



Learning Disability Documentation

The following guidelines are provided to assure that documentation of disability submitted to Disability Support Services (DSS) is appropriate to both verify disability and to support requests for accommodations, academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids. To establish eligibility for services, students must present documentation that meets the following criteria:

Testing Must Be Comprehensive and Current

In most cases, current 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* level of functioning in an educational setting, it is in a student's best interest to provide recent and appropriate documentation. In the case of adults tested after age of 21, testing more than five years old will be re-evaluated.

A school plan such as an individualized education program (IEP) or a 504 plan is insufficient documentation in and of itself but can be included as part of a more comprehensive assessment battery. A comprehensive assessment battery and the resulting diagnostic report must include a diagnostic interview, assessment of aptitude, and measure of academic achievement and information processing.

The Diagnostic Interview

Because learning disabilities are most commonly manifested during childhood, educational history about learning difficulties in elementary, secondary and post-secondary education must be included. An evaluation report must also include a comprehensive diagnostic interview by a qualified evaluator who addresses relevant background information to support the diagnosis. Such information may include:

- Developmental history
- Academic history including results of prior standardized testing, and notable trends in academic performance
- Family history
- Psychosocial history
- Medical history, including the absence of a medical basis for the present symptoms
- History of prior and present psychotherapy and pharmaceutical-therapy
- Discussion of any dual diagnosis of alternative or co-existing mood, behavioral, neurological and/or personality disorders
- A description of the presenting learning problem(s)

The Neuropsychological or Psychoeducational Evaluation

The neuro-psychological or psycho-educational evaluation for the diagnosis of a specific learning disability must be submitted on letterhead of the qualified professional and it must provide clear and specific evidence of a learning disability. It is not acceptable to administer one test, nor is it acceptable to base a diagnosis on only one of the several subtests. Objective evidence of a substantial limitation to learning must be provided. Minimally, domains to be addressed must include the following:

Aptitude/Cognitive Ability

This list is not intended to be definitive or exhaustive. A complete and comprehensive intellectual/cognitive assessment is required. This may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Third Edition (WAIS-III)
- Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Fourth Edition (WAIS-IV)
- Woodcock-Johnson-Third Edition: Tests of Cognitive Ability (WJ-III)
- Kaufman Adolescent and Adult Intelligence Test
- Reynolds Intellectual Assessment Scale (RIAS)
- Stanford-Binet (SB5)
- Test of Non-Verbal Intelligence (TONI-3)

The Slosson Intelligence Test-Revised and the Kaufman Adult Intelligence Test do not constitute adequate intelligence test measures.

Information Processing

Specific areas of information processing (e.g., short-term memory, working memory, long-term memory, sequential memory, auditory and visual perception/processing, processing speed, executive functioning, psychomotor ability) should be assessed as the information processing deficit and it must have the logical nexus that explains the academic difficulty. Acceptable instruments include the following, but are not limited to:

- Wechsler Memory Scale
- Rey Osterrieth Complex Figure
- Trails A & B
- Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Third Edition (PPVT-III)
- Rey Auditory Verbal Learning Test
- Bender Visual-Motor Gestalt Test
- Beery Visual-Motor Integration Test
- Wisconsin Card Sorting Test

Other instruments relevant to the presenting learning problems may be used in conjunction with one or more of the aptitude tests named above.

Achievement

A complete achievement battery is required with all sub-tests and standard scores. The battery must include current levels of academic functioning in reading (decoding and comprehension), mathematics, and written language. Acceptable instruments include, but are not limited to:

- Woodcock-Johnson-Third Edition: Tests of Achievement (WJ III)
- Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT III)
- Test of Written Language-2 (TOWL-2)
- Gray Oral Reading Test (GORT 4th ed.)
- Spadafore Diagnostic Reading Test
- Woodcock Reading Mastery Test-Revised
- Stanford Diagnostic Mathematics Test

The Wide Range Achievement Test- Revised (WRAT 3 or 4) is not a comprehensive measure of achievement, and therefore is not acceptable if used as the sole measure of achievement. The Nelson-Denny Skills Test (Form G& H) is not a sole appropriate diagnostic measure of reading achievement. It is a useful screening instrument when administered under standardized conditions, but it should not be used as a basis for diagnosis.

The Report Must Include a Specific Diagnosis

- Individual "learning styles", "learning differences", and "academic problems" in and of themselves do not constitute a learning disability. The nature and severity of the functional limitation(s) must be supported by the test data, academic history, anecdotal and clinical observations that may include the student's level of motivation, study skills, and other non- cognitive factors. These findings must support the fact that individual's functional limitations are due to the stated disabilities.
- The report must indicate what steps were taken to evaluate the impact of second language issues to rule out the possibility that second language difficulties are a cause of the academic problems.

Actual Test Scores Must Be Provided

Standard scores must be provided for all normed measures. Percentiles are also acceptable; grade equivalents are not acceptable unless standard scores and/or percentiles are also included. The assessment must show evidence of discrepancies and intra-cognitive differences. The particular profile of the student's strengths and weaknesses must provide a rationale for the accommodations that are recommended.

Tests Used to Document Eligibility Must Be Technically Sound

The tests used must be reliable, valid and standardized for use with an adult population. The test findings should document both the nature and severity of the learning disabilities.

A Description of Requested Accommodations Including the Rationale Must Be Provided

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 and should be correlated to specific test results or clinical observations. If any accommodation or auxiliary aid was provided in the past, it should be discussed; including information about specific conditions under which the accommodations were used (e.g. standardized testing, final exams, national board examination) and whether or not they benefited the student. For example, if the diagnosed condition is a learning disability, what is the processing disorder, and what is the relationship between the disorder and the requested accommodation? Any school plan (e.g. IEP or 504 plan) is not sufficient in and of itself, but can be included as part of a more comprehensive assessment battery as described in this document.

If no prior accommodations have been provided, the qualified professional and/or student should include a detailed explanation as to why no accommodations were used in the past and why accommodations are needed at this time.

A Qualified Professional Must Conduct the Evaluation

Professionals conducting assessment and rendering diagnoses of specific learning disabilities must be qualified to do so. Experience in working with an adult population is essential.