

# MSU-Bozeman Disability Documentation Guidelines

PSYCHOLOGICAL DISABILITY

To help students with psychological disabilities overcome the effect of disability on their academic performance, MSU-Bozeman makes reasonable accommodations on the basis of individual need.

In order to determine eligibility for academic accommodations under MSU guidelines and identify accommodations a student will need in order to experience academic success, the Office of Disability Services (ODS) requires full documentation of the specific nature of the diagnosed mental disorder and its effect on academic achievement.

Due to the changing nature of psychiatric/psychological disabilities, the report must be current. In most cases this means that results must be from an evaluation that has been conducted within the last twelve months, and a yearly update may be necessary to confirm continued impairment and need for services.

Though each case is dealt with on its own merits, eligibility for disability accommodations and services typically requires that the student present the following evidence:

1. There is clear evidence of a properly diagnosed and reported psychological impairment.
2. The diagnosed impairment substantially limits (as compared to the average1 person in the general population) a major life function.

It is important to remember that a diagnosis is relevant to determining whether an individual has an impairment; however, a diagnosis may be insufficient to determine if the individual has a disability. It is possible, therefore, for a student with a diagnosed psychological impairment not to be eligible for accommodations at a college or university. This happens when the diagnosed impairment doesn't substantially limit a major life function.

Please share the information in this handout with the professional whose letter of verification you will submit. A full diagnostic report must be completed by a mental health professional and

uploaded to the students ACCOMMODATE profile (https://montana-accommodate.symplicity.com/) using the students NetId and password.

1 The "average person" standard is the yardstick used by federal regulatory agencies such as the U.S. Department of Justice and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to determine whether or not an impairment is severe enough to constitute a disability.

# Specific Documentation Guidelines: Psychological Disabilities

## The presence of a full-fledged DSM-5 or ICD-10 disorder must be documented.

* 1. A summary of the results of a structured psychiatric interview is preferred. In the absence of such a structured interview, an itemized review of DSM-5 or ICD-10 diagnostic criteria must be present.
  2. Supportive documentation of the disorder should include review of family history, age of onset and course of illness, psychological tests (especially illness-specific assessments), and the history of treatment for the disorder. This supportive documentation is essential to provide external validation of the presence of the disorder. It is unacceptable for the documentation of the disorder to be limited to a description of current symptoms.

## The functional impairment caused by the disorder must be documented.

* 1. Diagnosis-specific rating scales should be provided whenever possible, although global clinical assessments of severity may be acceptable.
  2. Detailed documentation should be provided of precisely how the diagnosed disorder causes impairment in functioning, and detailed documentation about the pervasiveness of any identified functional impairment should also be provided.
  3. If impairment in functioning in an educational environment is noted, the report should contain a detailed history of actual illness-caused school performance deficits.

## Documentation should be provided concerning what accommodation is being requested, and how this accommodation will specifically remedy the illness-caused disability.

* 1. Accommodations are not generally acceptable unless they are targeted toward remedying the illness-caused functional impairment.
  2. Individuals may have well-documented disabilities for which no targeted accommodation is available.

Adapted from Gordon, M. & Kaiser, S. (1998). *Accommodations in Higher Education under the Americans with Disabilities Act: A No-Nonsense Guide for Clinicians, Educators, Administrators, and Lawyers*. New York: Guilford Publications, Inc.

Updated 05/26/2022