

Guidelines for Documentation of Disabilities for Adults and Adolescents

*Nazareth College of Rochester Office for Students with Disabilities
Nazareth College's Guidelines for Documentation of Disabilities are adopted from
AHEAD (Association of Higher Education and Disability) "Best Practices Disability
Documentation in Higher Education." 2006.*

The following guidelines for documentation are offered to students and prospective students to facilitate the process by which persons with disabilities are given reasonable accommodations at Nazareth College.

1. Qualifications of the Evaluator

Professionals conducting assessments, rendering diagnoses of learning disabilities and making recommendation for appropriate accommodations must be qualified to do so.

The name, title and professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about license or certification as well as the area of specialization, should be clearly stated in the documentation. A clear link between the professional making the diagnosis and the disability is strongly encouraged (e.g. and orthopedic limitation might be documented by a physician, but not a licensed psychologist.). The professional diagnosing a disability should have no personal relationship with the student.

2. Documentation

The provision of all reasonable accommodations and services is based upon assessment of the impact of the student's disabilities on his or her academic performance at a given time in the student's life and current level of functioning in the post-secondary education setting. A school plan such as an individualized education program (IEP) or a 504 plan is insufficient documentation, but it can be included as part of a more comprehensive assessment. Prescription pad notes are not acceptable documentation. In some instances documentation may be outdated or inadequate in scope or content. It may not address the student's current level of functioning or need for accommodations. Therefore, it is in the student's best interest to provide recent and appropriate documentation relevant to the student's learning environment. Documentation should ordinarily be no more than 3 years old. Quality documentation includes a clear statement that describes how the condition was diagnosed, provides information on the functional impact, and details the typical progression or prognosis of the condition.

Any request for changes in accommodations may warrant additional documentation.

All documentation should include specific recommendations for accommodations as well as an explanation as to why each accommodation is recommended. It is helpful when documentation provides information on expected changes on the functional impact on a disability over time.

3. Substantiation of the Learning Disability Assessment

Minimally, the domains to be addressed must include the following:

1. Aptitude

A complete intellectual assessment with all subtests and standard scores reported.

2. Academic Achievement

A comprehensive academic achievement assessment is essential. The assessment should include current levels of academic functioning in relevant areas such as reading (decoding and comprehension) mathematics, and oral and written language.

3. Information Processing

Specific areas of information processing (e.g., short-and long-term memory, auditory and visual perception/processing, processing speed, executive functioning and motor ability) should be assessed

Specific Diagnosis

Individual "learning styles," "learning differences," "academic problems": and "test difficulty or anxiety," in and of themselves, do not constitute a learning disability. It is important to rule out alternative explanations for problems in learning such as emotional, attentional or motivational problems that may be interfering with learning but do not constitute a learning disability.

Test Scores

Standard scores and/or percentiles should be provided for all normed measures. The data should logically reflect a substantial limitation to learning for which the student is requesting accommodation.

4. Substantiation of a Mental Health Impairment

Documentation of an Emotional or Psychological Disability should include:

- A current DSM-IV diagnosis from an appropriate licensed professional. This would include a description of the specific symptoms associated with the diagnosis and any other conditions or dual diagnoses that may accompany the primary diagnosis.
- Result of any psychological and/or neuropsychiatric testing
- A summary of all prior diagnoses and treatment from the treating professionals
- An educational history describing how the disability and its symptoms have affected the student's academic performance and quality of life.
- A current treatment plan from a licensed mental health professional. This would include any prescribed medications, intensity and duration of counseling or psychotherapy, indications for adjunctive therapies (support groups, health regimes).

5. Documentation for Other Disabilities

DEAFNESS AND/OR HARD OF HEARING:

An audiogram from a certified audiologist indicating air and bone conduction thresholds.

VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS :

A medical eye report from a certified ophthalmologist.

MOBILITY AND OTHER HEALTH IMPAIRMENTS :

A statement of disability including any recommended accommodations signed by a treating physician.

5. Confidentiality

Nazareth College has a responsibility to maintain confidentiality of the evaluation and may not release any part of the documentation without the student's informed and written consent.

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