



Guidelines for Documentation of Disability

THE NEED FOR DOCUMENTATION:

Under federal law (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the American with Disabilities Act of 1990), individuals with disabilities are defined as having “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual; a record of such impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment.” Individuals with disabilities are protected from discrimination in admissions and employment. With adequate documentation of the current impact of the disability, individuals are entitled to reasonable accommodations. Therefore, documentation serves two primary purposes in post-secondary education. First, documentation must establish that the individual has, or has been considered to have, a disability, and therefore is protected from discrimination. Second, the documentation must describe the functional impact of the disability so that potential appropriate accommodations can be identified.

GENERAL DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES:

Documentation of a disability consists of an evaluation by an appropriate professional. Included must be a clear statement of the diagnosis, the basis for the diagnosis, and the **current** impact of the disability as it relates to the accommodation request. As appropriate to the disability, the documentation should include the following elements:

1. A diagnostic statement identifying the disability, date of the most current diagnostic evaluation, and the date of the original diagnosis.
2. A description of the diagnostic tests, methods and/or criteria used including specific test results (including standardized testing scores) and the examiner’s narrative interpretation.
3. A description of the current functional impact of the disability. This may be in the form of an examiner’s narrative, and/or an interview, but must have a rational relationship to diagnostic assessments. For learning disabilities, *current documentation is defined using adult norms*.
4. A statement indicating treatments, medications, and/or assistive devices/services currently prescribed or in use.
5. A description of the expected progression or stability of the impact of the disability over time, particularly the next five years.
6. A history of previous accommodations and their impact.

7. The credentials of the diagnosing professional(s), if not clear from the letterhead or other forms. Please note that diagnosing professionals shall not be family members or others with a close personal relationship with the individual being evaluated.
8. Documentation prepared for specific non-educational venues (i.e. Social Security Administration, or Department of Veteran's Affairs, etc.) may not meet these criteria.
9. IEP or 504 plans *are not be considered sufficient documentation* unless accompanied by a current and complete evaluation after the age of 18.

Recommendations for accommodations, adaptive devices, assistive services, compensatory strategies, and/or collateral support services will be considered within the context of the individual's current program. Accommodation decisions are made on a case-by-case basis, considering the impact of a particular student's disability within the specific context in which that student must function.

Beyond the more objective determination of a disability and its impact provided by external documentation, Eastern Mennonite University recognizes that input from the individual with a disability is also a rich and important source of information on the impact of the disability, and on the effectiveness of accommodations.

Records from school divisions concerning students exiting from special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), are given due consideration in determining the presence of a qualifying disability and making decisions regarding accommodations.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Nationally, most institutions of higher education utilize guidelines developed by the Association of Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) and the Educational Testing Service (ETS). These guidelines can be found on their websites.