



Among people with psychiatric disabilities, 63% report that going to school to earn a degree or certificate is important to them, 68% of whom say they would like to increase their engagement in education. Educational support is very important to people with psychiatric disabilities: up to 52% of mental health consumers would like more supports in education such as assistance in applying to an education program, gaining access to financial aid, strengthening basic education skills, peer support groups, and staff support.

*Students with disabilities are as academically successful as students without disabilities when individualized supports are provided.*

More than 33,000 students with mental illnesses are

enrolled in colleges and universities, a number that continues to increase.

In addition, many people with serious mental illness have a strong interest in obtaining higher education, which is important as education is a key factor in their employment.

**Beyond traditional education, 50% of people with psychiatric disabilities report that taking a class for leisure or life skills is important to them. Among them, 64% say they would like to do this more .**

Supported education programs provide support and services so people with a serious mental illness can begin or continue their postsecondary education. Half of students with serious mental illness who participated in a supported education program indicated that their job fit their education level and more than half indicated that their education prepared them for their job.

## **Barriers to education:**

Barriers to education vary between individuals, but are often internal barriers versus external barriers. It's important for people to understand which unique barriers they experience and how they can navigate the supports in their life to overcome those barriers.

- Issues with transportation
- Stigma
- Low self-esteem
- Health issues & hospitalization
- Lack of childcare
- Legal problems
- Lack of motivation, difficulty concentrating, trouble meeting deadlines
- Lack of money
- Poor social support
- Poor academic skills/performance
- Fear, anxiety, & stress
- Psychiatric symptoms & medication side-effects
- Substance use problems
- Lack of institutional support (teachers,

## Types of supports available:

- Financial support (scholarships, grants, financial counseling, etc.)
- Appropriate academic workload
- Classes/courses which are offered at ideal times of day
- Supportive teachers, professors, advisors and staff
- Help with admission, registration, finding programs
- Support from peers & family
- Developing academic skills
- Psychiatric stability
- Available accommodations
- Medication & physical wellbeing
- Childcare
- Legal help
- Substance use treatment

## Resources available to people who want to pursue education:

There is a free online GED prep course at [www.gedforfree.com](http://www.gedforfree.com) to help you study. Remember that the GED test cannot be taken online; do not trust any site that claims it can offer a GED certificate online, as this is a scam! Visit [www.gedtestingservice.com](http://www.gedtestingservice.com) to find a legitimate testing center near you.

The library offers free or low-cost educational programs, including literacy classes, GED prep courses, English as a second language classes, computer courses, and more in addition to books and educational media.

Community colleges generally offer a variety of adult education courses, including certificate courses and professional development workshops.

Many universities offer Continuing or Adult Education courses which are non-credit courses (not counting toward a college degree) and thus do not require application or admission to the university.

Within universities, the Office for Student Disability Services, the Dean of Students Office, and University Counseling Services provide resources and supports for students with psychiatric disabilities. Students who request accommodations obtain more than twice the number of supports as those who do not.

However, current and former students receive a significant amount of informal supports from instructors without going through disability offices.

The most helpful type of support for many students involves private meetings with instructors, and other commonly used supports include providing extra time to complete assignments and exams and giving the student a grade of incomplete instead of a fail if a relapse occurs.

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