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**ABSTRACT**

This guide has been prepared to help disabled students of all ages who are thinking about continuing their education after high school. It is based on the experiences of students with handicaps in postsecondary education, and contains practical suggestions designed to assist disabled persons in managing their daily challenges as they continue their education. Topics covered in the narrative part of the guide include the following: self-advocacy, planning ahead, looking for the best school, admissions, services available, arranging for necessary services, vocational rehabilitation services, support groups, and independent living. A list of resources for students considering postsecondary education and a list of HEATH (Higher Education and the Handicapped) publications conclude the guide. (KC)

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# HEATH Resource Center

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## MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR OPPORTUNITIES

### A Guide to Postsecondary Education For Adults with Handicaps

More and more students with handicaps are taking on the challenge of education and training after high school, and succeeding. This guide has been prepared to help disabled students of all ages who are thinking about continuing their education after high school. It is based on the experiences of students with handicaps in postsecondary education, and contains practical suggestions to assist in managing the daily challenges that arise as you continue your education.

Postsecondary education is any education beyond high school. It includes trade or business schools, vocational-technical schools, colleges, universities, and adult and continuing education programs. The ideas that follow apply to students of all ages: those in high school preparing for graduation, those who have left before graduation and now want to continue learning, as well as those who have been in the work force and have become disabled and now need to retrain for a new job.

Whether you plan to enroll in a full-time academic program or a single course of training, this guide is designed to help you to assemble the ideas necessary to make the most of your opportunities.

#### EXPRESS YOUR NEEDS— AND BE OPEN TO CHANGE

It is important to learn how to explain your needs to others and to be open to new or different ways of doing things. You are the one who knows your needs and strengths best. However, conditions won't always be just the way you want or need them. Sometimes new situa-

tions present other ways to help you use your strengths. Identifying the appropriate persons and stating your needs in a reasonable way are skills that many students, with or without disabilities, find essential. Expressing your needs in a reasonable and informed manner is called **self advocacy**.

Your parents, teachers, and counselors may now be assisting you as advocates, but as you grow and mature, you must assume the roles now played by the adults in your life. Learning to be your own advocate, is essential to achieving independence among adults. You learn these skills at home, in school, and interacting with friends and the community as you learn to represent yourself on an informal basis. If you feel the need to learn these skills more formally, look into an assertiveness training group in your community or local Center for Independent Living. (See last section for contact information.)

#### PLAN AHEAD

If you are in high school it is time to give serious thought to your academic and career goals. What are your main interests and favorite subjects in school? Discuss career plans and questions with your parents, friends, other people with disabilities, and especially with persons working in jobs of interest to you. Discuss academic program needs with your teachers (i.e. special education, regular education, vocational education) to make sure your program contains career exploration and possibly, a work-study component while you are still in school—so you can learn

about different careers and be better prepared to make choices later. In addition, talk with your school guidance counselor and/or vocational rehabilitation counselor to discuss career interest inventories and the availability of a vocational assessment to help you further explore and identify your career interests. In addition, visit your local school and public library for books and pamphlets which describe the different types of postsecondary programs (i.e. trade, vocational-technical, college, university), and provide information on the variety of job and career opportunities available.

If you are out of high school it would be helpful to speak with a counselor at a local vocational rehabilitation office, community college, or vocational-technical school to discuss career interests and explore available postsecondary training programs which would best meet your needs. In preparation for such a meeting think about the skills you have learned through hobbies, special classes, clubs, jobs and/or any volunteer work experiences. Knowing what you can and like to do best will help you discuss career plans and questions with your counselor, teachers, parents, friends, other people with disabilities and persons working in jobs of interest to you.

Explore all the postsecondary educational possibilities available to you. Write to HEATH for Education After High School—The Choice is Yours. This fact sheet describes different kinds of programs: universities, four-year colleges, community and junior colleges, a

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variety of vocational-technical programs, and adult education. Check your school or local library for information about schools that appeal to you and write directly to schools which interest you for catalogues.

Above all, take an active role in planning for your career and education needs. Participate in your IEP (Individualized Education Plan) or IWRP (Individualized Written Rehabilitation Plan), as appropriate. Ask questions. Talk to people who can help.

