



Documentation Guidelines: Psychiatric Disabilities

Center for Academic Success and Achievement
Disability/Access Services

Students who are seeking accommodations or academic support services on the basis of psychiatric disability are required to submit documentation to verify eligibility under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the ADA of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2009. The following guidelines are provided to assure that documentation is appropriate to verify eligibility. Psychiatric disability is a generic term used to refer to a variety of conditions involving psychological, emotional, and behavioral disorders and syndromes. Criteria used to diagnose a psychiatric disorder are found in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition (DSM-5, American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

Qualifications of the Evaluator

The following licensed professionals are considered qualified to evaluate and diagnose psychiatric disabilities:

- Psychologists
- Psychiatrists
- Neuropsychologists
- Neuropsychiatrists
- Clinical Social Workers
- Licensed counselors

The name, title and professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about license or certification (e.g., licensed psychologist) as well as the area of specialization, employment and state/province in which the individual practices should be clearly stated in the documentation. Reports should be on letterhead, typed, dated, signed, and otherwise legible.

Documentation

Documentation should be recent ***within six months*** and should validate the need for services based on the individual's *current* level of functioning in the educational setting. If the comprehensive diagnostic report is more than six months old, the student must submit a letter from a qualified professional that provides an update of the diagnosis, a description of the current level of functioning and a rationale for accommodations.

Qualified documentation should include:

- Historical information, diagnostic interview and/or psychological assessment
- Specific diagnosis
- Description of current functional limitations in the academic setting as well as across other settings
- Relevant information regarding medications expected to be in use and the anticipated impact on the student in an academic setting
- Current treatment
- Recommendations for academic accommodations

Tests for Assessing Psychiatric Disabilities in Adolescents and Adults

In addition to clinical interviews, tests may be used to support the presence of functional limitations.

- **Rating scales:** Categorize and quantify the nature of the impairment; no single test or subtest should be used solely to substantiate a diagnosis.
- **Neuropsychological and psychoeducational testings:** Cognitive, achievement, and personality profiles may uncover attention or information-processing deficits; no single test or subtest should be used solely to substantiate a diagnosis.
- **Personality tests**