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IECA⁺
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INSIGHTS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE INDEPENDENT EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANTS ASSOCIATION

April/May 2020

Calendar

Calendar Updates

Because of the COVID-19 virus, several IECA events have been rescheduled. IECA is posting the most up-to-date information on the Member Network.

April 14

Webinar: Counseling Underclassmen (Hint: Don't Talk About College)

May 12

Webinar: Applying to Medical School: Understanding the Process and Preparation

May 25

Memorial Day National office closed

June 9

Webinar: Evaluating Your Sales and Customer Relations Tools

July 15-17

New Date IECA Spring Into Summer Conference, Connecticut

July 28-August 1

STI East, Swarthmore College

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Female Students With ADHD: How IECs Can Help

By Sharon Saline, PsyD With Eric Endlich, PhD, IECA Associate (MA)

Nia was so excited to go to college. She'd been diagnosed with inattentive attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in eighth grade and received accommodations, such as extra time on tests, preferential classroom seating, and getting copies of teachers' notes. An executive functioning coach helped her use a calendar and organize assignments. Nia worked hard, graduated with a 3.8 GPA, and moved into her college dorm with high expectations. Sadly, six months later, she was back home. Depressed, anxious, and on academic probation, she'd isolated herself, dropped one class, and failed two.

Nia's story is all too common for girls with ADHD. They often struggle to manage their own schedules in college, seek help at learning centers, and follow through

on appointments; moreover, they frequently fail to inform their parents or advisors when they are falling behind. Some girls who succeeded in high school are confident about their abilities to manage university academics and independent living only to become quickly overwhelmed. They begin to miss deadlines and skip classes due to shame, anxiety, and depression. How can independent educational consultants (IECs) help girls prepare for college more effectively and guide those floundering when they get there?

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IECA Members: See the cover story in *Member-to-Member Insights* for guidance on how to run your practice during the coronavirus outbreak. And watch the Member Network for the latest updates being posted online.

The Basics

Let's start with some facts about girls with ADHD—a chronic condition marked by persistent inattention, hyperactivity, and sometimes impulsivity; those symptoms are more frequent and severe than in typical peers. There are three types of ADHD: hyperactive/impulsive, inattentive, and combination type. Keep in mind that there is a lag of up to three years in brain maturity for those with ADHD.

For every girl diagnosed with ADHD, there are three boys identified with the condition. Boys are diagnosed more often with hyperactivity/impulsivity, usually exhibiting inappropriate, aggressive, or impulsive behaviors. Girls tend to have the inattentive type of ADHD, which explains why we frequently miss ADHD in girls. Symptoms in girls with inattentive ADHD include forgetfulness, difficulty listening, daydreaming, problems with verbal and/or written expression, shyness, perfectionism, misreading social cues, and social isolation. Anxiety, depression, eating disorders, and self-harm often accompany or even overshadow ADHD in girls.

Everyone with ADHD has executive functioning challenges as well as personal strengths. Although they can focus well on things that interest them or come easily to them, they struggle with uninteresting, unpleasant tasks. Some deficits may be more obvious than others. For example, Ava gets to appointments on time but can't keep her bedroom organized or meet deadlines. Erika gets her work done but is distracted so easily that it takes her twice as long as it should. To make things worse, many girls will deny their challenges because they are embarrassed.

Some girls with ADHD will do anything to avoid disappointing others. Despite offers to help her with planning and organization, Jasmine lied repeatedly in therapy, saying she had her coursework under control when in fact she was barely passing two out of her four classes. She dropped out of therapy rather than working through her embarrassment. These factors combine to make evaluating and working with girls and young women with ADHD quite complicated.

College Selection

Most college students with ADHD need academic or executive functioning support. Weekly meetings help them organize their schedules, make a study plan, and break assignments into manageable chunks. Although colleges frequently offer free peer tutoring and a writing center, relatively few have learning centers with professional academic coaches to help with other issues, such as time management. If a desired school doesn't have such a program, it might not be the right college for a girl with ADHD. She could hire a private executive functioning coach or company, however, if she is adamant about attending a particular university that doesn't happen to offer these services.

