

**STUDENT AFFAIRS OP 91.130: Guidelines for Documentation of Students with a Specific Learning Disorder, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD), or a Psychiatric/Psychological Disorder**

**Date: September 8, 2006**

Purpose

To provide uniform guidelines for documentation for students seeking accommodations from the University on the basis of a diagnosed Specific Learning Disorder, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD), or a Psychiatric/Psychological Disorder in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Policy

It is the policy of Mississippi State University that students seeking accommodations from the University on the basis of a diagnosed Specific Learning Disorder, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD), or a Psychiatric/Psychological Disorder must submit documentation of their disability to the Department of Student Support Services to verify eligibility under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Procedure

Students must address admission criteria and be accepted to Mississippi State University prior to service delivery. Students who are seeking accommodations from the Department of Student Support Services on the basis of a diagnosed SPECIFIC learning disability, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD), or a psychiatric/psychological disorder are required to submit documentation of their disability to verify eligibility under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. This means the disorder must have been diagnosed by a medical doctor, psychiatrist, licensed doctoral-level clinical allied health professional, doctoral-level education psychologist, or a combination of such professionals with expertise in the diagnosis of learning disabilities, ADD or AD/HD, or a psychiatric/psychological disorder. The qualification of the evaluator must include comprehensive training and direct experience with an adult disability population. Protection under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act civil rights statutes is based upon documentation of a disability that currently "substantially limits" some major life activity, including learning.

The prospective student providing documentation might already be familiar with Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Individual Education Plans are prepared by K-12 public school systems in a manner appropriate to assuring that students with disabilities have equal access to a free and appropriate education, in conformity with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This means an IEP is primarily a plan for education in primary and secondary schools. Unless educational records contain information which meets the disability-documentation requirements of this eligibility policy, they will not be accepted as stand alone verification of a disability. However, various educational records such as an IEP, a transcript, or other special-education records may serve as valuable information in identifying services and accommodations which were effective in the past. These records are part of the documentation required in the guidelines below.

All documentation of a disability submitted to the Department of Student Support Services will be held in confidence. No information about the student's disability will be revealed to any member of the Mississippi State University faculty or staff, or any other person without the expressed written consent of the student, and only on the basis of a clear, educational need-to-know basis.

## LEARNING DISABILITIES

The following guidelines are provided for students identifying themselves as having a learning disability to ensure that the documentation is complete and appropriate to verify eligibility and support requests for reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids on the basis of disability that “substantially limits” one or more major life activities. A student with a learning disability must provide documentation from professionals who are considered qualified to evaluate and diagnose specific learning disabilities and who have additional training and experience in the assessment of learning problems in adults.

