

DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL DISABILITIES

These guidelines are intended to help you identify appropriate professional evaluation materials to support your application. We suggest that you review these guidelines with a care provider, educator, or disabilities support person who is familiar with your situation and your records, to determine whether or not an appropriate evaluation has already been completed, or whether more current and/or more thorough evaluation materials are needed. We realize that every applicant is unique, and we will be as flexible as we can when reviewing your materials. Once we review your materials, we may request additional information to clarify the nature and severity of your impairment and the reasonableness of the accommodations you are requesting.

We need to understand how your disability is impacting your CURRENT functioning. Thus, we will need to review materials from licensed mental health care professionals that address all of the following:

- **A clear DSM-IV or DSM-V diagnosis** should be provided, along with a detailed description of the specific symptoms that you have displayed and how these symptoms relate to DSM-IV or DSM-V criteria and how alternative explanations for your present difficulties have been ruled out.
- **An indication of the severity of the functional impact of your disability in academic/testing settings, as well as in employment and other life realms.** The evaluator should provide a detailed description of your past and current symptoms, their severity in you as compared with most people, and the functional impact these symptoms have had, in multiple life areas. Ideally, normed, standardized questionnaire measures, as well as information from outside sources, would be used to help clarify the severity and impact of your impairment. Normed, performance-based measures of attention, processing speed, or other cognitive skills impairment may be particularly helpful in clarifying the severity of any cognitive impairments you may report.
- **A brief description of treatments, medications, supports, and accommodations** (formal and informal) that have been used to address your impairment and the impact that these supports and accommodations have had on your functioning.
- **A statement as to what accommodations your evaluator believes are appropriate for you** in academic and testing settings at this time given the nature and current impact of your impairment. Your evaluator should make specific statements as to how the accommodations being requested are expected to address the symptoms or challenges you are experiencing. Your evaluator should also indicate the extent to which you are currently making use of similar accommodations in other settings and how those accommodations have related to your specific symptoms.

- **If you are taking medications** that may impact your functioning while taking exams, the prescribing physician should provide a statement indicating what medications you typically take in academic and testing situations and what impact they appear to be having on your functioning in relation to your psychiatric symptoms, as well as in cognitive skill areas such as concentration, processing speed, etc.

Regarding the need for a current evaluation: Many psychological disabilities have a variable course over time, and functioning can sometimes be improved markedly with treatment. At the same time, we realize that it may not be feasible for you to undergo a second, complete evaluation if you have already undergone a thorough evaluation in years past. Thus, it is recommended that you provide us with both a thorough initial evaluation (even if it is several years old) and at least a brief update from a mental health care professional that addresses the current severity and impact of your impairment.

All evaluations should be performed by an appropriately licensed mental health care professional with expertise in the area being assessed. The evaluator's name, title, and professional credentials -- including license and certification information as well as area of specialization, employment, and the locality in which the professional evaluator practices -- must be included in the documentation. All reports must be typed on official letterhead, dated, and signed by the evaluator. The evaluator should not be a family member of the person being evaluated. The evaluation should list all tests that were administered and all external documents that were reviewed. Test results should be presented in sufficient detail to allow a comparably trained professional to review them. If an evaluation incorporates information and/or test data that was taken from a secondary source, this information should be clearly identified and presented separately from any new information or data that was obtained as part of the current evaluation.