

Services for Students with Disabilities

Interpreting Services

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Documentation Guidelines

The following documentation guidelines have been established for three primary reasons. First, these guidelines have been recommended by various agencies to define “qualified student with a disability” so that sufficient documentation of a disability that is in accordance with the law can be provided. Second, these guidelines are provided so that the necessary Columbia College Chicago (Columbia) officials can make informed decisions about providing reasonable accommodations and better provide equal access to students with disabilities. Third, and most importantly, these guidelines exist to empower both students with disabilities and the Columbia officials that serve students with disabilities to more fully understand students’ disabilities and to be better able to advocate for them.

Guidelines for All Disabilities

The following guidelines apply to documentation of any type of disability. If applicable, see also the specific criteria for documenting learning disabilities, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder or attention deficit disorder (AD/HD), psychiatric disabilities, physical disabilities, and/or chronic illnesses at Columbia.

Documentation of a disability must be provided by a qualified professional who is unrelated to the student being evaluated. This would include, but is not limited to, a medical doctor, nurse practitioner, psychiatrist, and/or at least a Master’s-level school psychologist, clinical psychologist, counseling psychologist, neuropsychologist, or social worker.

In general, documentation should be no more than 3 years old. For individuals who have learning disabilities and/or AD/HD, it is not necessary to update documentation after age 18. In other words, you must present documentation that is current within 3 years or, if the documentation is more than 3 years old, it must be from when you were at least 18. In addition, for some chronic medical conditions, it may not be necessary to provide documentation within this 3-year timeframe.

Documentation must state the nature of a student's disability/diagnosis and how this disability impacts the student's daily functioning, especially in academic areas. Reports of any testing done to document the disability should be included (a test-score summary is recommended), and areas of strengths and weakness should be indicated. The documentation must also provide recommendations for how to best address the student's disability-related needs, whether through remediation, accommodation, and/or other means. A doctor's note indicating that a student has a particular disability, is taking a particular medication, and/or needs a particular accommodation does not constitute adequate documentation of any disability.

An IEP or 504 Plan is not appropriate documentation of disability at the post-secondary level.

A psychological educational evaluation report is required for conditions such as learning disabilities and AD/HD; however, for other disabilities for which a formal report that satisfies the above criteria may not be available, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office (SSD Office) at (312) 369-8296 or ssd@colum.edu or go to <https://students.colum.edu/ssd>, for a Verification of Disability form.

Please contact the Interpreting Services Coordinator at (312) 369-8295 or (dwilborn@colum.edu) with questions regarding documentation for deafness or hard-of-hearing status.

Guidelines for Specific Disabilities

Learning Disabilities

In addition to meeting the general guidelines, this documentation must also:

- Indicate a significant discrepancy between IQ and achievement;
- Demonstrate a processing deficit (such as slow speed of processing, poor visual discrimination, etc.), which explains the underachievement;
- Explain how other conditions (such as sensory deficits, attention problems, etc.) were excluded as an explanation for underachievement;
- Include a history and background section;
- Include a test score summary.

Acceptable tests to assess for IQ, achievement, and/or processing include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale
- Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales
- Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Cognitive Abilities and Tests of Achievement

- Wechsler Individual Achievement Test
- Wide Range Achievement Test
- Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals
- Test of Adolescent and Adult Language
- Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing
- Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests
- Nelson-Denny Reading Test
- Gray Oral Reading Test and/or Gray Silent Reading Tests
- Test of Written Language
- KeyMath 3 Diagnostic Assessment
- Test of Visual-Perceptual Skills

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) / Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD)

In addition to meeting the general guidelines, this documentation must also:

- Satisfy the criteria set forth in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-V;
- Indicate the subtype (primarily inattentive, primarily hyperactive/impulsive, or combined);
- Include reports of continuous performance tasks (CPTs);
- Include reports of symptom checklists;
- Include reports of neurological testing to document AD/HD;
- Provide information on the history of difficulties;
- Provide information on previous and current treatments/interventions and their success;
- List current medication(s) and possible side-effects/impacts on academic functioning.

Psychological/Psychiatric Disabilities

In addition to meeting the general guidelines, this documentation must also:

- Include any reports elucidating the nature, severity, and specific DSM-V diagnosis of the disability;
- List current medication(s) and possible side-effects/impacts on academic functioning.
- Verification of Disability form may be required.

Physical Disabilities & Chronic Illness

In addition to meeting the general guidelines, this documentation must also:

- Include any reports detailing the formal diagnosis of a student's disability/illness with any functioning and learning limitations posed;
- List current medication(s) and possible side-effects/impacts on academic functioning.
- Verification of Disability form may be required.

Other

Some of the aforesaid requirements may not be applicable to requests for “assistance animals” under the Fair Housing Act or service animals. Where appropriate, please contact the SSD Office for more information.