Documentation Guidelines for Psychological, Neurological, or Mental Health Issue

To receive accommodations for equal access and opportunity in a university setting for a Psychological, Neurological, or Mental Health issue students should submit documentation that sufficiently delineates the nature of the situation. It should meet the following guidelines:

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

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

3. There is an adequate summary of clinical circumstances: an explanation of how the issue originated and 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. There is a description of how the situation can be expected to change over time. A multi-axial assessment is encouraged using the format described in the DSM-IV-TR.

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 of how the diagnosed condition will substantially limit the student’s functioning in relation to important aspects of college. For academic accommodations it could be things such as: attending classes, listening to lectures, writing notes, completing reading assignments, taking tests, writing assignments, peer group projects participating in class discussions, etc.. For accommodation related to living in a residential hall it could be things like sharing a relatively small apartment like setting with a roommate with many peers living nearby, 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 their respective topics. Paperwork copied directly from a medical file may not 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 simply recommends how a student should be accommodated (i.e., if doesn’t adequately delineate the nature of the student’s issue). The best documentation may be both the summary of a relatively recent evaluation and concise letter explaining why specific types of accommodations are necessary.