



## DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS WITH A PSYCHIATRIC/PSYCHOLOGICAL DISABILITY

University of Vermont students who seek accommodations based on their disability are responsible for completing an online [Getting Started with SAS Form \(https://myaccess.uvm.edu/ClockWork/user/intake/default.aspx\)](https://myaccess.uvm.edu/ClockWork/user/intake/default.aspx) and for providing appropriate supporting documentation. A student who seeks academic accommodations, on the basis of a disability, is responsible for obtaining the needed evaluation and resulting documentation, and for initiating contact with the Student Accessibility Services (SAS). The University of Vermont approaches requests for accommodations with the belief that each student's circumstance is unique and that a flexible approach is the right way to determine appropriate accommodations.

By itself, a medical diagnosis does not establish a need or an entitlement to accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or the Americans with Disabilities Act as Amended (ADA-AA). Another way of saying this is that having any disorder or condition does not, by itself, lead to any conclusion under Section 504 or the ADA. Therefore, the documentation required by University of Vermont extends beyond the medical diagnosis and encompasses the four key elements of a person's disability status under Section 504 and the ADA. Those key elements are that:

- the student has a physical or mental impairment
- the impairment limits the student's participation in a major life activity\*
- the degree of limitation is substantial and
- there is something that the college can do that would be reasonable, needed, and predictably effective in responding to the impairment.

Documentation that substantiates each of these four areas serves as a foundation that legitimizes a student's request for appropriate accommodations. If a student seeks accommodations, on the basis of more than one disability, then more than one professional may need to be involved in developing the diagnoses and other documentation.

SAS will review the documentation and collaborate with the student to determine reasonable and appropriate academic accommodations. Students will be contacted and encouraged to schedule a conversation with the SAS as soon as possible after submitting documentation.

The accommodations afforded to each student will be determined on an individual basis and will be based on the documentation provided.

### ***Please see the next page for our disability documentation requirements.***

The Disability Documentation Form, list examples of a "major life activity" as defined under the ADA Amendments Act of 2008. According to the ADA, "A major life activity also includes the operating of a major bodily function, including, but not limited to, functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions."

**Major life activities** include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working. "A major life activity also includes the operating of a major bodily function, including, but not limited to, functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions."

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/42/12102>

<https://www.ada.gov/pubs/adastatute08.htm>

Acceptable documentation of a psychological disability must meet the following requirements:

- **The diagnosis must be substantiated and be made by a qualified professional.**  
*The diagnosis must be made by a licensed psychologist, psychiatrist, or other professional with recognized expertise in diagnosing mental health conditions. The provider must be an impartial individual who is not a family member of the student.*  
  
*The documentation must identify a diagnosis of a psychological disorder by name and by code, according to either the ICD diagnostic system or the APA's most recent Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (please include the DSM code).*
- **Please indicate the expected progression or stability of the impacts described over time.**  
**This description should provide an estimate of the change in the functional impacts of the condition(s) over time and/or recommendations concerning the predictable needs for reevaluation of the condition(s). If the condition is variable (based on known cycles or environmental triggers) are they under self-care for flair-ups or episodes?**
- **Please indicate treatments, medication, and services currently prescribed or in use.**
- **Reflect and describe the current functional limitation the disability has on the student's learning or other major life activity and the degree to which it impacts the individual in the academic context.**  
*If the disability is managed by medication, list dosages and existing side effects, including whether the prescribed medication will impact the student's functioning in the academic environment.*  
  
*The age of acceptable documentation is dependent upon the disabling condition, the current status of the student, and the student's request for accommodations. Due to the changing nature of psychiatric disorders, documentation should include a recent evaluation or updated assessment within the past six (6) months. We reserve the right to request annual renewal of documentation.*
- **Please provide any additional relevant information not indicated above (IEP, 504 Plan, etc.)**
- **Include specific recommendations for accommodations with accompanying rationale.**  
*A connection must be established between how the requested accommodations would mediate the functional limitations on the student in the academic environment.*
- **Documentation is to be type-written on official letterhead, and signed and dated by the evaluator.**

SAS uses the Disability Documentation Guidelines recommended by AHEAD (the Association of Higher Education and Disability): [https://edgecastcdn.net/006FDC/AU/PDF/AHEAD\\_Supporting-Accommodation-Requests%5B2%5D.pdf](https://edgecastcdn.net/006FDC/AU/PDF/AHEAD_Supporting-Accommodation-Requests%5B2%5D.pdf)

Disability documentation should be sent to Student Accessibility Services in one of the following ways:

Email: [access@uvm.edu](mailto:access@uvm.edu)

Fax: 802-656-0739

Mail: Student Accessibility Services, UVM, 633 Main Street, A170 Living/Learning, Burlington VT 05405

Questions? Call (802) 656-7753 Our office hours are Monday-Friday 8:30am - 4:30pm

## **Note to Providers:**

In order to determine the most appropriate accommodations, we strongly recommend that these guidelines are written as completely and fully as possible. All information provided to our office is confidential; guidelines received are sent to a secure SAS electronic inbox, accessed only by administrative staff.

## **FAQ'A**

How does the ADA define Disability?

The ADA defines disability as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. An impairment is any mental or psychological disorder and any specific learning disability. A major life activity is defined as sitting, standing, bending, communicating, lifting, reaching, sleeping, eating, reading and mental/emotional processes such as thinking, concentrating and interacting with others." \*  
Substantially limits is defined as the impairment that severely restricts an individual from doing activities that are important to most people's daily lives.

What if there are multiple diagnoses? Do I need to complete a guideline for each one?

The more complete and comprehensive information we receive, the more aptly we are able to identify appropriate accommodations and ensure thorough services and supports. Limited or incomplete documentation could impact the timeliness of implementation and appropriateness of accommodations.

How should I determine a reasonable accommodation?

When considering an accommodation, we ask you to consider which barrier the individual is facing and recommend a potential solution that would decrease or minimize the individual's access to their education, housing, dining experiences, etc.

How are accommodations decided?

Our Accessibility Specialists will consider all the information you provided within the guidelines, taking into account the diagnosis and how each impacts an individual and their functional limitations. In addition to the individual's narrative, our Accessibility Specialists will determine, along with your recommendations, the most appropriate accommodations.