

Documentation for Students with Disabilities

Summary

The Center for Accommodation and Access requires official documentation to determine the need and kind of accommodations Columbus State University provides.

Purpose

This document explains the need and purpose of documentation, along with the responsibilities.

Policy

The first purpose of verifying documentation is to establish the existence of a disability as defined under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, P.L. 101-336 (July 26, 1990), as amended by P.L. 110-325 (September 25, 2008). Under these statutes, the severity of a disability or degree of life functions is more important than the name of the impairment or the disability although both are important. The second purpose of documentation is to describe and document the functional impact of the disability to assist in establishing a need for accommodations.

To establish the existence of a disability under these statutes, the documentation should demonstrate that the condition is a "mental or physical impairment that substantially limits a major life activity...." Life activities that are typically of great importance to college students are such functions as reading, listening, writing, learned speaking, as well as the basic functions of eating, sleeping, sitting, etc.

However, merely establishing the existence of a disability under Section 504 does only one thing: It means that the individual has a right to access a program and services. It does not mean that the need for accommodations has been established.

What is the Functional Impact of the Disability?

In order for the University to be able to determine whether reasonable accommodations can be designed and what those accommodations can be, we need detailed information about the IMPACT of the disability. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, P.L. 101-336 (July 26, 1990), as amended by P.L.

110–325 (September 25, 2008) specifically restrict colleges from having pre-packaged accommodations and automatically provided to persons based on the diagnostic name or category of the disability. We must look at each individual's disability and the functional impact of that disability.

Who Provides Verifying Documentation?

In most cases, documentation will be needed from licensed psychologists, medical doctors, psychiatrists, and/or neurologists. The Board of Regents requires specific documentation for learning disabilities, psychological disabilities, and cognitive disabilities. The Office of Disability Services has written criteria for the different categories of disabilities including medical and physical disabilities. Students should take these criteria to their health care providers to ensure proper documentation.

See Board of Regent's policy of the University System of Georgia for learning disorders: http://www.usg.edu/academic_affairs_handbook/section3/handbook/C679

How Current Should the Documentation Be?

In general, colleges and universities across the nation ask for documentation that is between two and five years old. The assessment of the student should be done as an adult (age 18 and over). The documentation should describe the "current" functional impact of the disability.

Who Must Provide Verifying Documentation?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are quite specific in that the student is responsible for providing adequate and current documentation.

The Office of Disability Services may assist students in acquiring adequate documentation from their health care providers, after the student has demonstrated that he/she has made a reasonable effort to do so. For instance, if the documentation lacks important information such as a signature, accommodation recommendations, or a functional impact statement, the Office of Disability Service may contact the health care provider to provide the information. This is done on a case-by-case basis. Students will need to request that the Office of Disability Services intervene on their behalf in obtaining information if their repeated attempts do not yield appropriate information.

(Quote from Jane Jarrow, PhD, Focus on Documentation, DAIS News, Vol 1, #12, 1997, (p.5 approx.) See also <http://daisweb.com/>

Related USG Policy

4.1.5 Students with Disabilities

Last Update

4/15/15

Responsible Authority

Director of the Center for Accommodation and Access