

Disability Services

Documentation Guidelines

Students requesting disability-related accommodations should be prepared to provide documentation of a disability by a qualified professional. This documentation facilitates services in several ways:

- 1) To assist in establishing that a student meets the definition of a person with a disability
- 2) To assist in understanding how the disability impacts the student in a particular setting
- 3) To assist in understanding the current impact of the disability as it relates to the accommodations requested

All documentation provided is reviewed on a case-by-case basis in light of these purposes. Young Harris College reserves the right to request more in-depth information or evaluations when the need arises.

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General Documentation Guidelines

Any documentation provided to Disability Services should:

1. Establish that the student is a person with a disability in need of accommodations by:
 - a. Adequately verifying the nature and extent of the disability describing the current professional standards and techniques used to come to this conclusion. When available, a diagnosis(es) should be stated.
 - b. Clearly describing the functional limitations created by the diagnosed disability.
 - c. Clearly establishing a nexus between the functional limitations and the recommended accommodation.
 - d. Affirming and substantiating the need for the student's request(s) for accommodations.
2. Be provided by a licensed clinical professional familiar with the student's history and functional implications of the impairments. This person must be someone eligible to diagnose and assess in the field of the disability (e.g. a podiatrist would not be an appropriate professional to assess a digestive disorder).
3. Be dated and signed, and include the name, title and professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about license or certification.
4. Be printed on the letterhead of the evaluating professional.
5. Be written in English.
6. Be current. This is generally defined as within the last calendar year unless the impact of the disability is stable over time. However, each case is evaluated on an individual basis and exceptions may be granted depending upon circumstances and the disability.

About IEPs and 504 Plans: A K-12 school plan such as an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) does not alone constitute documentation of disability but may be included in a student's overall assessment as relevant background information.

Specific Learning Disability Documentation Guidelines

Providing academic accommodations to students who have a learning disability is most accurate when we have information about how the student qualified for the diagnosis and the nature of their specific academic challenges. This information is typically available in a standard testing battery.

Students requesting accommodation on the basis of a specific learning disability must provide documentation from a professional who has undergone comprehensive training and has relevant experience in differential diagnosis of a full range of cognitive and psychiatric disabilities (e.g., Psychologist).

A comprehensive testing battery typically contains the following elements. The clinician completing the report may select tests other than those listed in the following example if they provide a rationale for the tests selected. An IEP or 504 plan is typically inadequate in this regard.

1. A diagnostic interview – the interview must include a description of the presenting problem(s), developmental, medical, psycho-social, and employment histories, family history, and a discussion of comorbidity where indicated;
2. An assessment – for the neurological or psychological evaluation to illustrate a substantial limitation to learning, the comprehensive assessment battery must contain the following domains:
 - a. Aptitude/cognitive ability – an assessment of global intellectual functioning as measured by the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-IV (WAIS-IV) or the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-III) with all subtests, standard scores, and index scores;
 - b. Academic achievement – a comprehensive achievement battery (e.g., Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery – III: Tests of Achievement), with subtest and standard scores, indicating current level of functioning in the academic areas of reading, math, oral and written language; and
 - c. Information processing – a comprehensive battery (e.g., Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery-III: Tests of Cognitive Abilities), with subtest and standard scores, which addresses the specific areas of short and long-term memory, sequential memory, auditory and visual perception, processing speed, executive functioning, and motor ability.
3. A specific diagnosis which conforms to the criteria for the specific learning disability, as stated in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.
4. A clinical summary which:
 - a. Indicates the substantial limitations to major life activities posed by the specified learning disability;
 - b. Describes the extent to which these limitations impact the academic context for which accommodations are being requested;
 - c. Suggests how the specific effects of the learning disability may be accommodated; and
 - d. States how the effects of the learning disability are mediated by the recommended accommodations.
5. Testing must have been administered using adult norms or have occurred within the last 5 years. Contact Disability Services in for guidance if you are updating a previous testing battery.

Housing and Dining Accommodations

Students requesting accommodations related to their Housing and Dining agreements must provide documentation in accordance with the General Documentation guidelines above. Housing and Dining accommodations are relevant to the specific YHC Housing Agreement and end upon the expiration of that Agreement. Students should be prepared to provide updated documentation for accommodation requests for each new Housing Agreement.

