



## **Disability Documentation Guidelines**

**(Taken from The Focus Program Policies and Procedures Manual 2007-08)**

### **Section Three: Documentation of Disabilities**

#### **3.1 Purpose of Documentation**

The purpose of the documentation of the disability is to establish that the student has an official diagnosis of a disability and to demonstrate that the disability substantially limits a major life activity. The documentation must validate the need for reasonable accommodations and demonstrate the impact of the disability on the student's ability to function in a postsecondary setting. In addition, the documentation assists in the determination of the appropriate accommodations and services to minimize the impact of the disability and personalizes the student's rights to equal access to Andrew College.

#### **3.2 Eligibility Verification**

Eligibility for disability services and participation in the Focus Program is based upon the nature of the student's documented disability and how the disability impacts the student's ability to learn and function in a postsecondary setting. Students with disabilities must "self-disclose" their disabilities and provide disability documentation to the Focus Program Director, who makes the decision as to whether the student is eligible to receive services based on the disability policies and guidelines of Andrew College and ADA and Section 504. Once eligibility is established, the Focus Program Director must determine if the student is "otherwise qualified," and if the documentation supports the need for the requested accommodations and participation in the Focus Program. This information is then documented in the student's disability services file.

#### **3.3 Documentation Guidelines**

In general, documentation of a disability must meet the following requirements ("ACT Policy for Documentation to Support Requests," 2005).

- 1) A qualified professional who has training and experience in the applicable area of the diagnosis must complete the documentation, and please note that it is not appropriate for professionals to evaluate members of their own family.
- 2) There must be an official diagnosis of a disability along with description of the nature and extent of the disability.
- 3) Specific information must be included that documents how the disability substantially limits a major life activity and the student's ability to function in an academic environment.
- 4) Recommended reasonable accommodations must include a rationale for each accommodation.
- 5) The documentation must be current and address the individual's current level of functioning and the current impact of the disability on academic functioning.

The following table includes a non-exclusive list of disabilities and professionals qualified to document these disabilities.

Disability	Diagnostician
AD/HD	Psychologist, Psychiatrist,
Emotional Disability Mental Illness	Psychologist, Psychiatrist
Visual Impairment	Ophthalmologist
Hearing Impairment	Certified Otologist, Audiologist
Physical Disability	Physician, Nurse Practitioner
Learning Disability	Psychologist, Psychiatrist, School Psychologist

The Focus Director may require students to update documentation that is not current or that does not reflect the student's need for the requested accommodations in order to determine the student's eligibility for disability services or participation in the Focus Program.

### **3.4 Documentation of a Learning Disability**

Only qualified, licensed professionals may assess and diagnose learning disabilities. A qualified professional must hold a graduate degree in a field related to diagnosis of learning disabilities and have experience in evaluating learning disabilities. Experience in working with an adult population is essential. The professional may not be a family member of the student ("Policy Statement for Documentation of a Learning Disability," 1999).

The testing and documentation of the learning disability must be current and conducted within the past three years or after the student's eighteenth

birthday. The testing must be comprehensive. The documentation must validate the need for services under the student's current level of functioning because the provision of all reasonable accommodations and services is based upon assessment of the current impact of the student's disabilities and his/her academic performance. An individualized education program (IEP) and/or a 504 plan are not sufficient documentation although these plans may be used to help decide appropriate services. The documentation must include the following information and address the following domains ("Policy Statement for Documentation of a Learning Disability," 1999).

- 1) **Aptitude:** The documentation must be comprehensive and include measures of aptitude and academic achievement in the following areas: reading, mathematics, oral, and written language.
- 2) **Information Processing:** The documentation must include information regarding specific areas of information processing.
- 3) **Achievement:** Current levels of functioning in reading (decoding, rate, comprehension, mathematics (calculations, reasoning, and algebra) and written language (spelling and written expression) are required.
- 4) There must be clear and specific evidence to support the diagnosis of a learning disability. Differences in learning styles and learning differences do not constitute learning disabilities.
- 5) Actual test scores must be provided along with interpretation of results. Standard scores are required to substantiate eligibility for specific accommodations.
- 6) Tests used to document eligibility just be technically sound and standardized for use with an adult population.
- 7) The documentation must provide evidence of how the learning disability substantially limits the student's ability to learn and perform in an academic setting.
- 8) Recommendations for accommodations must include a rationale for each accommodation. Recommendations should be supported by specific test results and clinical observations and be based on objective evidence of a substantial limitation to learning.
- 9) A written summary of background information about the student's relevant educational, medical, and family histories that relate to the learning disability must be included.
- 10) A clinical summary based on the comprehensive assessment must be included in the documentation and include any rule-out diagnoses as well as an indication of the substantial limitation to learning caused by the learning disability and a rationale to support accommodations to mitigate the limitations-refer to #8.
- 11) Diagnostic reports must include the names, titles, and professional credentials of the evaluators as well as the date(s) of the testing. All reports must be typed and submitted on official letterhead.

(Adapted from the Academic Affairs Handbook, Section 2:22:03: Criteria for Outside Evaluations: Georgia Regents Criteria for Accepting Outside Evaluations Documenting Learning Disabilities)

### **3.5 Documentation of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders (AD/HD)**

Only qualified, licensed professionals may assess and diagnose AD/HD. AD/HD is considered a medical and/or clinical diagnosis. A qualified professional must have comprehensive training in the differential diagnosis of AD/HD and be able to provide a DSM-IV-TR diagnosis of AD/HD as well as experience in working with adolescents or adults with AD/HD. The professional may not be a family member of the student ("Policy Statement for Documentation of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder," 1999).