## LOOK FOR THE BEST SCHOOL

Students with handicaps who have completed postsecondary education and who are now employed in jobs as a result of good training stress the importance of studying in the best program available for the subject matter to be mastered. Advisors of disabled students agree that selecting schools and programs should begin with a list of the best programs in your chosen field of study. The list can then be narrowed by investigating which of these best and most appropriate ones can meet your needs as a disabled student. Thus,

- Step one is gathering information about schools which offer training in your field.
- Step two is being aware of accommodations you need.
- Step three is being aware of the accommodations and special services available in the programs of interest to you.

The HEATH fact sheet, **Strategies for Advising Disabled Students for Postsecondary Education**, contains additional information on this topic.

Some questions to ask yourself when looking at each school include:

- Do you use auxiliary aids (i.e. tape recorder, braille, interpreter, reader, computer, etc.) in doing your course work? Will these devices be available at this school?
- Who will pay for the auxiliary aid - you, the school, or an agency such as Vocational Rehabilitation?
- Are alternate methods of accomplishing course requirements available?

- What is the record of the institution in meeting needs like yours?

Once you've made some decisions, write or call ahead to arrange a visit to the school (or schools) that interest you, if this is at all possible. Try to time your visit to campuses while classes are in session but not during exams, so that you can meet and talk to other students, both disabled and non-disabled. A campus visit can give you the facts that you need to make an informed decision about how you fit into the school's community.

Find out who is responsible for services to handicapped students. Is it the Dean of Students, a Vice President (VP) of the institution, or is there a Disabled Student Service (DSS) program or officer? A **preadmission interview with the Dean, VP, or DSS Officer during a student's junior year in high school is recommended.** At this time questions about a student's disability-related needs can be raised outside of the admissions process. Insight gained from the **junior year preadmissions interview** allows the student time to enhance his or her record prior to completing the admissions application the following year.

## ADMISSIONS

Be sure to find out about admissions requirements of programs you may wish to attend. Some programs require that you take certain preparatory courses before you qualify for admissions. Become involved in some extracurricular and community activities. That helps develop your competencies, learn the self-advocacy skills mentioned earlier, and enhance your record as recognized by admissions officers. Many schools require standardized admissions tests or other assessment. Special test-taking accommodations (such as large print copy, use of a reader, or additional time) can be made for disabled students who need them. Write for these free pamphlets: **Information for Students with Special Needs—Admission Testing Programs for the College Board** from ATP Services for Handicapped

Students, CN6400, Princeton, New Jersey 08541; and **Special Testing Guide** from ACT Assessment, Test Administration, PO Box 168, Iowa City, Iowa 52243. For special accommodations in taking the GED—the high school equivalency exam—contact the Adult Education Agency in your state.

## SERVICES AVAILABLE

Many postsecondary schools and training programs routinely provide auxiliary aids, accommodations, and services which enhance access to handicapped persons. Federal legislation such as the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and the Vocational Education Act and amendments provide assurance that qualified disabled students can participate. For details of these federal laws contact the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, Washington, DC 20202. Examples follow of types of adjustments and accommodations that many colleges, vocational training programs, and adult education classes make and services you should look for and ask about when you are exploring a post-secondary educational institution. Request the accommodations from the Dean of Students, Disabled Student Services officer, or whoever is responsible for services to handicapped students.

### Pre-registration.

If you have limited mobility or need to plan access to services or materials such as recorded texts, interpreters and note takers in advance, you can ask for help in scheduling your classes before the rush of registration day. In planning your program, allow for the time you need to get from place to place even in rainy or snowy weather. Many schools are moving to computerized early registration for all students and it may be possible to register for fall classes as early as the previous spring.

### Flexibility in class scheduling.

Not all classrooms are necessarily accessible. If you register (preferably pre-register) for a class that is scheduled in a room that is

inaccessible you may request from the Dean of Students or Disabled Student Service office that the registrar relocate the class to a room that meets your needs. This is usually not difficult to arrange provided you request the change as soon as the problem is identified.

#### **Flexibility in course requirements.**

Some schools have a list of courses that are required in order for a student to qualify for certain degrees or certificates. If your disability absolutely prevents you from participating in a specific required course even with adaptations, you may be able to arrange to have a different class substituted for the required one. For example, a deaf student might take an art course instead of a music class to fulfill the fine arts requirements.

