



DISABILITY  
SUPPORT  
SERVICES

## **Guidelines for Documenting a Psychiatric Disability**

- 1) **A Qualified Evaluator.** Professionals conducting assessments, rendering the diagnosis of psychiatric, psychological, behavioral, and emotional disorders/syndromes, and making recommendations for appropriate accommodations, must be qualified to do so. These are licensed professionals with comprehensive training and expertise in mental health, skilled in differential diagnosis of psychiatric disorders, such as (neuro)psychologists, (neuro)psychiatrists, relevantly trained medical doctors, clinical social workers, and counselors. The report must meet these criteria:
  - include the evaluator's name, title, professional credentials, license and/or certification number
  - be presented on the professional's letterhead, typed, dated, signed, and legible
  - the evaluator may not be a member of the student's family
  
- 2) **Current Documentation.** Reasonable accommodations are based on the current impact of a disability; therefore, it is of utmost importance for psychological documentation to address an individual's current level of functioning and present need for accommodations. Due to the changing nature of psychiatric disabilities, a full report from a treating mental health professional completed within the past twelve months is considered current. The documentation may require an annual update, depending on the nature of the condition.
  
- 3) **Comprehensive Documentation.** The documentation **must** include:
  - A discussion of:
    - relevant developmental, historical, and familial information
    - evidence of current functional impairment
    - duration and severity of the disorder
    - expected progression or stability of the impact of the condition over time
  - A **clear** diagnosis of psychiatric disorder based on *DSM 5* or *ICD-10* criteria, including:
    - A **clearly stated** diagnosis, subtype if applicable, and diagnostic code
    - A list of the *DSM-5* or *ICD-10* diagnostic criteria as the basis for the diagnosis

Disability Support Services - 3410 Taft Blvd., Wichita Falls, TX 76308

Phone: 940-397-4140 — Fax: 940-397-4180 — Email: [disabilityservices@msutexas.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@msutexas.edu)

- Evidence of the ruling out of other potential diagnoses, dual diagnoses and alternative explanations such as educational, linguistic, and cross-cultural factors
  - A description of how the diagnosis substantially impacts a major life activity/activities
  - **CANNOT INCLUDE** wording such as “seems to indicate” or “suggests”
  - **NOTE:** Test anxiety, in and of itself, is not an accommodated disability
  - A description of current and past treatments, therapeutic techniques, assistive devices, medication, etc. used ameliorate the impact of psychiatric disability
  - A description of current functional limitations of the individual in an academic environment (e.g., impact on study skills, test-taking and organizational skills.) Functional limitations should be determined WITHOUT consideration of mitigating measures (e.g., medication). If the condition is episodic in nature, level of functioning should be assessed based on active phase of symptoms
  - Appropriate, specific recommendations for academic accommodations including:
    - detailed explanation as to why each accommodation is recommended
    - a correlation to previously discussed functional limitation in life activity
- 4) **Psychological Instruments.** Though not explicitly required, psychological instruments may be useful in helping the evaluator render a more accurate diagnosis and, therefore, better recommendations for accommodation. If such tests are used, results should be included in the report. All tests should be current with an explanation of validity, reliability, and the purpose for which they are being employed. Scores must be reported in raw, standardized and/or percentile ranks, if applicable.
- 5) **Supporting Documentation.** The qualified evaluator’s report, while necessary, is by no means the only documentation we can use to better accommodate the student with a psychiatric disability. Other helpful documents include: records of previous accommodation, high school 504 plans or IEP’s, previous psychological and psycho-educational evaluations, report cards, transcripts, and parent, teacher, tutor, or employer reports. Disability Support Services (DSS) reserves the right to access student transcripts (e.g. classes and grade earned at MSU Texas) for evaluation purposes.

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