



OKLAHOMA CITY UNIVERSITY

STUDENT HEALTH AND DISABILITY SERVICES OFFICE

HANDBOOK For DISABILITY SERVICES

The Student Health Clinic and Disability Services Office, located in the Panhellenic Quadrangle, is proud to make this handbook available to you, to increase awareness of the various disabilities and how accommodations can be implemented throughout the campus. This handbook is by no means all-inclusive. The primary goal of the handbook is to express our belief in the need for communication among students, faculty and our office.

Oklahoma City University, in compliance with federal laws and regulations, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, disability or status as a veteran in any of its policies, practices or procedures. This includes, but is not limited to admissions, employment, financial aid and educational services.

The Assistant Vice President of Human Resources and Risk Management, Liz Hedrick, serves as the Compliance Officer for Section 504 of the ADA.

The Coordinator for Disability Services at Oklahoma City University is Brenda Johnston RN BSN, Director of Student Health and Disability Services Office, phone (405) 208-5991 or (405) 208-5090.

OCU Law Students are assisted with disability accommodations by Debra Fathree, Associate Dean of Students. She may be reached at (405) 208-5334.

DISABILITY LAWS IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

The Rehabilitation Act

Title V. of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is generally regarded as the first civil rights legislation on the national level for people with disabilities. Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act is a program access statute. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in any program or activity offered by an entity or institution receiving federal funds.

Section 504 states (as amended):

“No otherwise qualified person with a disability in the United States...shall, solely on the basis of disability, be denied access to, or the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity provided by any institution receiving federal financial assistance.”

Under Section 504, institutions were required to appoint and maintain at least one person to coordinate its efforts to comply with the requirements of Section 504 (Section 504 Coordinator). The SHDSO has the ongoing responsibility of ensuring that the institution/agency/organization practices nondiscrimination on the basis of disability, and this office should be included in any grievance procedures developed to address possible instances of discrimination brought against the institution.

The Americans with Disability Act (ADA)

The ADA is a federal civil rights statute that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities. There are four sections of the law: employment, government, public accommodations, and telecommunications. The ADA provides additional protection for persons with disabilities in conjunction with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The ADA is designed to remove barriers that prevent qualified individuals with disabilities from enjoying the same opportunities available to a person without disabilities.

Postsecondary institutions are covered in many ways under the ADA. Employment is addressed by Title I; Title II and III address private entities; and miscellaneous items are addressed under Title V and Title IV.

The ADA in Relation to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

Institutions that receive federal funds, such as Oklahoma City University are covered under Section 504. The ADA does not supplant Section 504, but in those situations where the ADA provides greater protection the ADA standards apply. Therefore, postsecondary institutions must adhere to both the Rehabilitation Act and The Americans with Disability Act.

Enforcement of Section 504

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in the U.S. Department of Education enforces Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Oklahoma City University offers students with disabilities a grievance procedure which includes steps to follow if students perceive that their disabilities are not being accommodated. If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome from using the schools' grievance procedure, or chooses to use an alternative to using the grievance procedure, the student may file a complaint against the school with OCR or in a court of law.

STANDARDS

The Association on Higher Education and Disability (*AHEAD*) is an international, multicultural organization of professionals committed to full participation in higher education for persons with disabilities. The Association is a vital resource, promoting excellence through education, communication and training. AHEAD has developed program standards which facilitate equal access to postsecondary education for students with disabilities. The Student Health and Disabilities Service Office at Oklahoma City University complies with these nine standards which are as follows:

1. Consultation/Collaboration/Awareness
2. Information Dissemination
3. Faculty/Staff Awareness
4. Academic Adjustments and Accommodations
5. Instructional Interventions
6. Counseling and Advocacy
7. Policies and Procedures
8. Program Development and Evaluation
9. Training and Professional Development

ADA PUBLICATIONS STATEMENT

Faculty members are advised to place the following statement in all syllabi for students to meet compliance with the Information Dissemination standard and bring attention to it during the first class meeting:

“If you need an accommodation due to a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please contact Student Health and Disabilities Service Office immediately at (405) 208-5991 or (405) 208-5090. Advance notice is required for many accommodations.”

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Students have a responsibility to self identify or disclose their disability to the designated office for disability services.
- Provide verifying documentation to that designated office.
- Obtain assessment and test results and provide them to that office.
- Act as independent adults
- Arrange their own weekly schedules
- Arrange for and obtain their own personal attendants, tutoring and individually fitted or designed assistive technologies.

TRANSITION FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO POST SECONDARY FOR THE DISABLED STUDENT

It is important for post secondary faculty and staff to realize that requirements for post secondary institutions in regards to disabilities vary greatly from secondary institutions. In high school, the parent or guardian was encouraged, and in some situations, required to be active in advocating for the student. In high school, the school had the responsibility to identify students with disabilities and provide assessment of learning disabilities. The school provided certain non-academic services and structured a large part of the student's weekly schedule. The school was required to modify education programs, prepare Individual Education Plans, provide a free and appropriate education and provide appropriate services by the school nurse or health services.