- A. **TESTING MUST BE COMPREHENSIVE:** It is not acceptable to administer only one test for the purpose of diagnosis. The following is not intended to be an exhaustive list or to restrict assessment in other pertinent and helpful areas such as vocational interests and attitudes. Minimally, domains to be assessed must include but are not limited to:
- (1) **APTITUDE** : The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised (WAIS-R) with subtest scores is the preferred instrument. The Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery-Revised, Tests of Cognitive Ability, or the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale: Fourth Edition are also acceptable measures.
  - (2) **ACHIEVEMENT:** Current levels of functioning in reading, mathematics, and written language are required. Acceptable instruments include the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery-Revised; Tests of Achievement; Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT); Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK); Scholastic Abilities Test for Adults (SATA); or SPECIFIC achievement tests such as the Test of Written Language-2 (TOWL-2), Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised, or the Stanford Diagnostic Mathematics Test are also acceptable. The Wide Range Achievement Test-Revised (WRAT-R) is NOT a comprehensive measure of achievement and therefore is NOT acceptable.
  - (3) **INFORMATION PROCESSING:** Specific areas of information processing (e.g. short and long-term memory, sequential memory, auditory and visual perception/processing; processing speed) must be assessed. Information from subtests on the WAIS-R or the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Ability, as well as other instruments relevant to the presenting problem(s), may be used to address these areas.
- B. **TESTING MUST BE CURRENT:** For testing to be current, it must have been conducted within the past three years. Because the provision of “all reasonable accommodations and services” is based upon assessment of the current impact of the student’s disabilities on his/her academic performance, it is in the student’s best interest to provide recent and appropriate documentation.
- C. **EVIDENCE AND IDENTIFICATION MUST BE “CLEAR AND SPECIFIC”.** There must be “clear and specific” evidence and identification of a learning disability. Individual “learning styles” and “learning differences” in and of themselves do not constitute a learning disability.
- D. **ACTUAL TEST SCORES MUST BE PROVIDED:** Standard scores and/or percentiles are acceptable; however, grade equivalents are not acceptable unless standard scores and/or percentiles are also included. This is important since certain University policies and procedures (e.g., petitioning for permission to substitute courses) require actual data to help substantiate eligibility.
- E. **PRIOR ACCOMMODATIONS AND/OR AUXILIARY AIDS MUST BE DISCUSSED:** A description of any accommodation and/or auxiliary aids that have been used at the secondary or postsecondary level must be discussed. Include information about the specific conditions under which the accommodation was used (e.g., standardized testing, final exams, etc.) and whether or not it benefitted the student. If no accommodations have been previously provided, a detailed explanation as to why none have been used, and the rationale supporting the student’s current need of such accommodation must be provided. The diagnostic report should include specific recommendations.

for accommodations as well as an explanation as to why each accommodation is recommended. Base reasonable accommodations and services upon assessment of the impact of the student's disability on his/her academic performance.

- F. **DOCUMENTATION MUST BE PROPERLY PREPARED BY A QUALIFIED INDIVIDUAL:** The documentation must be prepared by a person who is not a family member of the student and who is qualified by professional training and practice to diagnose and treat learning disabilities, particularly with an adult population. Diagnostic reports must include the name(s), title(s), and credentials of the professional(s) along with the signature, licensing information, and other pertinent training of the evaluator. In addition, the area of specialization and state/province in which the individual practices should be clearly stated in the documentation. The following would be considered qualified to evaluate specific learning disabilities provided that they have additional training and experience in the assessment of learning problems in adults: clinical or educational psychologists, school psychologists, neuropsychologists, Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Social Workers, learning disabilities specialists, physicians, and psychiatrists. Date(s) of diagnosis must also be included in the documentation.
- G. **DOCUMENTATION MUST BE PROPERLY PRESENTED:** The documentation must be typed or word-processed, and printed on the letterhead of the practitioner or the agency hosting the practice. Handwritten notes or letters are not acceptable.

### **ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER**

The following guidelines are provided for students identifying themselves as having Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) to ensure that documentation is complete and appropriate.

- (1) A clear statement of the DSM-IV diagnosis;
- (2) A summary of procedures and instruments used to make the diagnosis;
- (3) A summary of the evaluation results, including standardized scores;
- (4) A history of past and present symptoms which meet the criteria for diagnosis;
- (5) A Medical History relating to current use of medication and the impact of medication on the student's ability to meet the demands of an academic program;
- (6) A statement of functional limitations and the expected impact on the student's academic performance;
- (7) Recommendations for academic accommodations to help compensate for the disability; and
- (8) A concise statement of credentials by the professional performing the evaluation.

**DOCUMENTATION MUST BE PROPERLY PREPARED BY A QUALIFIED INDIVIDUAL:** The documentation must be prepared by a person who is not a family member of the student and who is qualified by professional training and practice to diagnose and treat ADD and/or AD/HD. The documentation must be typed or word-processed and printed on the letterhead of the practitioner or the agency hosting the practice. The signature, licensing information, and other pertinent training of the evaluator must accompany the documentation. Handwritten notes on prescription pads will not be accepted. All documentation must be current, within the past three years. The diagnostic report should include specific recommendations for accommodations as well as an explanation as to why each accommodation is recommended. Base reasonable accommodations and services upon assessment of the impact of the student's disability on his/her academic performance.

