

STUDENT DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER



DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES FOR PSYCHIATRIC DISABILITIES

Assessment Providers

Psychiatric disabilities are a generic term referring to a variety of conditions involving psychological, emotional, cognitive, and/or behavioral disorders and symptoms. Professionals conducting assessments, rendering diagnoses of psychiatric disabilities, and making recommendations for accommodations must be qualified to do so. It is essential that professional qualifications include (1) comprehensive training and relevant expertise in differential diagnosis of psychiatric disorders and (2) appropriate licensure/certification. The diagnostician should be an impartial individual who is not a family member, friend or have a personal relationship of any kind with the student. Qualified professionals may include licensed:

Psychologists/Neuropsychologists; Psychiatrists/Neuropsychiatrists; Psychiatric nurse practitioners; other relevantly trained medical doctors

Assessment Documentation

Due to the changing nature of psychiatric disabilities, it is essential that student provide recent and appropriate documentation from a qualified professional. Since reasonable accommodations are based upon the current impact of the disability, the documentation must address the individual's current level of functioning and the need for accommodations. The documentation must be a comprehensive diagnostic/clinical evaluation and include:

1. Diagnostician's name, title, license/certification credentials, area of specialization, phone/fax number, address, signature, and date(s) of treatment
2. Diagnostic interview to include historical information (medical, developmental, educational, and psychosocial)
3. Description of current functional limitations in different settings with understanding that a psychological disorder usually presents itself across a variety of settings other than just the academic domain and that its expression is often influenced by context-specific variables (e.g., school-based performance)
4. Clear statement of the individual's diagnosis (DSM-IV Multiaxial classification), with a description of diagnostic tests, methods, and/or criteria used.
5. Description of expected progression or stability of the impact of the condition over time
6. Information regarding kind of treatment and duration/consistency of therapy
7. Alternative diagnoses or explanations should be ruled out
8. Recommendations and rationale for reasonable accommodations

Note: Not all conditions listed in DSM-IV are disabilities or even impairments for the purposes of Section 504/ADA. Therefore, a diagnosis does not in and of itself meet the definition of a disability necessitating reasonable accommodations under these laws.