

CUNY Documentation Guidelines

Welcome to CUNY, the nation's largest public urban university, which is deeply committed to equal access and educational opportunity for individuals with disabilities. Students with disabilities have a long and storied history of making vibrant contributions to all aspects of University life. Indeed, individuals with disabilities are not only counted among CUNY's best and brightest students, they also participate richly in the University's student life. Currently, the CUNY Coalition for Students with Disabilities continues in this leadership tradition, as its delegates from each campus help to shape CUNY policy and celebrate the rich contributions to University life of people with disabilities.

Each of CUNY's 19 campuses feature an office of disability services that, with the support of the University's Office of Student Affairs, works individually and collectively to provide reasonable accommodations and support services to CUNY students with disabilities.

There are more than 9,000 students with disabilities currently enrolled at CUNY who have demonstrated the ability to meet the academic and technical standards of the colleges in which they are enrolled. These students with disabilities provide appropriate documentation of their disabilities to their college offices of disability services to verify and clarify their needs for reasonable accommodations.

The following represents a summary of the guidelines used by CUNY's disability services professionals as the necessary elements to assess the appropriateness of disability documentation for the purpose of verifying students' needs for reasonable accommodation. These guiding principles have been endorsed and represent the consensus of the CUNY's disability services professionals, who serve as the members of the CUNY Committee of Student Disability Issues (COSDI) and by the CUNY office of Students Affairs.

Diversity Statement

The CUNY Office of Disability Services is invested in the success of all students within the CUNY system. The celebration of diversity is evident in CUNY's mission statement, "...the University will continue to maintain and expand its commitment to academic excellence and to the provision of equal access and opportunity for students, faculty and staff from all ethnic and racial groups and from both sexes." CUNY is committed to providing access and opportunity to all students with disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act 1990 (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the amendment, Section 508, of the Rehabilitation Act, and all other current legislation.

Initiating Services

Each Cuny campus has a designated disability services provider. While the location of the office may vary, the service is available on every campus.

Unlike high school, where students are automatically provided with testing and accommodation services, on the college campus it is the student's responsibility to self-disclose and to provide documentation in order to receive accommodations. The laws that govern the K-12 environment are not the same as those that govern the college environment.

Documentation Guidelines

General guidelines

Students diagnosed with a disability that request services or accommodations are required to provide appropriate and current documentation. In the case of multiple disabilities, students must provide documentation for each disability for which accommodations are requested. Prior documentation such as an individualized Education Program (IEP) or a history of receiving accommodations from a former school does not necessarily validate the need for services or continuation of accommodations at the university level. This history can, however, be attached to the current documentation as part of a comprehensive assessment battery. The determination of reasonable accommodation on campus is based on satisfying the documentation guidelines outlined below and a clear demonstration of the functional limitations on the student's performance in an academic setting. These guidelines apply for all disability types recognized by the ADA.

- A qualified professional should conduct the evaluation and provide name, title, professional credentials, including information about state licensure or certification number.
- The evaluation should include the diagnosis (ICD-10 or DSM-IV) and be dated. The document will include the original signature of the professional responsible for the assessment of functioning.
- The evaluation must be current. Disabilities may change in severity over time and documentation should support current accommodation needs.
- Recommendations and rationale for accommodations and/or assistive technology must be based on the analysis of the functional impact of the diagnosis.
- Services, accommodations and/or assistive technology will be determined on an individual basis upon documentation review and consultation with the disability service professional at each campus.
- Insufficient documentation may result in the delay of services and accommodations.

Key Points: Qualified evaluator; current evaluation; evaluation signed and dated by evaluator; recommendations for accommodations. (Note: the term *evaluation* and *documentation* are used according to which is more appropriate for disability type. Both constitute acceptable reports or material for supporting services and accommodations.)

- **Learning Disability Documentation Guidelines**

The evaluation should:

- Be conducted by an evaluator with comprehensive training with adolescents and adults with learning disabilities.
- Be evaluated within the last three years of high school (for those diagnosed in school).
- Include a description of functional impact of diagnosis and include specifics of how the learning process may be affected by the diagnosis; and should include recommendations and rationale for accommodations and/or assistive technology.
- Include test scores to document the nature and severity of the disability.
- Adult students not previously diagnosed must provide appropriate documentation as per guidelines for students not previously diagnosed.

- **ADD/ADHD Documentation Guidelines**

The evaluation should:

- Be conducted by a qualified professional whose background includes training and relevant experience in the full range of psychiatric disorders.
- Be within the past three years and be updated as required.
- Include a summary of relevant historical information including initial onset, diagnosis, medication and indication of ADD/ADHD throughout adolescence or adulthood.
- Identify functional limitation in the educational setting.
- Include rationale for specific recommendations or accommodations.

- **Psychological & Psychiatric Guidelines**

The evaluation should:

- Be made by a professional who is qualified with appropriate training in diagnosing psychological and/ psychiatric disorder.
- Be within the past three years and be updated as required.
- Include a summary of relevant historical information including initial onset, diagnosis, medication and indication of psychological/psychiatric disorder throughout adolescence or adulthood.
- Include rationale for specific recommendations or accommodations.

- **Visual Impairment or Blindness**

The evaluation should:

- Include an ophthalmologic evaluation made by a qualified professional or granted by a recognized resource such as NY State Commission for the Blind (include CBVH Registry Number)
- Be current and reflect present condition. In case of visual acuity changes, new documentation should be submitted.
- Identify functional limitations and provide recommendations for academic accommodations/assistive technology.

- **Deaf/Hard of Hearing Guidelines**

The documentation should:

- Include a diagnosis based on an audiological evaluation conducted by a qualified professional.
- Provide a description of functional limitations and recommendations for academic accommodations, interpreter services, and other services including assistive technology.

- **Mobility / Orthopedic Disabilities**

The evaluation should:

- Be made by a qualified professional with the appropriate training in diagnosing physical disabilities.
- Be current and relevant. If the conditions change, an updated report will be required.
- Include a diagnosis, a description of any functional limitations and recommendations for accommodations and / or assistive technology.

- **Chronic Medical Condition**

The evaluation should:

- Be submitted on letterhead (or a standardized medical documentation form provided by the college) by a qualified health professional.
- Be within the past six months. In case of changes, new documentation needs to be submitted.
- Identify medication, if any, and include information describing the possible impact of the medication upon academic performance.
- Identify functional limitations in the academic environment and recommendations for accommodations and / or assistive technology.

- **Substance Abuse / Chemical Dependency**

The evaluation should:

- Be submitted from a qualified professional with experience in the field of Chemical Dependency.
- Be current (within one year of submission).
- Identify academic functional limitation and recommendations for accommodations.
- Include treatment program and medication information in the report.

- **Other**

- Consult with the Director of Disability Services on campus.

Prepared by the CUNY Committee on Student Disability Issues – Documentation Guidelines Subcommittee