

Specialized Launch Kit

CARD 1 OF 3

Three reference cards for first-generation, neurodiverse, and LGBTQ+ college families.

FOR FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE FAMILIES

First-Gen Quick-Reference

A. TRIO / STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

TRIO/Student Support Services (SSS) is federally funded and free. Ask your student's university for the SSS office by name.

Eligibility (any one criterion qualifies):

- ☐ First-generation student (neither parent earned a bachelor's degree)
- ☐ Low-income (Pell Grant-eligible or family meets income threshold)
- ☐ Student with a documented disability

Your student may qualify based on any one of these criteria.

What SSS provides:

- Academic advising
- Tutoring and writing support
- Financial literacy coaching
- Emergency grant referrals
- Peer mentor access
- Financial aid renewal help

HOW TO APPLY

Your student contacts the SSS or TRIO office directly at their university. It is separate from the financial aid office. They can apply even after the semester has started.

B. SEMESTER CHECK-IN CALENDAR

Ask these specific questions every six weeks. "How's school?" is not enough.

WHEN	ASK THIS
First two weeks	"Have you introduced yourself to at least one professor in office hours? Have you found the TRIO/SSS office?"
Week 6 (before midterms)	"Have you met with your academic advisor this semester? Have you checked your financial aid status on the portal?"
Week 10 (after midterms)	"If any grades surprised you, have you talked to that professor? Is your financial aid still fully in place for next semester?"
Finals / End of semester	"Do you have everything you need to renew your financial aid? Have you registered for next semester's classes?"

C. FINANCIAL AID GLOSSARY

TERM	WHAT IT MEANS IN PLAIN ENGLISH
SAP (Satisfactory Academic Progress)	A GPA and credit completion standard your student must meet to keep financial aid. If they fall below it, aid can be suspended.
EFC / SAI	The number the government calculates based on your income and assets. It is not what you will actually pay. It is the starting point for your aid package.

TERM	WHAT IT MEANS IN PLAIN ENGLISH
Verification	A process where the financial aid office asks for additional documentation (tax transcripts, etc.) to confirm your FAFSA data. Missing this deadline can freeze aid.
Dependency Override	A process allowing a student to be classified as independent even if they do not meet the standard federal criteria. Requires documentation of exceptional circumstances.
Professional Judgment	Authority the financial aid office has to adjust aid based on unusual circumstances not captured by the standard FAFSA. If something in your life changed significantly, ask about this.

WATCH FOR

If your student's GPA drops below 2.0 or they withdraw from more than one course in a semester, check SAP status immediately. A SAP failure can suspend aid retroactively.

Disability Accommodations Roadmap

A. HIGH SCHOOL IEP/504 VS. COLLEGE ADA/504

	HIGH SCHOOL (IDEA / IEP)	COLLEGE (ADA / SECTION 504)
Who identifies needs	School identifies and refers	Student must self-identify
Documentation	School-provided	Student provides from their own evaluation
Parent involvement	Active, required	Excluded unless student authorizes
Services proactively offered	Yes	No. Student must request each semester.
Legal standard	School must meet student's individual needs	School must provide equal access
Who enforces	IEP team + district	Student, often alone

The biggest shift: college does not seek your student out. Your student must go to the disability services office before they need help, not after.

B. DOCUMENTATION CHECKLIST FOR THE DISABILITY SERVICES APPLICATION

- ☐ Psychoeducational evaluation or neuropsychological report (typically within the last 3 to 5 years for most schools)
- ☐ Letter from a diagnosing clinician on official letterhead, listing diagnosis and recommended accommodations
- ☐ IEP or 504 Plan from high school (supplementary, not always sufficient alone)
- ☐ Recent records from treating psychiatrist, psychologist, or therapist if applicable
- ☐ Documentation checklist from the specific university's disability services office (requirements vary by school)

Pull the documentation checklist from your student's specific university. Requirements differ. Some schools accept a diagnostic letter; others require a full psychoeducational evaluation.

C. FIRST CALL TO DISABILITY SERVICES -- WHAT TO ASK

Your student should call, not email, for the first contact. Suggested language:

"Hi, I'm a new student and I was diagnosed with [condition] in high school. I had accommodations through an IEP. I'd like to understand the process for requesting accommodations here and get a copy of your documentation requirements. Can you walk me through what I need to submit?"

Ask specifically:

- What documentation do you require for [specific condition]?
- What is the timeline from submitting documentation to getting accommodations approved?
- Are there accommodations that can be put in place provisionally while my documentation is under review?
- Is there an academic coaching program separate from disability services that students here use?

D. BUILDING THE PLAN B CONVERSATION

Before your student declines accommodations at the start of a semester, have this conversation:

"If you decide to try without accommodations this semester, I support that. I want us to agree on a trigger point. If [X happens], would you be willing to contact disability services and get them reactivated? What would X look like for you?"

OUR PLAN B TRIGGER:

LGBTQ+ Support Guide

A. CAMPUS SUPPORT OFFICES TO LOOK FOR

WHAT THE OFFICE DOES	WHAT IT MAY BE CALLED
LGBTQ+ community, programming, peer support	LGBTQ+ Resource Center, Pride Center, Gender and Sexuality Resource Center, Rainbow Resource Center
Affirming mental health counseling	University Counseling Center (ask for an LGBTQ+-affirming therapist specifically)
Housing with inclusive options	Residential Life (ask about gender-inclusive housing options)
Student crisis support	Dean of Students Office

Not every campus has a standalone LGBTQ+ center. Smaller schools often route these services through the counseling center or Dean of Students. The Campus Pride Index (campusprideindex.org) rates campuses 1 to 5 stars across eight categories of LGBTQ+-inclusive policy and resources.

B. READING THE CAMPUS PRIDE INDEX

The Campus Pride Index rates colleges across eight categories: LGBTQ+ policy inclusion, support and institutional commitment, academic life, student life, housing, campus safety, counseling and health, and recruitment and retention efforts.

Scores of 4.0 to 5.0 stars indicate strong institutional commitment. Scores below 2.0 may indicate limited formal support infrastructure. The index is self-reported, so look at it as a starting point, not a guarantee.

C. RECONNECTION SCRIPTS -- WHEN THINGS HAVE BEEN STRAINED

OPTION A -- AFTER A CONVERSATION THAT DIDN'T GO WELL

"Hey. I love you. I've been thinking a lot. I don't want silence between us. Would you be willing to talk this week? I'll follow your lead on when and how."

OPTION B -- FIRST CONTACT AFTER A PERIOD OF SILENCE

"I'm not calling to re-argue anything. I'm calling because I miss you and I want you in my life. That's it. Can we start there?"

OPTION C -- ONGOING CHECK-IN (LOW-PRESSURE, NO AGENDA)

"Thinking about you today. Nothing you need to respond to. Hope it's a good one."

Trevor Project research consistently shows that LGBTQ+ young people with parental contact and support have significantly better mental health outcomes. The relationship does not have to be perfect to be protective. Staying in contact, even imperfectly, matters.

D. CRISIS RESOURCES -- KEEP THESE

CRISIS SUPPORT LINES

Trevor Project

- TrevorLifeline: 1-866-488-7386 (24/7 phone)
- TrevorText: Text START to 678-678
- TrevorChat: thetrevorproject.org/get-help

Additional Resources

- Trans Lifeline: 877-565-8860
- Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741

