Documenting a Learning Disability

Guidelines for Documenting a Learning Disability

The individual must submit typed documentation on official letterhead of the professional/service provider describing the disability. Professional evaluators must have comprehensive training and experience relevant to the adolescent and adult LD population, including populations that are culturally and linguistically diverse. Please note that the provider cannot be a family member of the student submitting documentation. Documentation must include:

- Name
- Title
- Professional Credentials
- License or certification
- Area of specialization
- Employment and state of employment

It is helpful when documentation reflects the current impact of the disability on academics and the living/learning environment. Documentation should include a narrative description of the disability, with the following included:

1. **Documentation should be comprehensive**

   - Evidence of early impairment of a LD should demonstrate that the symptoms of the LD existed in childhood and manifest in more than one setting.
   - An explanation of the current impact on functionality in daily college life, such as academics, living, and social should be provided.

2. **Diagnostic interview**

   An evaluation report should include the summary of a comprehensive diagnostic interview with relevant academic historical information.

   - a summary with a description of the presenting problems
   - relevant medical history, including absence of a medical basis for the symptoms
   - academic history, with prior standardized test scores
   - relevant family history, including primary language and level of English fluency
   - reports of class performance
   - relevant psychosocial history
   - relevant employment history
• a discussion of dual-diagnosis
• alternative or co-existing mood, behavioral, neurological, and/or personality disorders
• an exploration of possible alternatives that may mimic an LD

3. Assessment

For the neurological or psychological evaluation to illustrate a substantial limitation to learning, the comprehensive assessment battery should contain the following domains:

4. Aptitude/Cognitive Ability:

A complete intellectual assessment with all subtests and standard scores.

Suggested tests might include:

- WeschlerAdult Intelligence Scale III (WAIS-III)
- Woodcock-Johnson Psychological Battery – Revised
- Tests of Cognitive Ability
- Kaufman Adolescent and Adult Intelligence Test
- Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (4th ed)

5. Academic Achievement

A comprehensive achievement battery with subtests and standard scores indicating current level of functioning in the academic areas of: reading (decoding and comprehension), math, oral and written language.

Suggested tests might include:

- Scholastic Abilities Test for Adults (SATA)
- Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK)
- Woodcock-Johnson Psychological Battery-Revised: Tests of Cognitive Ability
- Weschler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT)
- Nelson-Denny Reading Skills Test
- Standford Diagnostic Mathematics Test
- Test of Written Language (TOWL-3)
- Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised

6. Information Processing

The specific areas to be addressed include short and long-term memory, sequential memory, auditory and visual perception, processing speed, executive functioning and motor ability.

Acceptable instruments might include:

- Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude-3 (DTLA-3)
7. **Evaluation/testing should provide a clear indication of a diagnosed Learning Disability**

- Please use direct language in the diagnosis and documentation of a learning disability
- The presence of a dual diagnosis should be ruled out, as well as educational and cultural factors affecting the individual

8. **Actual test scores from standardized instruments should be provided**

The data, including standard scores and/or percentiles, must logically reflect as substantial limitation to learning, and both the nature and severity of the LD(s) the candidate is requesting accommodations for. The tests used must be reliable, valid, and standardized for use with an adolescent/adult population.

9. **An interpretative summary should be provided**

A well-written interpretative summary based on a comprehensive evaluative process may include:

- evaluator having ruled out alternative explanations for academic problems such as poor education, poor motivation, and/or study skills, emotional problems, attention problems, and cultural/language differences
- how the presence of an LD is evident in patterns of cognitive ability, achievement, and information processing
- the degree of substantial limitation to learning presented by the LD and the degree to which it affects the individual in the context for which accommodations are being requested
- indication of how specific accommodations mediate the effects of the LD symptoms
- any record of prior accommodation(s) or auxiliary aids

10. **Rationale for recommendations for academic accommodations should be provided. Please include:**

- the impact of the LD on a major life activity
- the degree of impact on the individual, including intensity and frequency of symptoms
- specific test results or clinical observations to support recommendations

Please suggest recommendations for specific academic accommodations. The documentation should provide rationale that supports the type(s) of accommodation(s) being requested that are based on the individual’s present level of functioning in the educational setting.

Documentation should be submitted to the Office of Academic Services via fax, mail, or in-person. The cost of obtaining professional verification is the responsibility of the student.