

# New Mexico Tech Counseling & Disability Center

## **GUIDELINES FOR DOCUMENTATION OF STUDENTS WITH A SPECIFIC LEARNING DISORDER, PHYSICAL DISABILITY, OR A PSYCHIATRIC/PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDER**

Date: 01/22/2015

### **Purpose**

To provide uniform guidelines for documentation for students seeking accommodations from NM Tech on the basis of a diagnosed Specific Learning Disorder, a Psychiatric/Psychological Disorder, or Physical Disability in accordance with section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the American with Disabilities Act of 1990.

### **Policy**

To request accommodations students are encouraged to submit documentation of their disability to the Counseling and Disability Services Office (located in Fidel Center, 835-6619/5443, [counseling@admin.nmt.edu](mailto:counseling@admin.nmt.edu)). This is to assist in providing accommodations that are both reasonable and appropriate. Services will not be denied to any student based solely on a lack of documentation.

### **Procedure**

Students who are seeking accommodations from the Office of Counseling and Disability Services (OCDS) on the basis of a diagnosed specific learning disability, a physical disability, or a psychiatric/psychological disorder are requested to submit documentation of their disability. This could include diagnosis by a medical doctor, psychiatrist, licensed educational diagnostician, licensed doctoral-level clinical allied health professional, doctoral-level education psychologist, licensed masters level social worker, or a combination of such professionals with the experience in the diagnosis of learning disabilities or AD/HD, physical disability, or a psychiatric/psychological disorders. The qualification of the evaluator should include comprehensive training and direct experience with the disability population. Protection under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act civil rights statutes is based upon a disability that currently “substantially limits” a major life activity, including learning.

The prospective student providing documentation might already be familiar with Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Educational information included in the IEP which identifies past services and accommodations can be very helpful in determining accommodations at the post-secondary level.

Since handwritten copies of notes/letters are sometimes difficult to read, it is suggested that any documentation presented to OCDS be typed or word processed.

All documentation of a disability submitted to the Counseling and Health Center will be stored in a confidential file room (as per HIPAA regulations), and maintained separate from academic records. No information about the student's disability will be revealed to any member of the NM Tech faculty or staff, or any other person without the expressed written consent of the student, and only on the basis of a clear, educational, need-to-know basis.

## Learning Disabilities

The following guidelines are provided for students identifying themselves as having a learning disability. A student with a learning disability is encouraged to provide documentation from professionals who are considered qualified to evaluate and diagnose specific learning disabilities and who have additional training and experience in the assessment of learning problems in adults.

### A. COMPREHENSIVE TESTING

The following is not intended to be an exhaustive list or to restrict assessment in other pertinent and helpful areas such as vocational interest and attitudes. Domains to be addressed might include but are not limited to:

- 1) **APTITUDE:** The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised (WAIS-R) with subtest scores is the preferred instrument. The Woodcock Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery-Revised, Test of Cognitive Ability, or the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale: Fourth Edition, are also acceptable measures.
- 2) **ACHIEVEMENT:** Current levels of functioning in reading, mathematics, and written language are required. Acceptable instruments include the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery-Revised; Tests of Achievement; Wechsler Individual Achievement (WIAT); Stanford achievement tests such as the Test of Written Language-2 (TOWL-2).
- 3) **INFORMATION PROCESSING:** Specific areas of information processing (e.g. short and long-term memory; auditory and visual perception/processing; processing speed). Information from subtests on the WAIS-R or the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Ability, as well as other instruments relevant to the presenting problem(s), may be used to address these areas.

### B. CURRENT TESTING

For testing to be current it must have been conducted within the past three years. Because the provision of "all reasonable accommodations and services" is based upon assessment of the **current** impact of the student's disabilities on his/her academic performance, it is in the student's best interest to provide recent and appropriate documentation.

