



Guidelines for Documenting Psychological Disability

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, individuals with disabilities are guaranteed certain protections and rights of equal access to programs and services. The following guidelines are provided in the interest of assuring that psychological documentation is appropriate in order to verify eligibility and support requests for accommodations, academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids.

Documentation must be provided by a qualified professional with comprehensive training and relevant expertise in differential diagnosis with appropriate licensure/certification. Qualified evaluators may include psychologists, psychiatrists, neuro-psychiatrists, clinical social workers, licensed counselors, and psychiatric nurse practitioners.

A diagnosis of a psychological disorder, syndrome or condition alone does not qualify an individual for accommodation(s) under Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. The provision of all reasonable accommodations and services is based upon assessment of the student's disabilities on his/her academic performance at a given time in the student's life. The documentation must establish a relationship between the requested accommodation and the functional limitations in an academic setting. In addition, existing documentation should not be more than three years old.

The Diagnostic Report should provide the following:

- Specific diagnosis identified in the *DSM-N-TR* or the ICD-10.
- Multiaxial DSMIV Diagnosis Axis I Clinical Disorders, Axis II Personality Disorders or Mental Retardation, Axis III General Medical Conditions, Axis *N* Psychosocial and Environmental Problems and Axis IV Psychosocial and Environmental Problems.
- Description of symptoms which meet the criteria for the diagnosis.
- Description of the impact of the student's diagnosis in an academic setting and substantial limitation(s) it imposes on a major life activity or activities. Major life activities as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act include but not limited to walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working and caring for oneself.

- State the impact of the student's disorder in an academic setting such as exam taking, note taking and concentrating. Please describe what major life activity or activities impacted by *this* disorder.
- Information regarding current medications prescribed for the diagnosis and how or if the side effects of the medication will impact the student in an academic setting.
- Historical Information, Diagnostic Interview, and/or Psychological Assessment. This should also include a list of instruments/procedures used to diagnose the psychological disorder.
- Specific recommendation(s) for reasonable accommodation(s) due to the functional limitations the disability imposes accompanied by rationale and justification for each.
- Rule out other diagnoses that may imitate the purported disability.
- Name, title and credentials of the evaluator on letterhead, dated and signed by the evaluator. Documentation should not be more than three years old.
- Indicate prognosis and include likelihood for improvement or further deterioration and within what approximate time frame.
- Describe whether this student poses a threat to himself/herself or to others.
- Description of learning abilities specific to the postsecondary environment that are impaired by the psychiatric disability e.g. difficulty with concentration, slow processing speed etc. Also include the side effects of medication prescribed for disorder.

Further assessment by an appropriate professional may be required if co- existing learning disabilities or other disabilities or other disabling conditions are indicated or if this documentation does not support the need for the requested accommodations.