



DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES

General Information

American University, under the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, provides services to qualified students with documented disabilities. Disability Support Services (DSS), part of the Office of Campus Life, determines eligibility for services for students with medical, physical, sensory, and psychological disabilities. Students with learning disabilities or Attention Deficit Disorder are served in the Academic Support Center.

Federal law defines disability as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. It is important to note that a condition in and of itself does not necessarily constitute a disability. The degree of impairment must be significant enough to substantially limit one or more major life activities (e.g. walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working, or taking care of oneself).

To determine eligibility, DSS requires current and comprehensive documentation of the student's disorder. The following information is provided to assist American University students who wish to obtain disability-based academic accommodations.

Documentation Must Be Current and Relevant

Recent and comprehensive documentation about the current functional impact of the disability in a university setting is required in order to determine whether reasonable accommodations can be designed and which specific accommodations can be provided.

The student is responsible for submitting this documentation. All documentation will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and students may be required to provide additional documentation. Students may be required to furnish periodic reevaluation to support continuing accommodation needs depending on the nature of the disability and documentation received. If a disability is a physical or sensory impairment of an unchanging nature, e.g., blindness or congenital deafness, documentation does not need to be updated.

Qualifications of the Evaluator

DSS requires current and comprehensive documentation of the student's condition from a licensed clinical professional or health care provider with the appropriate expertise. This evaluator must be familiar with the history and functional limitations of the student's condition(s). The provider must not be a relative of the student or a friend of the student or student's family. The documentation must include the name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about licensure and/or specialization. All evaluation reports must be typed on letterhead, signed, dated, and legible.

Deadlines

There are no specific deadlines for requesting services through Disability Support Services and students may register with the office at any time during the semester. Please note that retroactive accommodations cannot be granted. However, timely requests for accommodations are important since delay may affect the availability of particular services. In particular, students requesting interpreters or books in alternate format should notify DSS at least 10 weeks prior to the beginning of the semester.

Evaluation of Documentation

Once documentation is received, students are responsible for follow-up with the director of Disability Support Services. Please note that sending documentation to the DSS office does not constitute a formal request for services. Students must undergo a registration and intake process with DSS to initiate the accommodation process. Through registration and intake, students will meet with the director in order to discuss documentation and reasonable accommodation requests. The Director will advise the students of any specific documentation needs or other requirements during the process.

Questions

Questions regarding these guidelines should be directed to Joanne Benica, Director, Disability Support Services at 202-885-3312 (V/TTY) or benica@american.edu.

The above guidelines are intended to inform students about the university's decision-making process but it is not exhaustive since we cannot anticipate every situation. The educational process necessitates change. This publication must be considered informational and not binding on the university. The university reserves the right to amend these guidelines with or without notice. Consult Disability Support Services for additional information.



Disability Support Services

For Completion by Medical Provider:

Name: _____

Title: _____

Credentials: _____

Contact Information: _____

Patient Name: _____

To determine eligibility for reasonable accommodations, American University requires current and comprehensive documentation of the student's condition from a licensed clinical professional or health care provider familiar with the history and functional limitations of the student's condition(s). The provider giving the below information must not be a relative of the student or a friend of the student or student's family. Thank you for your time and support in providing assistance to this student. Please return this form and your responses on professional letterhead as soon as possible via fax, email, or mail.

1. the presenting problem and relevant history
2. a diagnosis (DSM if applicable), duration, and severity of disability
3. substantial disability-based limitations and, specifically, how they relate to the educational environment
4. whether these substantial limitations continue to be the case when following recommended treatment
5. substantial medication side effects, if any
6. suggested accommodations in an educational setting

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