

# Guidelines for Documenting a Learning Disability\*\*

## Policy

Clover Park Technical College is committed to compliance with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations regarding the provision of accommodations needed to provide equal access to qualified individuals with disabilities. Final determination as to the appropriateness of an accommodation in the College setting is evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the Disability Resources for Students Office. Disability related information will be treated in a confidential manner in accordance with federal and state regulations. Documentation of disability and related information will be kept in a separate file in the Disability Resources for Students Office.

## Procedure

A student is responsible for providing documentation that supports his/her request for accommodation. It is important that the documentation indicates the student has a disability as defined by federal laws and regulations and that the documentation supports the individual's request for accommodation. The following documentation guidelines are provided in the interest of ensuring that documentation of a Learning Disability demonstrates a significant impact on a major life activity and supports the individual's request for accommodation.

- An evaluation should be conducted by a qualified professional who is licensed and/or otherwise properly credentialed to diagnose the Learning Disability as a part of the scope of their practice. The name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator, should be clearly stated in the documentation. All reports should be on letterhead, dated, signed, and otherwise legible. NOTE: The qualified professional should not be a family relation.
- The documentation should include a diagnosis of the learning disability with a description of the current functional impact. Documentation that does not address the student's current level of functioning may not support requested accommodations. When appropriate additional supportive documentation may be requested.
- Diagnosis of a Learning Disability should include a comprehensive assessment battery done with a diagnostic tool such as the WAIS and/or Woodcock-Johnson and a report which typically includes:

- Diagnostic Interview: Presenting problems, medical, developmental, psychosocial, etc. and a discussion of dual diagnosis where indicated.
- Assessment of Aptitude: A complete intellectual assessment with all sub-tests and standard scores reported.
- Academic Achievement: A comprehensive academic achievement battery should include current levels of functioning in relevant areas such as reading (decoding and comprehension), mathematics, and oral and written language.
- Information Processing: Specific areas of information processing (e.g., short and long term memory, sequential memory, auditory and visual perception/processing, processing speed, executive function, and motor ability) should be evaluated and diagnosed as appropriate.
- Specific diagnosis: It is important to rule out alternative explanations for problems in learning such as emotional, attentional or motivational problems that may be interfering with learning but do not constitute a learning disability. The diagnostician is encouraged to use direct language in the diagnosis and documentation of a learning disability, avoiding the use of terms such as “suggests” or “is indicative of” a learning disability.
- Identify the assessment tools used to make the diagnosis (i.e. WAIS, Woodcock-Johnson)
- Test Scores: The test findings should document the nature and severity of the learning disability and data should logically reflect a substantial limitation to learning. Standard scores and/or percentiles should be included and are expected to correlate with identified functional limitations and recommendations for accommodation.

VERY IMPORTANT NOTE REGARDING IEP AND 504 PLANS: An IEP or 504 Plan in and of itself may be insufficient documentation to support a request for services. For an IEP or 504 Plan to be considered as documentation of a learning disability it must include aforementioned diagnostic information.

- Interpretative summary based on a comprehensive evaluative process should include:
  - demonstration of evaluator’s having ruled out alternative explanations for academic problems (e.g., poor education, poor motivation, emotional problems, attentional problems and cultural/language differences);
  - indication of how patterns in the student’s cognitive ability, achievement, and and/or information processing reflect the presence of a learning disability;

- indication of the substantial limitation 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;
  - any record of prior accommodation or auxiliary aids and specific conditions under which accommodations were used
  - medical information, as appropriate, should include the impact of medication on the student's ability to meet the demands in a post-secondary environment.
- Suggestions of academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids with supporting evidence may be included. The final determination regarding the provision of appropriate academic adjustments and auxiliary aids rests with the CPTC Disability Resources for Students Office.

## **What to do if your existing documentation may not meet the above guidelines or you do not have documentation?**

Students who believe their existing documentation may not be sufficient are encouraged to submit what they have to the Disability Resources for Students Office for review by the Disability Resources Coordinator. It might be the case that the documentation is sufficient. In the event additional information needs to be obtained from the diagnostician, the Disability Resources Coordinator can explain to the student what additional information is needed so that the student can return to the diagnostician to obtain the additional information. Depending on the information in the existing documentation, provisional accommodations may be established for a student while the additional documentation is being sought. Students who do not have documentation are also encouraged to meet with the Disability Resources Coordinator to discuss the access barriers they are encountering and obtain information and resources on how to proceed with obtaining documentation and learn of available campus resources that could be of assistance with or without documentation of the disability.

***\*\* These guidelines are not meant to be used exclusively or as a replacement for direct communication with the Disability Resources for Students regarding the individual nature of a disability. While submitted documentation meeting the above guidelines may be acceptable to Clover Park Technical College it is important to be mindful that they may/may not meet the documentation guidelines required in other academic or testing organizations (e.g., special certifications, Board examinations, standardized tests for admission to other institutions of higher education).***

