

Learning Disabilities

Introduction

Students requesting accommodations or services because of a learning disability from MUSC College of Health Professions are required to submit documentation to determine eligibility in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). A diagnosis of a learning disability does not necessarily qualify a student for academic accommodations under the law. To establish that a student is covered under Section 504 and the ADA, the documentation must indicate that the disability substantially limits some major life activity, including learning.

The following guidelines are provided in the interest of assuring that documentation of a learning disability is complete and supports the request for accommodations. The College of Health Professions will determine eligibility and appropriate services, case by case, based on the quality, recency and completeness of the documentation submitted. The following requirements provide students, schools, and professional diagnosticians with a common understanding of the components of documentation that are necessary to validate the existence of a learning disability, the impact on the individual's educational performance, and the need for academic accommodations for the purpose of the ADA and the 1973 Rehabilitation Act.

A Qualified Professional Must Conduct the Evaluation

The assessment must be administered by a trained and qualified (i.e., certified and/or licensed) professional (e.g., psychologist, school psychologist, neuropsychologist, educational diagnostician, or student clinicians who are being supervised by a qualified professional) who has had direct experience with adolescents and adults with learning disabilities.

Documentation Must be Current

Reasonable accommodations are based on the current impact of the disability on academic performance. In most cases this means that a diagnostic evaluation should be age appropriate and relevant to the student's learning environment, and show the student's current level of functioning. If documentation does not address the individual's current level of functioning a reevaluation may be required.

Documentation Must Include a Specific Diagnosis

The report must include a clear and direct statement that a learning disability does or does not exist including a rule out of alternative explanations of learning problems. Terms such as "learning difficulty", "appears", "suggests", or "probable" do not support a conclusive diagnosis.

Documentation Must be Comprehensive

The documentation must include a summary containing relevant historical information, instructional interventions, related services, and age of initial diagnosis. The documentation must also include objective data regarding aptitude, achievement and

information processing. Test scores (standard scores, percentiles, and grade equivalents) must be included in the documentation. (Refer to testing information)

Recommendations for Accommodations

A diagnostic report may include specific recommendations for accommodation(s). A prior history of an accommodation, without a demonstration of a current need, does not in and of itself warrant the provision of a like accommodation. Each accommodation recommended by an evaluator should include a rationale. The evaluation should support the recommendations with specific test results or clinical observations. If an accommodation is not clearly identified in the diagnostic report, the College of Health Professions will seek clarification and, if necessary, more information, and will make the final determination as to whether appropriate and reasonable accommodations are warranted and can be provided. The College of Health Professions reserves the right to request reassessment when questions regarding previous assessment or previous service provision arise.

Examples of Typical Measures Used in Adult Assessment of Learning Disabilities

(this is not intended to be a complete list, but rather serve as a guide for clinicians)

Aptitude

- a. *Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-3rd Edition (WAIS-III)*
- b. *Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised (WAIS-R)*
- c. *Stanford Binet Intelligence Scale-4th and 5th Edition (SB IV, V)*
- d. *Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery-3rd Edition: Tests of Cognitive Ability*
- e. *Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery-Revised: Tests of Cognitive Ability*
- f. *Kaufman Adolescent and Adult Intelligence Test*

Achievement

- a. *Wechsler Individual Achievement Tests II (WIAT II)*
- b. *Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT)*
- c. *Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery-3rd Edition: Tests of Achievement (WJ-III)*
- d. *Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery-Revised: Tests of Achievement (WJ-R)*
- e. *Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK)*
- f. *Scholastic Abilities Test for Adults (SATA)*

Note: Screening tools such as the **Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT-III)** are not considered comprehensive measures of achievement and must be accompanied by a comprehensive measure such as one of those listed above. All instruments selected to measure these areas must be age appropriate.

Information Processing

a. Subtests of the WAIS-R or WAIS-III

b. Subtests of the Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery: Tests of Cognitive Ability

c. Wechsler Memory Scales-Revised or 3rd Edition