

Guidelines for Documenting a Physical or Medical Disability

Students seeking support services from Accessibility Services on the basis of a previously diagnosed physical disability or medical condition must submit documentation that verifies their eligibility under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The documentation must describe a disabling condition, which is defined by the presence of significant limitations in one or more major life activities.

Merely submitting evidence of a diagnosis is not sufficient to warrant academic accommodations. Documentation from a recognized agency as being eligible for services, for example the New Mexico Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, may be considered but specific accommodation requests may require the documentation outlined below.

A physician, surgeon, physical therapist, occupational therapist, or other medical specialist with experience and expertise in the area related to the student's disability, should make the diagnosis. Conditions may include, but are not limited to, mobility impairments, multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, chemical sensitivities, spinal cord injuries, cancer, AIDS, muscular dystrophy, spina bifida, diabetes, asthma, etc. The diagnostician should not be a family member of the student. Documentation should include:

1. A clear statement of diagnosis of the physical disability or medical condition is required. The age of acceptable documentation is dependent upon the condition and the nature of the student's request for accommodations. Disabilities that are sporadic or change over time may require more frequent evaluations.
2. A summary of assessment procedures and evaluation instruments that have been used to make the diagnosis, including evaluation results and standardized scores if applicable are requested.
3. Information relating to treatment and its impact on the student's ability to meet the demands of the postsecondary environment. Relevant information regarding any medication that may impact an individual's academic performance should also be included.
4. A statement of the functional impacts or limitations on learning or other major life activity related to the disability and the degree to which it impacts the individual in the learning context for which accommodations are being requested.
5. Rationale for each recommended accommodation. The clinician must describe the degree of impact of the disorder on a specific major life activity, as well as the degree of impact on the individual.
6. All documentation must be submitted on the official letterhead of the professional describing the disability. The report should be dated and signed and include the name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about license or certification.