.
- **Employment:** For students seeking employment, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 also offers protection for those seeking a career path. The ADA protects employees from discrimination based on a disability. The ADA prohibits employers from discriminating against employees or applicants with disabilities in all aspects of employment including hiring, pay, promotion, firing and more.

