Documentation Guidelines for a Psychological, Neurological, or Mental Health Issue

To receive accommodation in a university setting for a psychological, neurological, or mental health issue students should submit documentation that sufficiently delineates the nature of the issue. It should meet the following guidelines:

1. The author’s credentials are indicated and confirm an appropriate level of expertise for the issue. Practitioners with a Master’s degree should obtain the co-signature of a doctor.

2. There is sufficient information regarding the student “as an adult.”

3. There is an adequate summary of the issue: an explanation regarding how the issue originated; significant changes over time; a list and description of current symptoms, including their frequency, magnitude, and duration; an outward assignment of a specific diagnosis; a description of any coexisting diagnoses that compound the circumstances of the primary diagnosis; a description regarding how the situation can be expected to change over time. A multi-axial assessment is encouraged using the format described in the DSM-V.

4. There are descriptions regarding how the diagnosed issue significantly limits the student’s functioning in major areas of life.

5. There is an explanation regarding how the diagnosed condition will substantially limit the student’s functioning in relation to important aspects of college. For academic accommodations it could be limiting things such as: class attendance, listening to lectures, writing notes, completing reading assignments, taking tests, writing assignments, working on peer group projects; and, participating in class discussions. For accommodation related to living in a residential hall it could be things like sharing a relatively small living area with a roommate, many peers living nearby, use of communal bathrooms, etc..

6. There is a recommendation about the kinds of reasonable accommodation that will be necessary to create equal access and opportunity in a college setting.

Concise statements may be sufficient if they adequately address those topics (1-6). Paperwork copied directly from a medical file may not entirely meet these guidelines (i.e., if it doesn’t discuss the topic of limitations in relation to college). Similarly, documentation may not meet these guidelines if it only recommends a student should have “support” or doesn’t adequately delineate the nature of the student’s issue. The best form of documentation may be both the summary of a relatively recent evaluation and a concise letter explaining why specific types of accommodations are necessary.