

## Documentation Guidelines for Physical, Mobility, and Other Health-Related Conditions

To receive accommodations or adjustments (alternative circumstances) for equal access and opportunity in a university setting students must arrange clinical documentation that sufficiently verifies and describes a disability situation. The purpose of documentation is to supply enough information for making effective decisions about the need to allow adjustments or accommodations. It should be written by a licensed clinician, preferably a doctor. There should be adequate information on all of the following topics. The paperwork should:

- a. Be signed by the author and verify credentials as an expert about the health issue (some authors provide a vita).
- b. Outwardly provide a diagnosis and list enough current symptoms and their magnitude to adequately support the diagnosis.
- c. Provide a historical summary about how the health issue arose and developed.
- d. Provide statements indicating how the symptoms will substantially limit what the student needs to accomplish or do in a university setting. (For academic adjustments the statements could explain how symptoms will limit the student from accomplishing common academic tasks: listening to lectures; taking notes; a lot of reading assignments; writing; delivering presentations; taking tests, etc.. For accommodations in regard to the physical nature of campus there could be explanations of limitations related to: sitting at small desks for lectures; using computers; living in the apartment like setting of a residential hall with most such buildings located on the fringe of campus, having multiple floors but no elevator, kitchen and laundry facilities in the basement, gender specific hallway bathrooms, small rooms that are typically shared with a roommate. For parking accommodation the statements should focus on: large parking lots typically located at a distance from important campus buildings.)
- e. Describe how the health condition's limiting influences can be expected to change over time.
- f. Present suggestions as to the reasonable academic adjustments and/or facilities accommodations that will be needed for off setting the limitations.

**Concise** statements may be sufficient if they adequately address their respective topics. Please keep in mind that a diagnosis is not equivalent to a disability; a disability is the way a diagnosed condition limits a person's functioning. It's important to describe the limiting influences. Documentation that's primarily paperwork copied directly out of a medical file rarely meets these guidelines (i.e., doesn't discuss limitations in a college setting). Similarly, documentation doesn't meet all the guidelines when it simply recommends how a student should be accommodated (i.e., doesn't adequately describe current clinical factors or explain how they'll limit the student). The idea is that documentation must provide adequate information to allow good decisions about why adjustments or accommodations will be necessary. Thus, the best form of documentation is probably the summary of a recent evaluation with a concise letter written specifically for this purpose.