

Guidelines for Documentation of a Specific Learning Disorder

Students who are seeking services from the Disability Support Office on the basis of a diagnosed specific learning disorder are required to submit documentation to verify eligibility under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Protection under these civil rights statutes is based upon documentation of a learning disorder that currently, substantially limits one or more major life activity including learning. The following guidelines are provided in the interest of assuring that documentation is appropriate to verify eligibility and support requests for reasonable accommodation, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids on the basis of a learning disorder. The Counselor for Disability Support Services is available to consult with diagnosticians regarding any of these guidelines.

- ❖ The report must be typed and written in English on letterhead, signed, and dated.
- ❖ Professionals conducting assessment and rendering diagnoses of specific learning disabilities must be qualified to do so. Trained and certified and/or licensed psychologists, learning disabilities specialists, and educational therapists are typically involved in the process of assessment. Experience in working with an adult population is essential.
- ❖ Diagnostic reports must include the name, titles, and professional credentials (e.g., licensed psychologist) of the evaluators as well as the date(s) of testing. A written summary of /or background information about the student's educational, medical, and family histories that relate to the learning disability must be included.
- ❖ Not Acceptable: A doctor's prescription pad note or a high school plan such as Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) or 504 plan. An IEP or 504 plan may be included and used as part of a more comprehensive evaluative report.
- ❖ Testing must be comprehensive. Minimally, domains to be addressed must include (but not be limited to):
 - Aptitude. The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale - Revised (WAIS-R) with subtest scores is the preferred instrument. The Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-educational Battery – Revised: Test of Cognitive Ability or the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale: Fourth Edition is acceptable.
 - Achievement. Current levels of functioning in reading, mathematics and written languages are required. Acceptable instruments include the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-educational Battery – Revised: Tests of Achievement; Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT); Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK); Scholastic Abilities Test for Adults (SATA); or specific achievement tests such as the Test of the Stanford Diagnostic Mathematics Test.
 - Information Processing. Specific areas of information processing (e.g., short-and long-term memory; sequential memory; auditory and visual perception/processing; processing speed) must be assessed. Information from subtests on the WAIS-R or the Woodcock – Johnson Tests of Cognitive Ability as well as other instruments relevant to the presenting learning problem(s) may be used to address these areas.
 - DSM-IV Diagnosis of the type of learning disability or disabilities. There must be clear and specific evidence and identification of a learning disability. Individual “learning styles” and “learning differences” in and of themselves do not constitute a learning disability. Alternative explanations for stated learning problems with terms such as “seems”, “appears”, “suggests”, or “probable” in the diagnostic summary will be considered equivocal and not supporting a definite and conclusive diagnosis.
 - Other pertinent and helpful areas such as vocational interests and aptitudes.
- ❖ Testing must be current. In most cases, this means testing that has been conducted within the past three years. Because the provision of all reasonable accommodations and services is based upon assessment of the current impact of the student's disabilities on his/her academic performance, it is in a student's best interest to provide recent and appropriate documentation.
- ❖ Tests used to document eligibility must be technically sound (i.e., statistically reliable and valid) and standardized for use with an adult population.
- ❖ Actual test scores must be provided. Standard scores and/or percentiles are acceptable; grade equivalents are not acceptable unless standard scores and/or percentiles are also included. This is important since certain college policies and procedures (e.g., petitioning for permission to substitute courses) require actual data to substantiate eligibility.

All documentation is confidential and should be submitted to:

Elizabeth Smith

Counselor of Students with Special Needs

Northwest Florida State College

100 College Boulevard

Building E Room 148

Niceville FL 32578

Telephone and TDD 850 729-6079

Fax: 850-729-5300

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After documentation is reviewed, student needs to make an intake appointment with the Counselor to discuss accommodations.