

# **GUIDELINES FOR DISABILITY DOCUMENTATION**

## **North Dakota Colleges and Universities**

### **Disability Services Council**

The North Dakota Colleges and Universities Disability Services use documentation of disability to 1) establish whether an individual is a person with a disability and 2) provide a rationale for identifying and implementing reasonable accommodations.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, define disability as “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities.” Major life activities include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working, sitting, standing, lifting, reaching, sleeping, and mental/emotional processes such as thinking, concentrating, and interacting with others. The ADA also protects individuals from discrimination if they have a record of such impairments or if they are regarded as having such impairments.

Formal evaluation procedures, clinical narratives, and the individual's self report will be used to determine appropriate and reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. The approved accommodations and strategies must logically relate to the functional limitations described in the documentation.

DSC has incorporated the Association of Higher Education and Disability's (AHEAD) (2004) seven essential elements of quality documentation into their criteria for documentation.

### **DISABILITY DOCUMENTATION SHOULD INCLUDE:**

1. A **clear diagnostic statement** that describes how the condition was diagnosed, information on the functional impact, and details on the progression or prognosis of the condition. Dates of the original and current diagnostic evaluations need to be included.
2. A **description of the diagnostic methodology**, criteria, evaluation methods, procedures, tests used, dates administered, clinical narrative, observations, and specific results that are congruent with the particular disability.

*\*\*Documentation for learning disabilities must include test scores and interpretation of aptitude, achievement, and, when possible, information processing. Tests used should be current and appropriate for assessing adolescents and adults.*

3. A description of the current functional limitations and how those limitations affect the student in a major life activity. A “functional limitation” is defined as an adverse effect on a major life activity caused by the disability. Functional limitations should be described in terms of how severely the activity is affected by the disability; the frequency with which the activity is affected and how pervasive the disability is in the performance of the major life activity.

4. A **description of current and past accommodations, services and/or medications and their effectiveness** in relation to the functional impact of the disability. Information about any significant side effects from current treatment or medication and its effect on physical, perceptual, behavioral, and cognitive performance is helpful.
5. A **description of the expected progression or stability of the disability** including the expected changes over time, information on the cyclical or episodic nature of the disability and any known suspected environmental triggers.
6. The **credentials of the evaluator/provider** that are relevant to the diagnosed disability. The professional should be licensed or otherwise properly credentialed, have appropriate and comprehensive training, relevant experience, and have no personal relationship with the individual being evaluated or diagnosed.
7. Although not required, professionals are invited to make **recommendations for accommodations, adaptive devices, assistive services, compensatory strategies, and/or support services** that are logically related to the functional limitation. College disability services offices, however, are not under any obligation to provide or adopt recommendations made by outside entities.

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