

Documentation of a Disability

In order to receive disability-related accommodations and/or services from Colorado Mountain College (CMC), students are required to submit documentation of their disability to verify eligibility under the Americans with Disabilities Act, the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Colorado Mountain College Disability Services Office (DS) policy. For these purposes, a disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Major life activities include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working.

Documentation of disability assists the DS staff in collaborating with the student to determine reasonable accommodations and/or services, which are provided on a case-by-case basis. If the submitted documentation is incomplete or does not support the student's request for accommodations and/or services, the student may be asked to provide additional documentation.

For example, an **Individualized Education Plan, 504 Plan, or Summary of Performance (SOP)** from a secondary school without supporting information generally is not considered to be sufficient documentation.

In general, documentation should include the following:

1. The credentials of the evaluator(s)

Documentation must be provided by a licensed or otherwise properly credentialed professional who has undergone appropriate and comprehensive training, has relevant experience, and has no personal relationship with the individual being evaluated. The individual making the diagnosis must be qualified to do so (e.g., an orthopedic limitation might be documented by a physician, but not a licensed psychologist). More specifically, the license needs to be granted by the Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA) rather than a Certificate from the Department of Education.

Documentation should be provided on official letterhead with the name, title, professional credentials, address, phone number, and signature of the evaluator, as well as the date of the report.

2. A diagnostic statement identifying the disability

Documentation should include a clear diagnostic statement. While diagnostic codes from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) or the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF) of the World Health Organization are helpful, a full clinical description may also convey the necessary information.

3. As appropriate to the disability, a description of the diagnostic methodology used

Generally, documentation should include a description of the diagnostic criteria, evaluation methods, procedures, tests, and dates of administration, as well as observations, specific results, and a clinical narrative. Where appropriate to the nature of the disability, both summary data and

specific test results, including subtest and index scores, should be provided. Data should be based on age norms and reported as standard scores and percentiles.

Diagnostic methods that are congruent with the particular disability and current professional practices in the field are recommended. For example, assessments for learning disabilities should include at least one measure of aptitude and measures of achievement in reading, math, and written language.

4. A description of the current functional limitations

Information on how the disability currently impacts the individual provides useful information for identifying reasonable accommodations. The documentation should be thorough enough to demonstrate whether and how a major life activity is substantially limited by providing a clear sense of the severity, frequency, and pervasiveness of the condition.

The age of acceptable documentation is dependent upon the disability. While relatively recent documentation is recommended in most circumstances, older documentation for conditions that are permanent or non-varying may be appropriate. Likewise, changing conditions and/or changes in how the condition impacts the individual brought on by growth and development may warrant more frequent updates in order to provide an accurate picture of the current status of the student (e.g., learning disabilities, attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder, psychological disorders, and chronic health conditions).

5. A description of the expected progression or stability of the disability

It is helpful when documentation provides information on expected changes in the functional impact of the disability over time and with context. Information on the cyclical or episodic nature of the disability and known or suspected environmental triggers to episodes provides opportunities to anticipate and plan for varying functional impacts and the need for reasonable accommodations and/or services.

6. A description of current and past accommodations, services, and/or medications

A description of current and past accommodations, services, and/or medications will assist the Disability Services staff in determining appropriate accommodations and/or services. A discussion of any significant side effects from current medications that may impact physical, perceptual, behavioral, or cognitive performance is also helpful. While accommodations and/or services provided in another setting are not binding on Colorado Mountain College, this information may provide insight for making decisions for reasonable accommodations and/or services.

7. Recommendations for accommodations and/or services

Recommendations for reasonable accommodations and/or services that are logically related to functional limitations provide valuable information for the review and planning process. Colorado Mountain College, however, will make the final determination of reasonable accommodations and/or services.

All expenses incurred for the testing are the responsibility of the student.

These guidelines are based on the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) best practices for documentation (<http://www.ahead.org/resources/best-practices-resources/elements>).

Students should keep a copy of the documentation for their personal records. The DS destroys documentation and other disability-related information seven years after a student leaves the college.

Please note that documentation accepted by the DS might not be accepted by other institutions, agencies, and/or programs (e.g., testing agencies, licensure exams, and certification programs). Please check with the specific organizations and/or programs to determine their documentation requirements. For additional information please contact the DS.

To initiate services, the individual must directly contact the DS and provide documentation of their disability.

For more information, consult with the Disability Services Coordinator at your campus:

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