

Documentation Guidelines for Learning Disabilities

Important note: Students who request accommodations in a higher education setting must submit documentation of their disability from an appropriate evaluator. The purpose of documentation is to provide Disability Resources with objective evidence that the student meets the criteria for having a disability, which is defined as 1) being diagnosed with a condition, and 2) experiencing a functional impairment or substantial limitation in at least one major life activity. Information provided below clarifies the data needed from the evaluator to assist Disability Resources in determining the student's eligibility for accommodations. If the documentation is not adequate in content or does not address the student's current level of functioning and need for accommodations, additional documentation may be requested. Please contact Disability Resources with any questions or concerns regarding these guidelines.

Documentation should thoroughly address each of the following:

1. Basic components of documentation

- Submit information that is typed or printed on letterhead, dated and signed. Evaluators are responsible for ensuring documentation is legible.
- Documentation should be submitted from an appropriate licensed professional who is not related to the student. For learning disorders, this is typically a clinical psychologist or learning disabilities specialist. Evaluators should include their name, title, and credentials.
- Include the student's identifying information, such as full name and date of birth.

2. History to support diagnosis

- Provide information which speaks to the nature of your working relationship with the student. For example, how long have you been treating the student, when was the most recent evaluation or visit?
- Provide any information regarding the student's medical, familial, and social histories which may relate to their diagnosis, symptoms, and/or functional limitations, including previous use of accommodations in an academic setting.
- In accordance with diagnostic criteria for learning disorders, provide evidence that a) symptoms have been present for at least the past 6 months and b) the learning difficulties began in school-age years.

3. Assessment to support diagnosis

- Provide information regarding tools or instruments used to determine a diagnosis, including a brief description of each instrument, data gathered listed in the form of sub-test scores and standard scores with percentiles, and your interpretation of how these scores inform the diagnosis. Also address whether the student's learning difficulties could be better accounted for by intellectual disabilities, uncorrected visual or auditory acuity, other mental or neurological disorders, psychosocial adversity, or inadequate educational instruction.
- Adult norm-referenced psycho-educational measures are preferred. Check lists/rating scales can be helpful, but should not be used as the sole criterion for diagnostic purposes. A comprehensive

evaluation should include multiple measures of intelligence/aptitude and academic achievement in the areas of reading (word reading, reading comprehension), written language (written expression, spelling), and math (number sense, number facts, calculation, mathematical reasoning).

- Appropriate instruments may include, but are not limited to: a structured clinical interview addressing relevant educational, medical, and social history, Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-IV, Wechsler Individual Achievement Tests, Woodcock Johnson Psycho-Ed Battery III-Test of Cognitive Ability, Woodcock Johnson Psycho-Ed Battery III-Test of Achievement, Stanford Diagnostic Reading/Math Test, etc.

4. Diagnostic statement and evidence of current impairment

- Eligibility for accommodations is based on the current impact of the student's disability. Therefore, it is important to provide recent information.
- Provide a clear statement of the diagnosis based on the most recent version of the DSM. Include a summary of substantial discrepancies, strengths and weaknesses. If a diagnosis could not be determined, provide information on plans for further assessment.
- Also based on your assessment, provide information of how the disability currently impairs the student across academic, social, and occupational settings when compared to most people in the general population. For example, which of the following major life activities are impacted by the student's disability: caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working.

5. Recommended accommodations and treatment

- Provide information regarding any medication, treatment, or strategies you would recommend based on the student's diagnosis and current impairment.
- Provide your recommendations for academic accommodations along with rationale for each accommodation based on your assessment of the student. The purpose of accommodations is to best ensure equal access to the learning environment, and accommodations should be based on a demonstrated need rather than a preference. Accommodations correlate with an impairment rather than a diagnosis, so there should be a clear connection between the student's functional limitations and the accommodations being recommended. *Recommendations made by evaluators are taken into consideration based on applicability to postsecondary education and are not guaranteed to be approved as accommodations.*

Please submit the report or address questions regarding documentation to:

Samford University Disability Resources
phone: 205-726-4078
fax: 205-726-2842
email: disability@samford.edu
mailing address: Samford University
Attn: Disability Resources
800 Lakeshore Drive
Birmingham, AL 35229

In compliance with FERPA and the ADA, documentation submitted to Disability Resources is confidential and will not be shared with other internal departments or external entities. Students may request that a copy of their documentation be sent to another institution or released for their personal records.