

Transitioning to CTY Summer Programs for Students with ADHD

Email: cty-disabilities@jhu.edu

Call: 410-735-6215

The combination of a rigorous academic course and new social environment, in addition to a residential experience for some students, requires preparation for most CTY students and their families. This preparation may be even more helpful for students with ADHD. This document seeks to provide some tips for facilitating your child's transition into the program and having a successful experience once there.

The environment of CTY Summer Programs is very different than that in a typical school or home. Three key aspects make the CTY environment unique:

- **Extensive time is spent in the classroom studying one subject.** Unlike a typical school setting, students at CTY study one subject for 5-7 hours a day. They are in the same classroom with the same teacher and students. Adjusting to these academic demands can take some time. Because students study just one subject, choosing a course that suits a student's strengths is of particular importance.
- **Students have an increased responsibility for attending to their own needs.** At home, and even in their home schools, students are often surrounded by people that have known them for an extended period of time and know what supports they need to be successful. At CTY, staff members take great efforts to get to know each student quickly; however, students also need to take responsibility for knowing who to go to with questions or concerns and asking for this assistance when needed. Staff members are always available to assist students, but students will need to take initiative to seek out that assistance.
- **Students have multiple transitions throughout the day and little unstructured time.** Students at CTY have a full schedule of academics and activities each day as well as a little unstructured time with friends. Sites typically encompass large portions of campus, and there will be various boundaries, buildings, and spaces for students to become familiar with. Transitions at CTY might involve 5-10 minute walks across campus, changing groups and clothing for activities, or waiting for events to start. The schedule can require significant focus and energy. Students must comply with strict lights out and meal times, which may be different from what they are accustomed to at home. In addition, students are studying one subject for 5-7 hours a day.

Before the program begins:

After your child has registered and been assigned to a course for the summer, contact CTY Disability Services at 410-735-6215 or cty-disabilities@jhu.edu to discuss your child's needs.

By providing CTY Disability Services with as much information as you can, you will help the summer staff best serve your child and allow for a positive experience. The more information you can provide, the more likely it is your child will have a more successful experience. Documentation will need to be sent to CTY Disability Services following the documentation guidelines explained during your conversation with a CTY Disability Services staff member.

To aid in deciding which accommodations may be helpful in the CTY setting, here is a list of commonly requested accommodations and supports for students with ADHD that have helped students transition into the program smoothly and find success.

- Modified assignments (broken into smaller parts) or extended time
- A single room (this may not be possible at all sites)
- Copies of notes from class and/or a guide for taking notes
- Clear and written expectations with a focus on what to do vs. what not to do for classroom assignments and activities as well as for activities outside of class and in the dorm
- An assigned seat (particularly close to the instructor or away from possible distractions)
- Posted agendas in the classroom and the residence hall
- A syllabus providing the basic class schedule for the session
- A feedback system (e.g., getting a mark on a chart when doing well or a number rating on behavior at the end of class each day) for monitoring focus and/or behavior

Students with ADHD do attend our programs and choose not to request formal accommodations. These students may function just fine when taking their medication and do not require any supports or accommodations in their school setting. If this is the case for your child, we still appreciate getting as much information as possible in order to best inform our staff on site about working with your child. If you are not sure about requesting formal accommodations, please think through the information provided about the unique environment at CTY as well as the examples of common accommodations or supports for students with ADHD at CTY. It may be better to set up a plan for your child in order to be proactive about providing him or her with optimal access to the program.

It is also important to note that all students on medication should continue to take their medication during the program as prescribed by their physicians. Although the program occurs during the summer and often students may not take the medications that they do during the school year, at CTY the daily schedule and demands of the program require as much focus and energy as needed during a typical school day. Thus, in order for

students who regularly take medications during the school year to have the greatest opportunity for success at CTY, it is imperative that students keep to their regular medication schedule. *In addition students at older students site are expected to be in class and focused during a regular evening session from 7pm-9pm. Please discuss any medication changes this may require with the prescribing professional.*

Tips For Helping To Ensure A Successful CTY Summer Experience:

Contact CTY Disability Services as soon as possible. If you complete a Request for Accommodations form through CTY Disability Services, think about the program holistically (not just in the classroom). Talk with your child about how he or she can best be supported. Have your child talk with CTY Disability Services staff about his or her needs.

