



Student Disability Services

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Requirements for Professional Reports Documenting Accommodation Needs of Students with Psychological Disorders

Under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act of 2008, Student Disability Services (SDS) protects qualified students enrolled at the University of Iowa from discrimination on the basis of disability and assures provision of reasonable accommodations. To do this, SDS requires documentation that diagnoses a disability **and** describes how the condition directly and substantially limits a major life function such as learning. **The documentation must demonstrate that the condition rises to the level of a disability.**

The following documentation requirements establish that the student is eligible for protection and services on the basis of a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as such. The documentation also supports the student's request for accommodations.

All reports must be type written and signed on professional letterhead and include the name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator, including license or certification, area of specialization, employment, affiliation, and the state or province of practice. Please note that IEP's and 504 plans will not be considered documentation, but should be integrated by the professional into the final report.

Components I-IV **must** be included in the professional report.

I. Qualifications of the Evaluator

Professionals conducting assessments and rendering diagnoses of a Psychological Disorder and making recommendations for accommodations must have comprehensive training and relevant experience with a Psychiatric population. Examples of such professionals are Licensed Clinical or Counseling Psychologists, Licensed Social Workers, and Psychiatrists.

II. Recency of Documentation

Because the provision of all reasonable accommodations and services is based upon our review of the professional's assessment of the current impact of the disability on academic performance, it is in a student's best interest to provide recent and appropriate documentation. This means that the comprehensive evaluation being submitted must have been completed within the past **six months**.

III. Comprehensive Information that Verifies the Existence of the Condition

A comprehensive evaluation should provide information about the history of the condition and verify the existence of a current condition. The evaluator's report must include the following:

- 1. Developmental, Psychological, Educational, and Accommodation History:** The report should discuss the history of the disorder. The report should also include information substantiated in medical and educational records as well as any family history deemed relevant by the examiner. Accommodation history should be discussed.

2. **Evidence of current impairment:** The report must describe the student's present learning difficulties including evidence of ongoing impairment in functioning at the time he or she was referred for the current evaluation. Documentation must include a current DSM-IV-TR diagnosis including the criteria by which the diagnosis was determined. A definitive diagnostic statement must be made and stated directly. **This statement should not use terms such as "suggests," "appears to," "is consistent with," "is indicative of" or similar language.** Relevant current medical information must be included.
3. **Alternate causes ruled out:** The report must demonstrate that the evaluator(s) has investigated and ruled out alternative psychological, medical, educational, and/or cultural explanations for the impairment.
4. **Objective testing must be provided to demonstrate academic impairment.** Clear objective evidence of a disability must be provided through standardized testing in one or more cognitive areas. In order to substantiate the need for recommended accommodations, testing related to attention, memory, learning, fluid reasoning, language, academic achievement, visual information processing, auditory processing, executive functioning, or perceptual reasoning must be used. Informal inventories, surveys, brief tests such as Beck Inventories, or direct observation by a qualified professional may be used in tandem with formal testing, but alone are not sufficient documentation to establish the presence of a disabling condition.

IV. Each recommended accommodation must be discussed individually and specific evidence must support each accommodation requested in the report.

Accommodations are provided for a condition only when the condition materially restricts an individual's academic functioning and when there is a substantial limitation as compared to the **general population**. Accommodations are not provided for relative weaknesses, areas needing improvement, or below expectancy performance that is not directly related to a disability.

Each accommodation should be correlated with specific functional limitations that have been documented in the assessment. All data must logically reflect the substantial limitation(s) to learning for which the individual is requesting accommodations. For example, a recommendation for extra times for exams may be related to the individual's processing speed sub-score on the WAIS-III. "Laundry lists" of accommodations that are not individually supported are insufficient for this section.

Please feel free to attach any additional documentation to the report.