#### **Extended time.**

While many postsecondary programs are referred to as one, two, or four-year programs, you may need more time (months or years) to complete the coursework if your disability limits the number of classes you can take each semester. Remember, though, that if you choose this alternative your education could become more expensive because of the additional time in school. For individual classes, you might want to consider extended time if your disability limits your ability to manage the required workload. In such cases, you might also have to ask your teachers for extra time to complete research papers or other assignments.

#### **Test modifications.**

Traditionally, tests are given in writing during a limited time period. Many instructors now are willing to modify examination methods or locations if your disability requires a different evaluation strategy. You may request to take a test orally, with questions on a tape or read aloud, or you may request to tape record your answers. If you use a print enlarger or other reading device, you can arrange extra time to complete your test. Often, Disabled Student Service Offices can assist in arranging the testing process. For further information, write for the HEATH

fact sheet **Measuring Student Progress in the Classroom.**

#### **Notetakers.**

If you have difficulty writing, or in listening to lectures and taking notes at the same time, arrange for notetakers on a regular basis. If specially trained notetakers are not available, ask a classmate to give you a copy of notes after class. You can provide the paper or cost of duplicating in return for the help. Special "carbonless" notepaper is available for notetakers from the National Technical Institute for the Deaf Bookstore, One Lomb Memorial Drive, Rochester, NY 14632.

#### **Special help for students with learning disabilities.**

Schools generally provide assistance to students with learning disabilities in one of three ways: some simply allow use of recorded texts, untimed tests, notetakers, etc; other schools have study centers where any student who needs help with math, reading, or study skills can go for tutoring; and/or some schools offer comprehensive learning disabilities programs which include diagnostic testing, individualized education plans, and tutoring (enhanced with audiovisual aids) by specialists in the education of students with specific learning disabilities.

If you have learning disabilities, you must think very seriously about what kind of academic help you need and evaluate the type of service offered at schools you are considering. Know your strengths and weaknesses, and how your learning style meshes with the requirements of your proposed course of study. For more information write for the HEATH fact sheet, **Learning Disabled Adults in Postsecondary Education.**

#### **Interpreter services.**

If you are hearing impaired and need an interpreter to fully access the college or vocational program environment, the institution in which you are enrolled can make an interpreter available for your use. Because interpreters are scarce in many communities you should work

with the appropriate person in your postsecondary institution to assure that your interpreting needs are known ahead of time and can be met. For more information request the HEATH fact sheet **Hearing Impaired Students in Postsecondary Education.**

#### **Orientation for New Students**

Will you need more than the usual orientation in getting acquainted with the campus and surrounding community? If so, is there a person available who can help? Many schools have additional orientation programs for incoming disabled students. Students with mobility problems are shown accessible routes around campus to help them manage on their own. Many visually impaired students arrange orientation to the campus by a trained mobility instructor through a community agency such as the vocational rehabilitation agency. Some schools have specially designed maps which show curb cuts, access ramps, elevator locations, and parking areas. Some campuses have maps which represent the campus in tactile format, in large print or in cassette form. If you could benefit from a map in alternative format, ask if there is one.

#### **Physical Access**

When looking into schools, check to see if you are able to move around the campus easily and whether or not you can enter and use the necessary facilities. Can you get into the classrooms, library, Student Union and recreational facilities? Not all parts of all campuses are necessarily accessible to you, and it will take patience and ingenuity to work out adaptations that will increase your mobility.

Look at the library. Library access means more than being able to get in the door. Can you use the card catalog, or catalog terminal? Can you move along the aisles to find and reach materials, use a study carrel, and copy materials from microforms or bound documents? Is there library staff or other help available to assist you in areas where your disability may limit your access to the library? If you need a place to accommodate you and your reader, is there one?

Look at **campus activities**. If you are a sports fan using a wheelchair, see if the athletic facilities have readily usable seating or wheelchair spaces. See if the locker rooms, pool, track, and weights are usable. Are there wheelchair sports teams? Music and theatre enthusiasts should investigate the accessibility of the auditorium or theatre. How are interpreters arranged for public events? Remember to spend some time looking over the Student Union or Center. This building is the focus of campus life outside of the classroom. Will you be comfortable there between classes, will programs and activities there be accessible to you? Is there an accessible study space and rest room there?