In post secondary, the students are considered adults and must act as their own advocate. This transition may be difficult for some parents and students.

The agreement for services or accommodation of disabilities at the postsecondary level must be between the person requesting the services and not at the request of a third party, such as a parent or guardian. The federal laws and FERPA are very clear that institutions are not to communicate to anyone but the student about individual academic progress and/or disability-related needs.

POST SECONDARY INSTITUTION RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE DISABLED STUDENT

- Post secondary institutions are *not* required to reduce or waive any of the essential requirements of a course or program.
- Post secondary institutions are *not* required to conduct testing and assessment of learning, psychological or medical disabilities.
- Post secondary institutions are *not* required to provide personal attendants.
- Post secondary institutions are *not* required to provide personal or private tutors, but tutoring services normally available to persons without disabilities must be accessible to persons with disabilities who are otherwise qualified for those services.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF DISABILITY DOCUMENTATION

The ADA states that students must self-identify, provide documentation of disability, and request services and accommodations. Documentation is reviewed by the Disabilities Coordinator for appropriateness and timeliness. For example, a student who wishes to be considered for an accommodation for a learning disability should generally provide documentation of testing by a licensed professional, a diagnosis, and specific recommendations for adaptation of the learning environment. Generally this diagnosis and testing should be less than three years old.

Information regarding disability is considered highly confidential, is maintained in separate, secure files in SHDSO with limited access, and is shared on a need-to-know basis. In this context, need-to-know could be defined as "needing to have knowledge in order to be prepared to take specific action." If the individual would not do anything differently as a result of knowing the information regarding disability, then it would be inappropriate to share such information. For example, if a student is hearing impaired and the faculty member would need to know

that to make adjustments in teaching style, then that information may be shared. In many cases, the faculty member does not need to know what the specific disability is, but only that the appropriate documentation has been provided to the appropriate source on campus and that this accommodation is necessary in order to fulfill the institution's mandate for equal access under ADA and Section 504.

This does not mean that faculty members are prohibited from asking the student for additional information if they believe they could better assist the student. Faculty may ask students directly about their disability and their need for accommodation. It is the student's prerogative to disclose as much or as little information to the faculty member about their specific disability. Faculty may not access such information from the disability coordinator for the campus who has been given that information and holds that documentation for the purpose of establishing eligibility and assuring protection under the law.

ACCOMMODATION

The word "accommodation" is many times misunderstood in relation to its application to students with disabilities. Accommodation provides a method whereby a disabled student can demonstrate his or her knowledge and abilities when traditional methods are inadequate. Accommodation in no way implies giving someone an unfair advantage over other students. In Section 504, which deals with postsecondary education, the term "appropriate academic adjustment" is used to describe the accommodations that might be required. Accommodations requested after the fact are *not* retroactive.

The ADA goes on to describe that accommodations must be reasonable, and use that term in the sense of the adjective, not the legal definition.

Three kinds of accommodations are *not* considered reasonable:

1. It is not a reasonable accommodation if making the accommodation or allowing participation poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others;
2. It is not a reasonable accommodation if making the accommodation means making a substantial change in an essential element of the curriculum or a substantial alteration in the manner in which you provide your services;
3. It is not a reasonable accommodation if it poses an undue financial or administrative burden.

Students with disabilities are required to meet the same academic standards as other students. Each disabled student has a specified plan designed to illustrate accommodations that can be provided for his or her particular disability. Communication with the Student Health and Disability Service Office is always recommended if clarification is needed about the terms of accommodation.

FACULTY NOTIFICATION OF NEED FOR ACCOMMODATION

When the student has completed the process of self-identification and has provided documentation to the Disability Services coordinator, faculty will be notified of need for accommodation. A form or letter will be brought to the faculty member by the student. The form is called, "Access Plan – Instructor Notification Form" and informs the faculty member of the specific accommodations appropriate for that student.

If a student approaches an instructor about accommodation, and a letter has not been received, the faculty member should refer the student to the SHDSO to begin the process so that all matters regarding disability accommodation are handled consistently.

Some of the most common accommodations utilized are listed below:

- Extended time on exams, generally time-and-a-half
- Classroom relocation for those with physical disabilities and motor impairments
- Note takers for students with particular kinds of physical and learning disabilities

- Interpreters for students who are deaf or hearing impaired
- Enlargement of reading material for students with visual impairments
- Alternative testing, or change in location for test, such as a quiet, distraction-free environment
- Tutors
- Adaptive equipment
- Time management/organizational support

TYPES OF DISABILITIES

VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

The degrees of visual impairment vary and will determine the types of accommodations needed for each individual. Some individuals will be able to read with enlarged print, while others who are completely blind will need their textbooks and tests read for them or computer adapted.