The testing and documentation of AD/HD must be current and conducted with the past three years. The documentation must validate the need for services under the student's current level of functioning. An individualized education program (IEP) and/or a 504 plan are not sufficient documentation although these plans may be used to help decide appropriate services. The documentation must include the following information ("Policy Statement for Documentation of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder," 1999).

- 1) There must be a clear DSM-IV-TR diagnosis with a description of current symptoms and evidence that the disability substantially limits the student's ability to learn and perform in an academic setting. A review of psychoeducational tests reports that supports attentional and learning problems must be included.
- 2) The documentation must be comprehensive and include the history of attentional symptoms with evidence of early and current impairment, a diagnostic interview, a developmental and relevant medical and family history, a rule out of alternative diagnoses or explanations, relevant testing, and an interpretive clinical summary. (Schizophrenia, borderline personality disorder, autism, or mental retardation is not the primary disability.)
- 3) Documentation must include rating scales of AD/HD behaviors and corroboration of behaviors by a third party.
- 4) Recommendations for accommodations must include a rationale for each accommodation and explain how the effects of AD/HD symptoms, as designated by the DSM-IV-TR, are mediated by the accommodations.
- 5) A summary of recommendations regarding any prescribed medication must be included along with a description of the impact of the medication upon the student's ability to perform in a postsecondary setting.

### **3.6 Documentation of Psychiatric and/or Psychological Disorders**

Only qualified, licensed mental health professionals may diagnose psychiatric and psychological disorders. These professionals include but are not limited to: licensed clinical social workers, licensed professional counselors, licensed clinical or counseling psychologists, and psychiatrists. The professional may not be a family member of the student. The documentation must be current and include an explanation of the current impact that the disability has on the student's ability to function in a postsecondary setting. The currency of the documentation depends upon the particular disability and the student's current condition as well as the specific accommodations that are being requested. The documentation must include the following information.

- 1) There must be a clear DSM-IV-TR diagnosis with a description of current symptoms and evidence that the disability substantially limits the student's ability to learn and perform in an academic setting.
- 2) The documentation must be comprehensive and include the history of symptoms, a diagnostic interview, relevant testing, and interpretive clinical summary.
- 3) Recommendations for accommodations must include a rationale for each accommodation.
- 4) A summary of recommendations regarding any prescribed medication must be included along with a description of the impact of the medication upon the student's ability to perform in a postsecondary setting.

### **3.7 Documentation of Other Disabilities Including Physical Disabilities**

Only qualified, licensed medical professionals may diagnose other disabilities including physical disabilities. The diagnostician must hold expertise in the area for which reasonable accommodations are being recommended. The documentation must include the following information.

- 1) A statement of the medical diagnosis with a description of current symptoms and evidence that the disability substantially limits the student's ability to learn and perform in an academic setting or impacts any other major life activity.
- 2) The documentation must be comprehensive and include a summary of assessment procedures used to make the diagnosis.
- 3) A summary of recommendations regarding any prescribed medication must be included along with a description of the impact of the medication upon the student's ability to perform in a postsecondary setting.

### 3.8 Provisional Accommodations

As stated in **3.3 Documentation Guidelines**, the Focus Director may require students to update documentation that is not current or that does not reflect the student's need for the requested accommodations in order to determine the student's eligibility for disability services or participation in the Focus Program. The Focus Director works directly with the student to determine appropriate and reasonable accommodations consistent with the student's documentation while maintaining confidentiality of the evaluation and not releasing any part of the documentation without the student's written and informed consent. In the event a student fails to supply the appropriate documentation, provisional accommodations may be granted up to one semester to allow time for the documentation to be completed and submitted for review by the Focus Director. However, the student must provide sufficient evidence that there is a specific disability before provisional accommodations are considered. Provisional accommodations are based totally upon the professional judgment and discretion of the Focus Director.

Students may not be accepted into the Focus Program under provisional accommodations, and students may not be accepted "conditionally" into the Focus Program. Please refer to **Section 4.1 Qualifying/Applying for the Focus Program**.

### 3.9 Acceptable Assessment Instruments

All testing must be administered and evaluated by a qualified licensed professional and a report that documents actual scores and interpretation of these tests must be provided. Evaluations based only on IQ and achievement tests will generally be considered limited in scope and may require the student to undergo further evaluation.

The following assessment instruments are listed to provide some guidance in the types of measurements that are commonly used in adult learning disability evaluations (Taken from Regents Center for Learning Disorders, University of Georgia).

IQ	Stanford-Binet
Aptitude	WAIS-R
	WISC-R
	WISC-III
Achievement	Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-educational Battery
	Wechsler Individual Achievement Test- II (WIAT-II)
	Test of Written Language-3 (TOWL-3)
	Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-R

	Stanford Tests of Academic Skills (TASK) Scholastic Abilities Tests for Adults
Information Processing	WAIS-III Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Ability Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude-Adult (DTLA-A)
Language	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised Boston Naming Test Expressive One Word Vocabulary Test (oldest age norms) Tests of Written Language (oldest age norms)
Visual-Spatial	Bender Gestalt Beery Visual Motor Integration (oldest age norms) Rey Osterreith Complex Figure Drawing
Memory	Wechsler Memory Scale Ray Auditory Verbal Learning Test California Verbal Learning Test
Attention	Gordon Diagnostic Testing Underlining Test Random A's Scanning Test Paced Auditory Serial Addition Test Continuous Performance Tests
Fine Motor	Finger Tapping Grooved Pegboard Purdue Pegboard
Executive Conceptual	Categories Test Wisconsin Card Sorting Test Porteus Mazes Raven Progressive Matrices Trail Making Test A&B Proverbs Test

**For additional information, please contact**

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