Think about your **transportation needs** on and off campus. If your disability prevents you from using regular transportation vehicles, look into available alternatives. Some schools have their own accessible vans. Be sure to look into private or public transportation services that may be available for community access. Remember to check the hours of operation of the transportation service before you schedule your classes. Your state Vocational Rehabilitation agency may provide money for your transportation needs.

Even if other students with similar disabilities are enrolled, you should find out if there are any special barriers to your own mobility. Check the elevators, are the buttons usable? Do you need a key? Where can you obtain one? Are the campus doors easily operated in all weather? Talk to people responsible for creating accommodations. Will you be able to work with them to make other changes?

Look beyond the buildings. Consider the **local terrain and weather**. Is the area flat or hilly? Will mobility in snowy or icy conditions be a problem? If there are extremes of temperature will they present a barrier to your participation in school? How well will you be able to live independently while you are there? Discuss this with the Disabled Student Services Officer at the school or other students with similar physical limitations to determine how you will be able to manage on campus.

## ARRANGE FOR NECESSARY SERVICES

The auxiliary aids, accommodations, and services identified above can readily be available to you in most postsecondary settings. **It is your responsibility as the disabled student, however, to request those which are necessary.** Most campuses require that a student present to the Dean of Students or Disabled Student Services Officer documentation of disability in order to receive services. A medical report, educational assessment, or a Vocational Rehabilitation prepared Individualized Written Rehabilitation Plan are examples of such documentation. Once you present your documentation to the appropriate person, you should indicate the particular accommodations you need to participate in the academic program and campus life.

If your school does not have a Disabled Student Services Office, or if the Dean of Students cannot currently provide you with the help you need, here are some ideas of things you can do yourself with the assistance of your Vocational Rehabilitation counselor or school advisor. In addition, the HEATH Resource Center staff can provide information which may help you determine and arrange adaptations you need.

**Arrange for necessary auxiliary aids and services well before the semester begins.** If you rely on taped text ask for required reading lists for your courses with ample lead time to arrange for taping, so that you are prepared for classes. Having a book taped might be done in six weeks, but may take as long as four to six months. Consult **Postsecondary Education and Career Development: A Guide for the Blind, Visually Impaired and Physically Handicapped** listed in the Resource section at the end of this guide.

**Check on the availability of a reading machine, or readers, if you need them.** Free reader services may be available through local agencies. The Library of Congress has a **Directory of Volunteers who Read Books** which can help you locate a reader in the community. For further information contact the National Library Service for the Blind and

Physically Handicapped, 1291 Taylor Street, NW, Washington, DC 20542, (202) 287-5100. The campus may provide readers through the work-study program. You may have some funds for reader services through the state Vocational Rehabilitation Services or other agency. You may need to use all of these resources to meet your reading needs. If so, suggest a mix of services to your Disabled Student Services coordinator, Vocational Rehabilitation counselor, Dean of students, or financial aid officer. They might be receptive to ideas of ways to work together and share costs. Remember to find out who is responsible for controlling reader services, and how to resolve any problems that arise. You must take the lead in arranging reader services to meet your needs in an effective and timely manner.

If you depend on **interpreters**, be aware of their availability in the school's geographic area. What is the quality of available services? Are there enough interpreters in the area to assure that services will continue throughout the time you are enrolled?

If you need a **personal care attendant** to assist with tasks of daily living, talk to other disabled students about how they are meeting these needs. Postsecondary institutions are not required to provide attendant care services and most do not. Some campuses do provide training of attendants and teach disabled persons how to manage attendant care. To locate an attendant try advertising on bulletin boards, in the campus and local papers, and through word of mouth in campus departments such as allied health, nursing, or a related department such as physical therapy. Many disabled students hire other students as attendants, and some students may earn academic credit as well as extra funds by serving as an attendant. Payment to a personal care attendant is nearly always the responsibility of the student. Such resources to pay for attendant care services as Medicaid, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and Department of Social Services should be explored. Be sure that you have a thorough understanding of how the attendant care process works for you. It helps to write out or chart all

of the steps that you will take in finding, hiring, training, paying, and replacing your attendant. Centers for Independent Living in many communities have both programs to train consumers of attendant care, potential attendants, as well as lists of pre-screened personal care attendants. Be sure you have such a list of people to call in an emergency and a telephone or other signaling device near your bed to call for help if your attendant is unable to be there one day. See **Information from HEATH**, September 1985 for additional information.