Ensure that adults working with your child are aware of specific difficulties your child faces and the strategies implemented to help with these to date as well as your child's strengths. This needs to be communicated to CTY Disability Services ahead of the session. The more information you can provide to help us be helpful to your child, the better. By informing CTY of known strengths and weaknesses, staff can better to play to strengths while working to ameliorate weaknesses.

Consult with appropriate school personnel and professionals knowledgeable about your child. Talk with them about your child's upcoming CTY experience and ask for recommendations they might have. These individuals have often seen your child in academic and situations when you are not around and may have valuable insights to offer about your child's attendance at CTY.

Read through the Site Information Packet and any other CTY-related materials with your child. Discuss the Honor Code and student expectations for behavior. Talk about how these rules and expectations may be different from those in school or at home and how this may relate to his or her daily routine and behaviors. Have your child start practicing meeting the expectations (that may be different than what he or she is used at home) so he or she can get used to the environment.

Think about the social, academic, and organizational skills that are required in the CTY setting that may not be needed in the home or school environment. For example, if your child typically spends a lot of time organizing materials outside of class time, this may not be possible at CTY due to the full schedule of the program. Discuss how your child might be able to keep up with organization within class time with support from the instructor or teaching assistant, if needed. In addition, if your child is participating at a residential site, discuss how he or she will share living spaces with others, will have to be responsible for getting ready in the morning and at night, will need to do laundry, etc. You may want to consider providing your child with some basic hygiene and housekeeping pointers, such as how to do laundry, how to make healthy food choices, how to keep possessions clean and organized, and how to share personal space with a roommate. Your child's Resident Assistant will also be on-hand to provide guidance and supervision in these areas.

Plan how your child will best be supported during unstructured times. Though an RA is always within eye or ear shot of students at residential sites, he or she will not

always be in the same room as students. Think about what may help your child stay focused and productive particularly during these times. Have your child keep a journal, bring a book, or draw. Likewise, activity time at both day and residential sites is often less structured than class time. Think about how your child may best stay focused in these less structured times. Write down and communicate your plan and thoughts with CTY Disability Services. This information will be passed along to site staff who will work with your child.

Think about the situations that will be new that may cause your child anxiety.

Discuss these with CTY Disability Services and your child in advance to prepare as much as possible. For example, students rapidly move from one activity to the next. If your child has difficulty switching between tasks, discuss strategies for dealing with this with your child, and make the site staff members aware of it so they can help lessen anxiety once on site.

Discuss strategies for dealing with anxiety in the CTY setting with your child and share this with CTY Disability Services and the academic counselor on site. What does your child normally do to cope in stressful situations? Will this be possible at CTY? (If you're not sure, discuss this with CTY Disability Services). Talk with your child and CTY Disability Services about what else your child can do to handle stress and anxiety on site.

Talk about ways to keep possessions organized and accounted for in this new setting, especially if this is the first time your child will be living away from home in his or her own room. Think about this responsibility when packing as well. Pack only the necessities for the three weeks (or for the day at day sites). More possessions mean that your child has more to keep track of. At day sites, think about what organizational strategies best work for you child in regards to bringing home homework and materials needed and ensuring this gets back to the site the next day.

Talk to the academic counselor the week prior to the start of the program.

(*Please note that the counselor will call you. If you do not hear from counselor within a day or two of the start of your child's program, please feel free to contact the site office and ask to speak with the counselor). The academic counselor is the point person for you on-site to discuss any accommodations or information that will help your child have a successful experience on site. Take this opportunity to share further information and ensure you both understand the Accommodations and/or Support Plan developed through CTY Disability Services. Have questions prepared that came up in any discussions with your child in preparing him or her for the program.

Talk to your child about where he or she can go for assistance while on site.

