

## General Guidelines for Documenting a Disability

Students seeking academic accommodations through Disability Services are required to establish eligibility for such services by submitting copies of current and relevant medical documentation. The following guidelines are provided to assure that documentation is appropriate to verify eligibility and to support requests for reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids.

**Please Note:** Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are useful, but are not, in and of themselves, sufficient documentation to establish eligibility for accommodations in the university setting.

- 1. Testing must be current and must provide clear and specific evidence and identification of a disability.** A student seeking accommodations must provide current documentation (no more than four years old) for a condition which can change over time or which responds to medication. A student seeking accommodation for a condition that does not change over time is encouraged to provide current documentation of their condition; however, re-testing may not be medically necessary to evaluate the student's disability. Because the provision of reasonable accommodations and services is based upon assessment of the current impact of the student's disabilities on their academic functioning, it is in a student's best interest to provide recent documentation.
- 2. Documentation should address the impact of the disability on an individual's functioning within the context of the academic and vocational environment.** Comprehensive assessment should include consideration of the following (as relevant to the nature of the student's disability): neurological functioning, cognitive and emotional functioning, and/or physical capacity. Evaluation of psychological/emotional functioning must be in accordance with DSM-V criteria.
- 3. Evaluation results and interpretation of results is required, as are specific recommendations for accommodations.** Any recommendation for accommodation should be based on objective evidence of a substantial limitation to learning as supported by specific test results or clinical observations. Reports should establish the rationale for any accommodation that is recommended, using test data or clinical data to document the need.
- 4. Documentation must be submitted by a qualified practitioner/diagnostician.** Trained, certified and/or licensed physicians, psychologists, learning disabilities specialists, occupational, physical, or speech-language pathologists, and other professionals are representative of clinicians involved in the process of assessment. Diagnostic reports must include the names, titles, and professional credentials of the evaluators as well as the date(s) of testing and contact information.
- 5. A summary of relevant background information (such as educational, medical and social history)** should be provided, including a description of any accommodation and/or auxiliary aid that has been used in high school or at another institution.
- 6. Students with temporary disabilities seeking accommodations must provide medical documentation on a semester by semester basis.**

## Documenting Learning, Attention and/or Communication Disorders

1. **Testing must be comprehensive.** Multiple tests are required to diagnose a learning disorder or to establish that a substantial limitation in a major life activity currently exists. Domains to be addressed should include (but are not limited to):

**Aptitude.** The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale - Revised (WAIS-R) or WAIS-III 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 acceptable.

**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 - 3 (TOWL-3), Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests - Revised, and the Stanford Diagnostic Mathematics Test.

**Information Processing.** Specific areas of information processing (such as short- and long-term memory, auditory and visual perception/processing and processing speed) must be assessed. Information from sub-tests on the WAIS-R (or WAIS-III), the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Ability, or the Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude-Adult (DTLA-A), as well as other instruments relevant to the presenting learning problem(s) may be used to address these areas.

Assessments of other pertinent life areas, such as vocational interests and aptitudes, are also welcomed.

2. **Tests used to document eligibility must have sound methodology (i.e., be statistically reliable and valid) and should be standardized for use with an adult population.** In addition to actual test scores, **interpretation of results is required.**

It is recognized that the type of documentation will differ depending upon the disability, so each situation is considered on a case-by-case basis. The director of Disability Services is available to consult with students, parents, diagnosticians, and educators regarding these guidelines and the accommodation process at Fitchburg State University.

**To ensure accommodation in a timely manner, it is advised that students submit documentation of an existing disability along with the corresponding Disability Services forms no later than June 1 for the fall semester or no later than Dec.1 for the spring semester.**

**Please submit documentation in a sealed envelope marked confidential to:**

Disability Services  
Fitchburg State University  
160 Pearl St.  
Fitchburg, MA 01420