



Suggested Guidelines for Documentation of a Psychiatric Disability

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, qualified individuals with psychiatric disabilities are protected from discrimination and may be entitled to reasonable accommodations and equal access to educational programs and services. To establish that a student is covered under the ADA, documentation must indicate that a specific psychiatric disability exists, and that the disability substantially limits one or more major life activities. The Office of Disability Services at Boston University offers accommodations and support for eligible students with psychiatric disabilities.

We have prepared this document to assist the evaluator in determining the level of information required to establish eligibility for accommodations. We hope that this will answer any questions you may have as to what should be included in your statement:

The Office of Disability Services requires documentation of a psychiatric disability to be prepared by a mental health professional, such as a psychiatrist, psychologist, or licensed psychiatric nurse practitioner. Clinicians must possess appropriate licensure or certification and relevant training or expertise in differential diagnosis of psychiatric disorders. The documentation must be less than twelve months old, typed in English on professional letterhead, signed, and dated with licensure numbers and state of licensure.

Documentation should be in the form of a detailed clinical summary which contains the formulation of all relevant diagnoses. It should explain the severity of the disorder, presenting symptoms, relevant historical, developmental, and familial data, relevant medical and medication history, and rule out alternative explanations or diagnoses. Diagnoses must be assigned per DSM-IV or ICD-10 criteria. Please include information regarding current treatment plan and/or medication, prognosis, and relevant side effects (if present). A description of functional limitations as they affect functioning in an academic environment must be included, as well as a request for specific accommodations. Each accommodation requested must be justified per the student's functional limitations as described.

This document should be accompanied by a completed and signed Disability Verification Form. Please also include copies of any diagnostic examination results, hospital discharge summaries, or other relevant historical documents if available.

The documentation you provide will be kept strictly confidential and information about the diagnosis or treatment will not be released to professors or administrators without the student's written consent. Please do not send any documentation regarding a student's psychiatric disability to his/her academic department or professors.

Please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Lorraine Wolf, Director, Office of Disability Services at 617/353-3658 with any questions.