The most common accommodations for individuals with visual impairments are listed below:

- Readers and/or scribes for examinations
- Readers and/or scribes for text books
- Extended test time
- Taping of classes
- Enlarged print tests or handouts
- Assignment of another student to assist with laboratory experiments or other classroom activities
- Adaptive computer programs and equipment

Following are tips for instructing students with visual impairments:

- Talk while you teach. As you move around the classroom or point particular things out, verbalize what you are doing.
- Use concrete examples. When trying to teach abstract concepts that might be difficult for someone with a visual impairment to grasp, couple those concepts with examples from real life experiences.
- Do not raise your voice with students with visual impairments. It is common for many people to raise their voices when speaking to someone who is blind. Unless otherwise noted, these individuals have normal hearing.
- Ask the students what they need. It is acceptable and advisable to speak individually with a student with a visual impairment.
- Read aloud anything you write on the board or show on a screen.
- Explain diagrams, charts, equations, etc.

HEARING IMPAIRMENTS

Students who are deaf or hearing impaired may require different types of services. Some students are able to verbalize while others rely on some form of sign language and interpreters. No two people with a hearing loss experience the loss in exactly the same way. There are several types of hearing loss and factors that determine the impact the hearing loss has on language development. A person may be born with a hearing loss or may become hard of hearing due to an accident or illness later in life. If the age of onset occurs before the acquisition of language and the development of speech (roughly two years of age), the individual may have language-based deficiencies that interfere with language syntax and vocabulary that is auditory-based. Because the usual way of acquiring language through auditory means is affected by hearing loss, visual learning of language takes the place of auditory learning.

People who are culturally deaf are members of a distinct linguistic and cultural minority. The members of this culture group use American Sign Language as their first language. Therefore, members of this cultural group are bilingual, and English is their second language. As with any cultural group, people who are deaf have their own values, social norms and traditions. Be sensitive and attentive to cross-cultural information in the mainstreamed classroom setting. Students who are culturally deaf may use American Sign Language interpreters in the classroom setting.

When interpreters are utilized in the classroom, the following guidelines are necessary:

- Speak directly to the student, not to the interpreter.
- Do not discuss problems or concerns about a student with the interpreter.
- If there is a concern or question about the interpreting situation, talk to the interpreter before or after the class.
- When requesting questions/comments from the class, please allow additional time for the student(s) to receive the interpreted message.
- It is important not to speak too fast and to make sure that there is only one speaker at any given time.

The most common accommodations for students who are deaf or have hearing impairments are note taking during class, tutoring sessions, and interpreters during class. Occasionally, deaf students will request extended test time because of difficulties in comprehending written English. It is important for deaf and hearing impaired students to choose their seats in the classroom to ensure their ability to hear or see the interpreter.

Telephone communications for students who are deaf or hearing impaired is no longer an obstacle. Text Telephone devices (TTYs) are available in the following O.C.U. campus locations:

- Main switchboard, phone (405) 521-5000
- Dulaney-Browne library, phone 521-5065
- Learning Enhancement Center, Walker Center, phone 521-5040

LEARNING DISABILITIES

A learning disability can be best described as an inability to acquire or relate specific information. A student's learning disability (or disabilities) can exist in any number of areas such as math, reading, or written language.

Because no two students' learning disabilities are exactly the same and each may vary in intensity and degree, it is important to consider each student individually. The most common types of accommodation provided are a quiet environment, extended test-taking time, and a reader or scribe.

Following are some suggested teaching strategies for students with learning disabilities. However, there is no one specific teaching strategy that works best for all students with learning disabilities. In general, students with LD perform better when they have clear-cut objectives, a structured classroom environment and an outcome-oriented class.

- Provide a syllabus with course objectives and important dates so that students can pace themselves.
- Structure assignments into segments which are easier to manage.
- Allow students to tape lectures and make copies of any overhead projections.
- Give detailed feedback to students about their performance on tests or projects.
- Be clear about the objective of assignments and the exact manner in which the assignments are to be completed.

ATTENTION DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder is generally characterized by an inability to pay close attention to detail, difficulty sustaining attention, forgetfulness in daily activities and other related symptoms. Although this disorder is usually spoken of in reference to children, ADHD does carry over into adulthood. Students who are diagnosed with ADHD may require some accommodation to accomplish academic requirements.