If you are enrolling in a vocational class, science lab, or studio workshop be prepared to make suggestions of possible adaptations for your program or equipment. For further information on vocational program modifications contact the Department of Vocational Education in your state and ask for the Special Needs Coordinator. In addition, write for the to the HEATH fact sheets, **Access to the Science Laboratory and Classroom and Education for Employment**.

You know what auxiliary aids you have used in the past which have worked best to help you with your studies. Do you plan to provide your own or does the Disabled Student Services Office or the state vocational rehabilitation agency provide such items as brailers, tape recorders, speech output devices (calculators, terminals, and tools) or reading machines? If your disability is recent, take advantage of the experiences of other students with similar disabilities, and the expertise of the Disabled Student Services Office or your rehabilitation counselor. If you need special equipment not available through the campus or a community agency, contact service clubs such as Kiwanis, Lions, or the Rotary which may be sources of assistance.

Make sure to include the costs of auxiliary aids, accommodations, and services when you prepare your **Financial Aid Form** the winter before you plan to attend school and each winter thereafter while a student. You should meet with the Financial Aid Officer at the program of your choice to explain these costs and give the school the opportunity to help you find local sources of funds. Write to HEATH for **Financial Aid**

for **Disabled Students** for additional information.

## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

Contact your local vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency while you are still in high school or soon after disability occurs. VR is a public agency set up in each state to assist eligible disabled people with services they need to become employable. In order to be eligible, a person must have a physical or mental handicap which causes a significant barrier to employment, and must be able to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services. Write for the HEATH Fact Sheet **Vocational Rehabilitation, a Postsecondary Student Consumer's Guide**, which explains how you can use VR, and the **State Resource List** which gives the address for VR and other postsecondary funding sources in your state.

If you are in high school, see if your school district and VR agency are involved in activities for transition between school and employment. Such programs should offer vocational assessment and/or skills training that can be useful to you as you prepare to continue after high school. If you are eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, you should manage coordination between your VR counselor and the financial aid officer at the postsecondary school you plan to attend.

## SUPPORT GROUPS

Disabled student support groups are appearing at more and more colleges and universities. They are helping to make important changes on campuses throughout the country. A disabled student organization can provide you with the opportunity to meet students who may have similar concerns and who can share ideas on ways to make needed improvements on your campus. It may also help you find solutions to your individual problems.

The activities of these groups vary in different places, depending on the concerns, needs, ingenuity and

commitment of the members. Some groups publish their own newspapers, others have sponsored "awareness days." Some provide peer-counseling, tutoring, social and recreational activities. Certain groups have worked successfully to bring about structural changes at the schools. Contact the Disabled Student Services Office on the campus of your choice to find out about such a group.

## INDEPENDENT LIVING

Find out if there is a Center for Independent Living (CIL) in the nearby community. CIL's are community service centers and are excellent sources of help. Services are provided by people who are disabled themselves and are concerned about helping you become as independent as possible. CIL's may:

- help find accessible housing
- provide a pre-screened list of attendants
- offer counseling on problems of independent living
- teach handicapped consumers how to hire, train, and manage attendant care
- teach money management, homemaking, or travel skills
- work to make the community more accessible

The **Independent Living Research Utilization Project**, ILRU (P.O. Box 20095, Houston, Texas 77025) (713) 797-0200 maintains a national computerized list of independent living programs and their services. Be aware that other centers might exist that are not listed. Ask around. Other disabled people may help you find one.

The suggestions listed here are some of the ways you can manage the challenges of postsecondary education and training. These ideas can make participating in an educational program after high school not only possible—but truly rewarding. Every student discovers his or her own individual ways of dealing with problems and overcoming obstacles. When these ideas are shared, other people benefit. Let your fellow students know, and let HEATH know how you **make the most of your opportunities**.

