



### **Documentation Guidelines for Psychiatric Disabilities**

**Important note:** Students who request accommodations in a higher education setting must submit documentation of their disability from an appropriate treatment provider. The purpose of documentation is to provide the Office of Accessibility with objective evidence that the student meets the criteria for having a disability, which is defined as 1) being diagnosed with a condition, and 2) experiencing a functional impairment or substantial limitation in at least one major life activity. Information provided below clarifies the data needed from treatment providers to assist the Office of Accessibility in determining the student's eligibility for accommodations. If the documentation is not adequate in content or does not address the student's current level of functioning and need for accommodations, additional documentation may be requested. Please contact the Office of Accessibility with any questions or concerns regarding these guidelines.

#### **Documentation should thoroughly address each of the following:**

##### **1. Basic components of documentation**

- Submit information that is typed or printed on letterhead, dated and signed. Treatment providers are responsible for ensuring documentation is legible.
- Documentation should be submitted from an appropriate licensed professional who is not related to the student. For psychiatric disabilities, this is typically a psychiatrist, psychologist, counselor, clinical social worker, or other mental health professional. Treatment providers should include their name, title, and credentials.
- Include the student's identifying information, such as full name and date of birth.

##### **2. History to support diagnosis**

- Provide information which speaks to the nature of your working relationship with the student. For example, how long have you been treating the student, when was their most recent evaluation or visit, etc.
- Provide any information regarding the student's medical, familial, and social histories which may relate to their diagnosis, symptoms, and/or functional limitations.
- Provide information regarding the onset, duration and severity of the disorder. This includes information regarding how the disorder has previously impacted the student as well as prior use of accommodations due to the disorder in an academic setting.

##### **3. Assessment to support diagnosis**

- Provide information regarding tools or instruments used to determine a diagnosis, including data gathered and your interpretation of how the data inform the diagnosis. Also address whether the student's difficulties could be better accounted for by other medical or mental disorders.
- Appropriate diagnostic tools may include, but are not limited to: a structured clinical interview addressing relevant educational, medical, and social history; behavioral observations; check lists/rating scales designed to measure emotional functioning; DSM criteria, etc.

##### **4. Diagnostic statement and evidence of current impairment**

- Eligibility for accommodations is based on the current impact of the student’s disability. Therefore, it is important to provide recent information. Due to the frequency with which psychiatric symptoms may change or manifest, it is preferred that documentation be dated within the past year.
- Provide a clear statement of the diagnosis based on the most recent version of the DSM, including diagnostic criteria and symptoms currently endorsed by the student. If a diagnosis could not be determined, provide information on plans for further assessment.
- Also based on your assessment, provide information of how the disability currently impairs the student across academic, social, and occupational settings when compared to most people in the general population. For example, which of the following major life activities are impacted by the student’s disability: caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working.

**5. Recommended accommodations and treatment**

- Provide information regarding any medication, treatment, or strategies you would recommend based on the student’s diagnosis and current impairment. If the student is currently receiving any medication or treatment, list any potential side effects that may interfere with academic or social functioning.
- Provide your recommendations for accommodations along with rationale for each accommodation based on your assessment of the student. The purpose of accommodations is to best ensure equal access to the learning and living environment, and accommodations should be based on a demonstrated need rather than a preference. Accommodations correlate to an impairment rather than a diagnosis, so there should be a clear connection between the student’s functional limitations and the accommodations being recommended. *Recommendations made by treatment providers are taken into consideration based on applicability to postsecondary education and are not guaranteed to be approved as accommodations.*

**Please submit the report or address questions regarding documentation to:**

Samford University Office of Accessibility

phone: 205-726-4078

fax: 205-726-2842

email: access@samford.edu

mailing address: Samford University  
 Attn: Office of Accessibility  
 800 Lakeshore Drive  
 Birmingham, AL 35229

*In compliance with FERPA and the ADA, documentation submitted to the Office of Accessibility is confidential and will not be shared with other internal departments or external entities. Students may request that a copy of their documentation be sent to another institution or released for their personal records.*