It's important to help these girls—and their parents—realistically assess their capabilities and needs. Not all girls with the grades and test scores to get into an Ivy League school will thrive there. They may require more-intensive support than what's offered at their

"dream" school. Girls with ADHD benefit from colleges that both understand and accept all kinds of learners and offer services to assist them in achieving academic and life goals.

Readiness

It's crucial to approach students with compassion, collaboration, and consistency. Despite their wish to go straight to a four-year college, many need a transition year at a job or community college to mature. Some benefit from a gap year program to nurture an artistic, athletic, or political passion. They may be managing adequately with considerable parental and school staff support, but when left to their own devices, they procrastinate and can't complete projects. You may witness students' executive functioning challenges when they can't start one of their essays, plan application tasks, or prioritize what's important. Those patterns suggest that they will likely face similar challenges in college. When working with these families, keep in mind:


- If a student had a 504 or IEP in high school, she should try to obtain comparable accommodations in college, especially in her first year. But the high school education plan doesn't carry over into college. The student must take documentation—typically a recent neuropsychological evaluation—to the college's disability center and formally request specific accommodations and supports recommended in the evaluation. Shame and procrastination may well deter a student from going to the disability center, so the IEC or parents should ensure that she has followed through. Just as in high school, she'll need support or scaffolding to make a successful transition to college and perform well academically.

Parents should monitor their daughter's compliance with services and decide what to do if she stops seeking support. Remember, however, that if she doesn't sign a FERPA waiver, her parents will have no way to find out if she's meeting with her coach or even attending class. Ultimately, parents can't make a young adult get assistance but with a caring approach and an agreed-upon plan, they can keep the lines of communication open.

- Girls with more severe ADHD and related issues may need a year or two at a program for students with learning differences before moving to a more independent setting. Conversations about a girl's social and emotional needs are just as important as those about academic topics. Explain that the ADHD brain needs more time to mature. This is a biological fact, not a personal failure. Provide some success stories about similar students.
- Girls with ADHD often want to please others and avoid conflict. As an IEC, you may be a girl's key ally. Get to know your student's hopes and fears, then help her share them with her parents and assist them in really listening. Keep the college selection process realistic by reviewing the supports that helped the student do well in high school.
- Consider referring a girl for an evaluation for inattentive ADHD (among other things) when she:
 - Shows perfectionistic, anxious, or depressive signs
 - Makes comments suggesting distractibility or memory issues
 - Reports feeling overwhelmed constantly regardless of how much she has to do

- Struggles more than typical kids of her age and background with writing assignments or staying on topic.

Success = What Works

One year later, Nia is studying at a community college; working part-time at a store; and finally accepting her quirky, creative brain. She realizes it was a mistake to pick her first college based on what she thought her parents wanted. She started taking an antidepressant along with her ADHD medication and both her anxiety and depression have decreased. Family therapy reset parental expectations and helped Nia strategize ways to improve time management and organization. Most importantly, her parents are giving her the space to figure out how to participate in college at a pace that works for her. 

President's Letter, from page 2

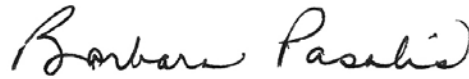
- Appointed an ad hoc Committee for Succession Planning to ensure a smooth transition of the Association staff.

Education. The Education & Training committee has reorganized responsibilities, evaluated current programs, and added educational offerings. The new Educational Intensives, *EIs*, provide modules of training that will enable our members to develop expertise in new areas and to expand their practices.

My profound thanks go to the entire IECA Board of Trustees, who have worked diligently to evaluate these changes. The work of the Board over the past year has culminated in sweeping changes in the way we operate and, I believe, will result in significant improvements for the membership.

Although the past year presented unprecedented challenges for the Association—the Varsity Blues scandal broke in March 2019—and we are now facing the Coronavirus pandemic, members can be assured that the staff, under the direction of CEO **Mark Sklarow**, is working overtime to serve members' needs, manage the budget, find alternative dates for conferences and programs, and cut discretionary spending to deal with loss of revenue from canceled programs.

We are fortunate to have a dedicated staff and a CEO who always comes up with creative solutions to transform our challenges into advantages, and I hope you will join me in thanking them.



Barbara Pasalis
IECA President



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