

## Guidelines for Documentation of a Learning Disability in Adults

Documentation criteria at McMurry University are consistent with the 1997 Guidelines of the Association of Higher Education and Disability. For more information, see [www.ahead.org](http://www.ahead.org)

### Documentation Guidelines

#### I. Qualifications of the Evaluator

#### II. Documentation

The provision of all reasonable accommodations and services is based upon assessment of the impact of the student's disabilities on his or her academic performance at a given time in the student's life. Therefore, it is in the student's best interest to provide recent and appropriate relevant documentation to the student's learning environment.

Flexibility in accepting documentation is important, especially in settings with significant numbers of non-traditional students. In some instances, documentation may be outdated or inadequate in scope or content. It may not address the student's current level of functioning or need for accommodations because observed changes may have occurred in the student's performance since the previous assessment was conducted. In such cases, it may be appropriate to update the evaluation report. Since the purpose of the update is to determine the student's current need for accommodations, the update, conducted by a qualified professional, should include a rationale for ongoing services and accommodations.

#### III. Substantiation of the Learning Disability

Documentation should validate the need for services based on the individual's current level of functioning in the educational setting. A school plan such as an individualized education program (IEP) or a 504 plan is insufficient documentation, but it can be included as part of a more comprehensive assessment battery. A comprehensive assessment battery and the resulting diagnostic report should include a diagnostic interview, assessment of aptitude, academic achievement, information processing and a diagnosis.

##### A. Diagnostic Interview

##### B. Assessment which must include the following:

1. Aptitude- A complete intellectual assessment with all subtests and standard scores must be reported.
2. Academic Achievement- A comprehensive academic achievement battery is essential with all current levels of academic functioning in relevant areas such as reading (decoding and comprehension), and oral and written language.
3. Information Processing- Specific areas of information processing (e.g., short and long-term memory, sequential memory, auditory and visual perception/processing, processing speed, executive functioning and motor ability) should be assessed.

##### C. Specific Diagnosis

##### D. Test Scores

Standard scores and/or percentiles should be provided for all normed measures. Grade equivalents are not useful unless standard scores and/or percentiles are also included.

##### E. Clinical Summary

The clinical summary should include:

1. demonstration of the evaluator's having ruled out alternative explanations for academic problems as a result of poor education, poor motivation and/or study skills, emotional problems, attentional problems and cultural/languages differences;
2. indication of how patterns in the student's cognitive ability, achievement and information processing reflect the presence of a learning disability;
3. indication of the substantial limitation to learning or other major life activity presented by the learning disability and the degree to which it impacts the individual in the learning context for which accommodations are being requested; and
4. indication as to why specific accommodations are needed and how the effects of the specific disability are accommodated.
5. The summary should also include any record of prior accommodation or auxiliary aids, including any information about specific conditions under which the accommodations were used (e.g., standardized testing, final exams, licensing or certification examinations).

#### IV. Recommendations for Accommodations

It is important to recognize that accommodation needs can change over time and are not always identified through the initial diagnostic process. Conversely, a prior history of accommodation does not, in and of itself, warrant the provision of a similar accommodation.

The diagnostic report should include specific recommendations for accommodations as well as an explanation as to why each accommodation is recommended. The evaluators should describe the impact the diagnosed learning disability has on a specific major life activity as well as the degree of significance of this impact on the individual. The evaluator should support recommendations with specific test results or clinical observations.

If accommodations are not clearly identified in a diagnostic report, the disability service provider should seek clarification and, if necessary, more information. The final determination for providing appropriate and reasonable accommodations rests with the institution.

#### V. Confidentiality

The receiving institution has a responsibility to maintain confidentiality of the evaluation and may not release any part of the documentation without the student's informed and written consent.