### **PSYCHIATRIC/PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDER**

The following guidelines are provided for students identifying themselves as having a Psychiatric/Psychological Disorder to ensure documentation is complete and appropriate.

- A. **A DSM-IV MULTIAXIAL DIAGNOSIS:** A thorough explanation of diagnoses including symptomology

and plan for treatment must be included. There must be clear and specific evidence of the disorder(s) in question. A listing of the “functional limitation” imposed by the disorder and how it might impair the student’s ability to perform to his/her potential in an academic setting must also be included. Diagnoses made prior to six months before the present date are not acceptable unless the disorder is considered to be relatively stable and long-standing. Such stability must be clearly illustrated within the documentation.

- B. **PRIOR ACCOMMODATIONS AND/OR AUXILIARY AIDS:** A description of any accommodation and/or auxiliary aid that has been used at the secondary or postsecondary level must be discussed. Include information about the specific conditions under which the accommodation was used (e.g., standardized testing, final exams, etc.) And whether or not it benefitted the student. If no accommodations have been previously provided, a detailed explanation as to why none has been used and the rationale supporting the student’s current need of accommodation must be provided.
- C. **A LIST OF PSYCHOACTIVE MEDICATIONS:** A complete list of psychoactive medications the student is taking, including dosage levels and likely side-effects, must be discussed. If the names of other medication on the student’s pharmacological regimen are available, they too should be included.
- D. **PROPERLY PREPARED DOCUMENTATION:** The documentation must have been prepared by a person who is not a family member of the student and who is qualified by professional training and practice to diagnose and treat the impairment leading to the disability. Diagnostic reports must include names, titles, and professional credentials of the psychiatrist(s) providing the diagnostic report. Date of diagnosis must also be included and should be current. The diagnostic report should include specific recommendations for accommodations as well as an explanation as to why each accommodation is recommended. Base reasonable accommodations and services upon assessment of the impact of the student’s disability on his/her academic performance.
- E. **PROPERLY PRESENTED DOCUMENTATION:** The documentation must be typed or word-processed, and printed on the letterhead of the practitioner of the agency hosting the practice. The signature, licensing information, and other pertinent training of the evaluator must accompany the documentation. Handwritten notes on prescription pads will not be accepted.

Appropriate reasonable accommodations and services are individually determined by the Department of Student Support Services staff in consultation with the student and based on the information provided in the documentation. The Director of Student Support Services is available to consult with the diagnostician regarding requirements for specific disabilities.

All documentation is confidential and should be submitted to the:

Director, Student Support Services  
Mississippi State University  
P.O. Box 806  
Mississippi State, MS 39762  
PHONE: (662) 325-3335 voice/TDD  
FAX: (662) 325-8190

### APPEAL PROCESS

Students with disabilities meeting guidelines for eligibility under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 who are denied reasonable academic accommodations may appeal their request to the Academic Accommodations Committee. The appeal must be filed 14 days from the date of notification denying accommodation.

Sources: Disability Resource Center, Santa Fe Community College, Gainesville, Florida.  
The Association on Higher Education and Disability, Columbus, Ohio.

Review

The Vice President for Student Affairs is responsible for the review of this operating policy every four years or as needed.

**THIS POLICY HAS BEEN RESCINDED**

**DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS  
OPERATING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

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**REVIEWED BY:**

/s/ William Kibler  
Vice President for Student Affairs

09-08-06  
Date

/s/ Don Zant  
Director, Internal Audit

09-08-06  
Date

/s/ Charles Guest  
General Counsel

09-12-06  
Date

**APPROVED BY:**

/s/ William Kibler  
Vice President for Student Affairs

09-19-06  
Date

/s/ Robert H. Foglesong  
President

10-02-06  
Date

THIS POLICY HAS BEEN RESCINDED