Emotional Support Animal Accommodation Documentation Guidelines

Emotional support animals are not covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act, but instead are covered by the Fair Housing Act. In addition to the information listed in the General Documentation guidelines listed above, emotional support animal documentation must also include or address the following:

1. An established therapeutic relationship between the student and the mental health evaluator including dates of first and last visit
2. The nature of the student's mental health disability including a DSM-IV or V diagnosis (specific disability) AND pertinent background information related to the mental health disability
3. Description of how the student is substantially limited in one or more major life activities in housing by this mental health disability such that an ESA would be necessary for this student to have full benefit or enjoyment of housing at the Young Harris College
4. Explains the nexus between the functional limitations of the disability and the recommended emotional support animal
5. Affirms that having the animal described alleviates identified symptom effects of the student's mental health disability or serves a defined role in treatment.
6. Affirms having the animal in residence is necessary to effectively benefit from YHC's residential program.
7. Description of the animal (i.e. a standard poodle, guinea pig, cat)

NOTE: Letters of documentation purchased from the internet for a set price rarely provide the information necessary to support an ESA request. Disability Services strongly discourages anyone from using these types of resources to obtain documentation.

If a requested accommodation is not supported by the documentation provided, students may be instructed to provide additional documentation in support of the request.

Students MAY NOT bring an emotional support animal onto campus until clearance is provided from Disability Services or Residence Life. Students with unauthorized animals on campus will be directed to remove the animal immediately and may be subject to conduct violations.

Types of Documentation NOT Accepted

Disability Services is unable to accept the following types of documentation:

1. Information originating from YHC Student Counseling Services.
2. Photographed images of documentation.
3. Handwritten letters from licensed professionals.
4. Entries from patient medical charts or other clinical notes.
5. Information written on prescription pads.
6. Information that is illegible or in a language other than English.
7. Self-evaluations.
8. Information from non-professionals.

9. Research articles.
10. Documentation provided by a member of the student's family.
11. Copies of documentation that you will need to have returned to you. All physical documentation received is scanned into an electronic format and then confidentially shredded.

If a requested accommodation is not supported by the documentation provided, students may be instructed to provide additional documentation in support of the request.

Submitting Documentation

Information can be submitted in one of the following ways. Unfortunately, Disability Services no longer supports fax communication.

- Dropped off at the YHC Success Center front desk during regular business hours
- Scanned and *attached* to an email (PDFs preferred; no photographs please) to disability@yhc.edu
- Attached to the Request for Accommodations form at the time of submission
- Sent by post mail to the following address:

Disability Services - Success Center
1 College St.
Young Harris, GA 30582

The accommodations process is not an immediate process. Disability Services at YHC will not review accommodation requests until all information is received. **Please allow up to 10 business days for review.** Required information includes:

- 1) A completed [Request for Accommodations form](#)
- 2) Appropriate documentation as outlined above

Once information is processed and reviewed, students will be contacted at their yhc.edu email address outlining next steps which may include a request to submit additional information and/or an invitation and directions to schedule an intake or follow-up meeting.

Confidentiality of Information

Disability Services views all materials pertaining to a student's disability as confidential. All disability-related information for students at Young Harris College is housed in Disability Services. Only staff persons working at Disability Services have access to these files. Registration with Disability Services will not appear on transcripts.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) do not allow faculty or others access to disability-related information (e.g. diagnosis, medications). Disability Services will not share a student's medical information with university faculty or staff without the student's consent. Disability Services personnel will confirm registration and approved accommodations on a need-to-know basis.

Additional Information

If the documentation does not meet the guidelines listed above, students are still encouraged to submit any information they have related to their diagnosis. Disability Services will work with students to determine what additional documentation is necessary. In some cases, provisional accommodations can be set up while the student is in the process of gathering additional documentation.

If a student does not have any documentation, they are still encouraged to contact Disability Services. Our office can provide more information about documentation requirements, as well as provide referrals to resources on and off campus.

NOTE: Students who have readily observable permanent disabilities (e.g. wheelchair user, white cane user) do not need to submit documentation. Instead, simply submit your Request for Accommodation Form and then contact Disability Services to schedule an intake meeting.