



Mount Saint Mary College

Office of Disability Services

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Requirements for the Documentation of a Learning Disability

The following guidelines for documentation of a learning disability are provided in the interest of assuring that evaluation reports are appropriate to document eligibility for services and accommodations. They have been adapted from those set forth by the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD).

1. Qualified Evaluator

Diagnosis of a learning disability must be done by an appropriately credentialed professional(s) with expertise in learning disabilities. Licensed psychologists, learning disability specialists, and educational therapists who have had comprehensive training and direct experience with an adolescent and adult learning disabled population can typically provide assessment for individuals who have or are suspected to have a learning disability. The name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about license or certification should be clearly stated in the documentation.

2. Current Testing

Once a person is diagnosed as having a qualified learning disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act the disability is normally viewed as life-long. However, although the disability will continue, the severity of the condition may change over time. Since the provision of all reasonable accommodations and services is based upon assessment of the impact of the student's disability on academic performance at a given time in the student's life, the documentation should be current. In most cases, this means within the past three years.

3. Comprehensive Testing

Documentation should validate the need for services based on the individual's current level of functioning in the educational setting. A comprehensive assessment battery and the resulting evaluation report should include the following:

- Diagnostic interview,
- Assessments of aptitude, academic achievement, and information processing
- Test scores
- Specific diagnosis
- Clinical summary
- Recommendations for accommodations

A school plan (i.e., individualized education program [IEP] or a 504 plan) is not sufficient documentation, but it can be included with the assessment battery. Each of the required components is described in more detail below.

4. Diagnostic Interview

An evaluation report should include the summary of a comprehensive diagnostic interview. Relevant information regarding the student's academic history and learning process in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education should be investigated and documented. Such information includes:

- Developmental history
- Academic history
- Family history
- Psychosocial history

- Medical history
- Discussion of the presenting learning problem

5. Assessment

The neuropsychological or psycho-educational evaluation for the diagnosis of a specific learning disability must provide clear and specific evidence that a learning disability does or does not exist. Assessment, and any resulting diagnosis, should consist of and be based on a comprehensive assessment battery which does not rely on any one test or subtest. Any test used to document eligibility must be technically sound. They must be reliable, valid, and standardized for use with adult populations. The test findings should document the nature and severity of the learning disability. The minimal domains to be addressed and acceptable instruments with which to assess them are listed below.

Aptitude – A complete intellectual assessment with all subtests and standard scores reported.

Acceptable instruments include:

- The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale – Third or Fourth Edition (WAIS-III or WAIS-IV)*
- Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Ability – Third Edition (WJ III COG)
- Kaufman Adolescent and Adult Intelligence Test (KAIT)
- Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale – Fourth Edition

The Wechsler Adult Screening Instrument (WASI) is not an acceptable instrument.

Achievement - Current levels of academic functioning in reading, mathematics, and written language are required. Acceptable instruments include:

- Wechsler Individual Achievement Test – Second or Third Edition (WIAT-II or WIAT-III)*
- Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement – Third Edition (WJ III ACH)
- Scholastic Abilities Test for Adults (SATA)
- Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK)

Specific achievement tests that are acceptable include:

- Woodcock Reading Mastery Test – Revised – Normative Update (WRMT-R/NU)
- Test of Written Language 3 (TOWL-3)
- Stanford Diagnostic Mathematics Test – Third Edition (SDMT 4)

The Wide Range Achievement Test – Third Edition (WRAT-3) is not an acceptable instrument.

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. Acceptable instruments include:

- The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale – Third or Fourth Edition (WAIS-III or WAIS-IV)*
- Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Ability – Third Edition (WJ III COG)

*Preferred instrument

6. Test Scores

Standard scores should be provided for all normed measures. Percentiles, while not preferred, are also acceptable. Grade equivalents are not an acceptable scoring format unless paired with one of the above formats. The particular profile of the student's strengths and weaknesses must provide a rationale for the recommended accommodations.

7. Clinical Summary

The summary should include:

1. A demonstration of the evaluator having ruled out alternative explanations for academic problems such as poor education, poor motivation and/or study skills, emotional problems, and cultural/language differences.
2. An indication of how patterns in the student's cognitive ability, achievement, and information processing reflect the presence of a learning disability.
3. An indication of the substantial limitations 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 the accommodations are being requested.
4. An indication as to why the specific accommodations are needed and how the effects of the specific disability are accommodated.
5. A record of prior accommodations or auxiliary aids, and how they were implemented in the past.

8. Specific Diagnosis

A DSM-5 diagnosis of a specific learning disability is a requirement. Individual "learning styles," "learning differences," or "academic problems" in and of themselves do not constitute a learning disability. Terms such as "suggests" or "is indicative of" are discouraged in favor of more direct language.

9. Recommendations For Accommodations

The diagnostic report must include specific recommendations for accommodations and relevant recommendations regarding the curriculum, as well as testing considerations. A detailed explanation must be provided as to why each accommodation is recommended. Recommendations should also be correlated to specific test results and/or clinical observations.

All documentation should be sent to:

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