

## A T Still University of Health Sciences

### Documentation Guidelines for a Psychological Disability

Students who are seeking accommodations must submit documentation to verify the existence of psychological disabilities. The purpose of the documentation is to determine eligibility for academic accommodation(s) and the type of accommodation(s) ATSU can reasonably provide. A diagnosis of psychological disorder alone does not necessarily assure the applicant of accommodations. Eligibility to receive accommodations under applicable laws is based upon the existence of a disability that currently substantially limits a major life activity. Examples of psychological disability include schizophrenia, manic depression, personality disorders, post-traumatic stress disorders, anxiety disorders, delusional disorders and eating disorders.

The following guidelines assure that the documentation verifies eligibility and adequately supports request for reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids. The Director of Learning Resources coordinates student accommodations for disabilities and is available by telephone at (660) 626-2424.

1. Documentation of a specific medical disability should be comprehensive and should include a diagnostic interview and any applicable ICD-9 or DSM-IV codes. All test scores, assessment data and laboratory or diagnostic results, should be included. The assessment or evaluation should result in a clearly stated diagnosis.
2. An individualized Education Plan or a 504 Plan developed at another time or for another school, even if it is for the condition reported, is inadequate documentation for a medical disability; however, it can be provided as a supplement to documentation.
3. Clinical specialists in the area of disability should provide all assessments, interviews and diagnoses.

NOTE: A clinical impression noted on a prescription pad is not considered adequate documentation of a disability

4. The diagnostic interview must include presenting problems, developmental, medical and psychosocial histories, family history and discussions of dual diagnoses where indicated.

5. Testing must be current and completed when the student is an adult. Because the provision of reasonable accommodations is based upon assessment of the disability on current academic functioning, recent and appropriate documentation is required. Functional limitations (significant weaknesses) must be identified.
6. The documentation should provide clear and specific evidence of the presence of a disability and the resulting impairment, as distinguished from loss of ability to function in society. Acute conditions might lead to limitations that could be considered disabilities. The diagnosis should be in direct language and avoid such terms as "suggests" or "is indicative of." If a disability is not present, that should be clearly stated in the report.
7. The following psychological conditions have been specifically excluded from coverage under the ADA: transvestitism, transsexualism, pedophilia, voyeurism, gender identity disorders, compulsive gambling, kleptomania, pyromania, or disorders resulting from illegal use of drugs.
8. Professionals conducting assessment and rendering diagnoses of specific psychological disabilities must be qualified to do so. Qualified professionals include licensed and board certified clinical specialists who are experienced in working with an adult population. Diagnostic reports must include the names, titles, and credentials of the evaluators and the date(s) of the testing.
9. The diagnostic summary rules out alternative explanations for academic problems and suggests accommodations with reasons for the specific disability. Each accommodation recommended by the evaluator must include a rationale.
10. Reports should be legible, i.e., they should be typed in a readable font on unblemished paper. Reports in digital format are not acceptable.

Several situations where individuals do not meet eligibility criteria include, but are not limited to

1. Letters or reports used as documentation from such educational professionals as psychologists, educational specialists, school counselors or speech pathologists who are not licensed to make a medical or psychiatric diagnosis.
2. Psycho-educational test report that does not specifically state the individual has disabilities.
3. A 504 Plan that is not supported by a diagnosis of a learning disability.

Adapted from the following guidelines: Association for Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD), The Ohio State University, The University of California at Berkeley, The University of Connecticut, The Educational Testing Service, the Medical College of Ohio and The University of Toledo and A Student Affairs Guide to the ADA and Disability Issues (Ryan & McCarthy, 1994)