Make sure that before your child is without you on-site that he or she knows who to talk to if he or she is feeling stressed or anxious.

During the program:

On Opening Day be sure to meet with the academic counselor on site. The academic counselor will most likely be stationed at the medical table at registration. If not, ask the health or other staff where to locate the counselor.

Check-in with your child and the academic counselor regularly. You may want to let the academic counselor know on Opening Day/Registration Day that you would like to speak with him or her at some point during the first week so that you know how your child is progressing in the program. It is easier to address any issue that may arise as it is developing rather than after it has surfaced in the form of your child wanting to leave or misbehaving. You know your child best, so site staff members appreciate any information you can update them with during the summer.

After the program:

On Closing Day, you'll have the opportunity to discuss your child's academic progress in a conference with his or her instructor. You may also want to check in with the academic counselor. Use any challenges faced as a learning experience and celebrate your child's successes in the program.

After the summer, you may be asked to participate in a survey about you and your child's experiences for the summer. Any feedback is appreciated to help improve future CTY summer experiences for students (and parents).

Further Resources:

Your child's CTY experience can help to prepare him or her for the college experience. The resources below may be helpful for you to help in preparing your child for the CTY Summer Programs, transitioning into middle or high school, and making the transition to college.

LEARNING DISABILITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND BEYOND - AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE:

This book provides a good approach to helping students succeed in the collegiate setting. Of particular note is chapter nine, written by Lynda Katz. She discusses the challenges of transitioning between high-school and university, as well as avenues for addressing and overcoming these difficulties using school resources and technology. The rigors of CTY's classes match those of most university classes, thus this article is particularly apt and helpful to parents.

DIFFERENT MINDS: GIFTED CHILDREN WITH AD/HD, ASPERGER SYNDROME, AND OTHER LEARNING DEFICITS:

This book works through the interweaving difficulties between giftedness and learning disabilities. While the book speaks of multiple learning disabilities, several of its chapters are dedicated to specifically to students with ADHD. Additionally, the book does a wonderful job explaining what it means to be gifted, and how having a learning difficulty can affect, and occasionally benefit a student's giftedness.

PARENTING CHILDREN WITH ADD/ADHD:

http://helpguide.org/mental/adhd_add_parenting_strategies.htm: This document provides tips and best practices for parents who have children with ADHD. In particular, the website provides a series of behavior strategies for improving communication,

maintaining structure, and improving organization and time management. The latter is especially important in CTY where students live on their own, often for the first time.

GIFTED CHILDREN WITH ADHD:

http://www.addresources.org/article_adhd_gifted_lovecky.php: Deirdre Lovecky's article is extremely helpful in differentiating a child who is gifted and has ADHD with his or her peers who are gifted or who have ADHD. She gives reassurances to parents that ADHD and giftedness work well together, as well as providing advice to students who need assistance balancing their ADHD and giftedness.

SMART BUT SCATTERED:

Written by Peg Dawson and Richard Guare, this book addresses executive function struggles and offers tips for parents (and educators) to help identify a child's strengths and challenges and then tips for helping address weaknesses in areas such as getting organized, resisting impulses, staying focused, using time wisely, planning, following through, being resourceful, etc.

HELPING THE CHILD WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES FIND SOCIAL SUCCESS- IT'S SO MUCH WORK TO BE YOUR FRIEND:

Written by Richard LaVoie, this book addresses how to assist students that might struggle socially due to their learning disability. It addresses anxiety and its impact on social situations, language difficulties, ADHD, social skills at home, social skills at school (including handling bullying), and social skills in the community.

2E NEWSLETTER AND BLOG (<http://2enewsletter.blogspot.com/>) and (<http://www.2enewsletter.com>):

Both the blog and the newsletter provide current articles and information related to all things "twice exceptional." The bi-monthly newsletter has a subscription fee, but the blog and news briefings (a collection of links to twice exceptional articles sent monthly) are free. Past newsletter themes have included ADHD, dysgraphia, transitioning to college and more. You can see a complete listing of past newsletter topics on the 2eNewsletter website.