# Resources For Students Considering Postsecondary Education

## PUBLICATIONS

**Campus Access for Learning Disabled Students: A Comprehensive Guide** by Barbara Scheiber & Jeanne Talpers, (\$17.95) Closer Look/Parents Campaign for Handicapped Children and Youth, 1201 16th Street NW, Washington DC 20036.

**Independent Living with Attendant Care**, by Mary Ann Board, Jean A. Cole, Lex Friedin, and Jane C. Sperry. This is a set which includes **A Guide for the Person with a Disability** (\$3.50), **A Guide for the Personal Care Attendant** (\$3.50), **A Message to the Parents of Handicapped Youth** (\$3.50), (\$10.95 for Set) The Institute for Rehabilitation and Research, 1333 Moursund Avenue, Houston, TX 77030.

**Postsecondary Education and Career Development: A Guide for the Blind, Visually Impaired and Physically Handicapped**, (\$4.50) National Federation of the Blind, 1800 Johnson Street, Baltimore, MD 21230. (301) 659-9314.

## NATIONAL RESOURCES

Library of Congress, National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, 1291 Taylor Street, NW, Washington, DC 20542. (202) 287-5100.

National Information Center on Deafness, Gallaudet College, Kendall Green, Washington, DC 20002. (202) 651-5109 (Voice) 651-5976 (TDD).

For the name and address of nearby Center for Independent Living: **Independent Living Research Utilization Project (ILRU)** PO Box 20095, Houston, TX 77025, (713) 797-0200.

For information about federal legislation concerning education of handicapped individuals: U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Washington, DC 20202.

For information on special testing accommodations: **Information for Students with Special Needs- Admission Testing Program for the**

College Board ATP Services for Handicapped Students, Institutional Services Box 592, Princeton, NJ 08541.

### Special Testing Guide

ACT Assessment, Test Administration PO Box 168, Iowa City, IA 52243, (319) 337-1332.

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## HEATH PUBLICATIONS LIST

The HEATH Resource Center operates the National Clearinghouse on Postsecondary Education for Handicapped Individuals. HEATH is an acronym for Higher Education And The Handicapped. Support from the United States Department of Education enables the Center to serve as an information exchange about educational support services, Policies, proce-

dures, adaptations, and opportunities on American campuses, vocational-technical schools, adult education programs, independent living centers, and other training entities after high school. The Center gathers and disseminates this information so that disabled people can develop their full potential through post-secondary education and training if they choose.

### FACT SHEETS

- Access to the Science Lab and Classroom
- Audiovisual Materials
- Career Planning and Placement Strategies
- Community Colleges—Concerns and Resources
- Cost Effective Ideas (*for administrators*)
- Education Beyond High School—The Choice is Yours
- Education For Employment (*Vocational Education*)
- Financial Aid and Disabled Students
- Hearing Impaired Students in Postsecondary Education
- Learning Disabled Students in Postsecondary Education
- Make the Most of Your Opportunities (*for students*)
- Measuring Student Progress in the Classroom
- Opportunities after High School for Severely Handicapped Persons
- Strategies for Advising Disabled Students
- Tax Incentives and Tax Benefits for the Employers of Disabled Persons
- Vocational Rehabilitation Services—A Student Consumer's Guide

### OTHER RESOURCES

- HEATH Brochure
- HEATH 1985-86 Resource Directory
- Bulk copies of the Resource Directory are available, if you indicate specific use such as:
  - workshop
  - faculty development
  - parent center
  - conference
  - student resource room
  - other (*specify*)
- Newsletter Subscription
- Newsletter back issues as available
- Federally Funded Programs for Disabled Students: A Model for Postsecondary Campuses** (*monograph for administrators*)
- State Resources List (indicate which state)

Single copies of HEATH materials are free to those who request them. Permission to duplicate HEATH materials is not necessary and is definitely encouraged. All HEATH publications are available on cassette from the Regional Libraries of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

Please mail back to the HEATH Resource Center, One Dupont Circle, Suite 670, Washington, DC 20036-1193.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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Check the one that best identifies you.

- Disabled Person or Advocate
- Teacher/Instructor
- Administrator
- Counselor
- Other (*specify*)



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