There are many different strategies that an instructor may use within the learning environment to address Attention Deficit Disorder such as visual aids, structured assignments, and clear outlines of requirements. As is often the case, communication can best clarify the specific needs of accommodation of each student with ADHD. The most common accommodations provided for students with ADHD are quiet environments during testing, extended test-taking time, and note takers. Other accommodations may include:

- Provide a syllabus with course objectives and important dates so that students can pace themselves.
- Extended test time
- Note taker
- Taping class lecture
- Distraction-free environment for testing

ORTHOPEDIC AND MOBILITY IMPAIRMENTS

The orthopedic and mobility impairment group is composed of a multitude of disability types. Spinal cord injuries, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, AIDS, and amputated limb are examples of these types of impairments. Because of the wide range of function within this group, accommodation is different for each individual.

Many students who have orthopedic and mobility impairments may use some sort of orthotic, prosthetic, or mobility aid such as wheelchairs, scooters, canes, braces, walkers or canes. Service dogs are also included as an aid to mobility with the visually impaired. It is important to ensure that these students are given ample room for any adaptive equipment they may need to bring to class and to modify the environment as needed.

Some of the most common accommodations provided are the following:

- Classroom relocation to an accessible building
- Extended test-taking time
- Note takers in class
- Recording of class lectures
- Scribes and readers for exams
- Tables brought into the classroom in place of a desk
- Assistants for lab experiments

PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS

Some types of psychological disorders include depression, anxiety disorders, personality disorders, mood disorders, and other forms of psychosis. Each psychological disorder varies in degree and intensity and some may be cyclical.

The social stigma attached to persons with psychological disorders may sometimes be the greatest obstacle to overcome. Understanding that treatment and medication can enable a person with a psychological disorder to function in a learning environment is essential in providing accommodations. Accommodations vary for each student and therefore, each student should be considered individually. Sustaining attention and/or focusing in the classroom and during tests are common problems that may affect a student with a psychological disorder. Side effects of medications should also be taken into consideration.

The most common accommodations provided for students with psychological disorders are

- Extended testing time
- Testing in a quiet environment
- Use of tape recorders in class
- Note takers

CHRONIC DISEASES OR MEDICAL CONDITIONS

The terms “systemic disability,” “medical condition” and “chronic illness,” refer to any of a number of health-related conditions that may affect the respiratory, neurological, and circulatory or immune systems of the body. The symptoms associated with these conditions are often unstable and unpredictable and may be episodic. Interestingly, the most severe symptoms associated with these conditions are often those caused by side effects of the medications used in treatment. These conditions affect each individual differently and include a wide variety and severity of symptoms.

Some conditions that are chronic are: diabetes, recurrent cancer, autoimmune disorders such as lupus or rheumatoid arthritis, respiratory conditions, blood disorders, Lyme’s disease, Crohn’s disease, pain syndromes, cardiac disorders, AIDS, seizure disorders, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis or muscular dystrophy.

The symptoms of chronic conditions may affect energy level, attention, mobility, concentration and a variety of other characteristics related to academic study. Because the symptoms of medical and chronic disabilities may be unstable, a student may not use accommodations for some time but then experience an exacerbation of symptoms or a relapse that requires accommodation.

Accommodations for students with chronic illnesses may include:

- Priority scheduling to work around treatment regimens, personal care needs, medication schedules, variations in energy level and pain
- Ability to take a lighter than average course load without losing the benefits of a full-time student
- Flexibility in scheduling classes, tests and exams
- Easily accessed parking close to the classroom
- Note taker or taped lectures
- Faculty-approved extensions on deadlines
- Early access to course syllabi and assignments
- Instructor assistance outside of the classroom
- Snacks and/or access to a refrigerator
- Ability to take frequent breaks
- Appropriate seating arrangements
- Assistive technology that decreases the impact of the disability

Students with chronic illness or medical condition may request a “relaxation of attendance.” Oklahoma City University Policy on Relaxation of Attendance follows in this handbook. A request for this accommodation must be accompanied by the appropriate documentation from a medical provider. The Disability Services Coordinator will contact faculty when such a request is made by a student. Utilizing the points of discussion in the University policy, the Coordinator, Faculty member and student will determine how attendance may or may not be relaxed based on course content and format.

COMPLAINT OR GRIEVANCE POLICY

Oklahoma City University recognizes that there may be times when a student or faculty member does not concur with the accommodations being provided for a disability. A copy of the policy, “Request for Review of Classroom Accommodation (Complaint or Grievance Policy) follows this handbook.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR INFORMATION

The following resources are provided for faculty or staff wishing more information on disabilities and accommodation at the postsecondary level:

“Students with Disabilities, Preparing for Postsecondary Education: Knowing Your Rights and Responsibilities”
U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, Washington, D.C. 20202. July 2002
<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html>

“Auxiliary Aids and Services for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities”
U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, Washington, D.C. 20202, September 1998
Association for Higher Education and Disability
<http://www.ahead.org/>

Oklahoma chapter, Association for Higher Education and Disability
<http://www.ok-ahead.org/index.html>

Disability Access and Information Support
<http://www.daisweb.com/>
