

Documentation Guidelines for Sensory Disabilities

Important note: Students who request accommodations in a higher education setting must submit documentation of their disability from an appropriate treatment provider. 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 treatment providers 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. Treatment providers are responsible for ensuring documentation is legible.
- Treatment providers should include their name, title, and credentials. Documentation should be submitted from an appropriate licensed professional who is not related to the student. This could include, but is not limited to, an optometrist/ophthalmologist, audiologist, or other trained healthcare professional qualified to make such a diagnosis.
- 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 their most recent evaluation, etc.
- Provide any information regarding the student's medical, familial, and social histories which may relate to their diagnosis, symptoms, and/or functional limitations.
- Provide information regarding the onset, duration and severity of the sensory impairment. This includes information regarding how the disorder has previously impacted the student as well as prior use of accommodations due to the disorder in an academic setting.

3. Assessment to support diagnosis

- Provide information regarding tools or instruments used to determine a diagnosis, including data gathered. Also address whether the student's difficulties could be better accounted for by other medical or mental disorders, intellectual or learning disabilities.
- For students with a **hearing impairment**, the most recent audiological exam (audiogram or audiometric report) results and interpretation should be included. For students with a **visual impairment**, the most recent visual acuity or visual field exam results and interpretation should be included.
- Other appropriate diagnostic tools may include, but are not limited to: results of diagnostic tests/procedures, behavioral observations, reported symptoms, 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 ICD, including diagnostic criteria and symptoms currently endorsed by the student. 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. If the student is currently receiving any medication or treatment, list any potential side effects that may interfere with functioning.
- Provide your recommendations for 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 and living environments, and accommodations should be based on a demonstrated need rather than a preference. Accommodations correlate to 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 treatment providers are taken into consideration based on applicability to postsecondary education and are not guaranteed to be approved as accommodations.*
- Provide a description of technologies currently used or recommended including, but not limited to:
 - hearing aids, assistive listening devices, cochlear implants, sign language interpreters or real-time captioning/text interpreting
 - corrective lenses, low vision assistive devices, digital magnifier or screen reading software, braille, alternative format text

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.