### **C. PRIOR ACCOMMODATIONS AND/OR AUXILIARY AIDS**

A description of any accommodation and/or auxiliary aid that have been used at the secondary or postsecondary level might be discussed. This includes information about the specific conditions under which the accommodation was used (e.g., standardized testing, final exams, etc.) and whether or not it benefited the student. If no accommodations have been previously provided, a detailed explanation as to why none have been used, and the rationale supporting the student's current need of such accommodation can be provided. The diagnostic report should include specific recommendations for accommodations as well as an explanation as to why each accommodation is recommended. Reasonable accommodations and services should be based upon assessment of the impact of the student's disability on his/her academic performance.

#### **Attention Deficit Disorder**

The following guidelines are provided for students identifying themselves as having Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) to ensure their documentation is complete and appropriate.

- 1) A clear statement of the DSM-V diagnosis;
- 2) A summary of procedures and instruments used to make the diagnosis;
- 3) A summary of the evaluation results, including standardized scores;
- 4) A history of past and present symptoms which meet the criteria for diagnosis;
- 5) A Medical History relating to current use of medication and the impact on the student's ability to meet the demands of an academic program;
- 6) A statement of functional limitations and the expected impact of the student's academic performance.
- 7) Recommendations for academic accommodations to help compensate for the disability.

#### **Psychiatric/Psychological Disorder**

The following guidelines are provided for students identifying themselves as having Psychiatric/Psychological Disorder to ensure documentation is complete and appropriate. In providing this documentation it is important to note that the NM Tech Counseling Center provides short term licensed professional therapy to help students at particular times of stress during their academic career. Students with a chronic mental health illness may be referred off campus for ongoing services and treatment.

#### **A. A DSM-V MULTIAXIAL DIAGNOSIS**

A thorough explanation of diagnosis including symptomology and plans for treatment could be included. A listing of the “functional limitation” imposed by the disorder and how it might impact the student’s ability to perform to his/her potential in an academic setting could also be included.

#### **B. PRIOR ACCOMMODATIONS AND/OR AUXILIARY AIDS**

A description of any accommodation and/or auxiliary aid that has been used at the secondary or post-secondary level should be discussed. Include information about the specific conditions under which the accommodation was used (e.g., standardized testing, final exams, etc.). Include whether or not it benefited the student.

#### **C. A LIST OF PSYCHOACTIVE MEDICATIONS**

A complete list of psychoactive medications the student is taking, including dosage levels and likely side effects. If the names of other medication on the student’s pharmacological regimen are available, they too could be included.

### **Physical Disability**

Any physical disability which has been documented by a physician or health care provider may also be accommodated in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the American with Disabilities Act of 1990. Disabilities may include visual, hearing, mobility, or other physical disability.

#### **A. DIAGNOSIS**

A thorough explanation of diagnosis including symptomology and plans for treatment could be included. It should be clear and give specific evidence of the disorders in question. A listing of the “functional limitation” imposed by the disorder and how it might impact the student’s ability to perform to his/her potential in an academic setting might also be included. A history of the diagnosis and the current status would be helpful.

#### **B. PRIOR ACCOMMODATIONS AND/OR AUXILIARY AIDS**

A description of any accommodation and/or auxiliary aid that has been used at the secondary or post-secondary level should be discussed. Include information about the specific conditions under which the accommodation was used (e.g., standardized testing, final exams, etc.). Include whether or not it benefited the student.

Appropriate reasonable accommodations and services are individually determined by the Counseling and Disability Services professionally licensed staff in consultation with the student. **All documentation provided to OCDS is confidential.** It can be submitted to:

Janet J. Ward, LISW  
Director, Counseling and Disability Services  
Fidel Center  
New Mexico Tech  
801 Leroy Place  
Socorro, NM 87801

PHONE: 575-835-5443/6619  
FAX: 575-835-6001  
Email: [jward@admin.nmt.edu](mailto:jward@admin.nmt.edu)

### Appeal Process

Students who have applied for reasonable academic accommodations in compliance with these guidelines who are denied such accommodations may appeal their request to the Affirmative Action Officer at NM Tech. The appeal must be filed 14 days from the date of notification denying accommodation.

### Review

The Vice President for Student and University Relations is responsible for the review of this operating policy by July 31<sup>st</sup> of each year.