

DOCUMENTATION OF DISABILITIES

Elmhurst College provides program accessibility and reasonable accommodations for persons defined as disabled in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the ADAAA of 2008.

It is the responsibility of each student who seeks accommodations, auxiliary aids, or disability services from Elmhurst College to provide documentation that describes the disability and its functional impact upon the student's academic or living environment. The following information is designed to help students submit appropriate information and engage in a productive interactive process with the College.

Elmhurst College
Elmhurst, Illinois

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. *Why provide documentation?*

A student seeking accommodations for any type of disability provides documentation that not only describes the student's physical and/or mental condition for which accommodation is sought but also explains the functional impact of that condition in academic or living situations depending upon the particular kind of accommodation sought. The College uses this documentation as a tool to identify strategies, including reasonable accommodations that will facilitate student access to courses, programs, and services. Documentation also is used to establish the presence of a disability.

2. *Who is responsible for obtaining documentation?*

The student is solely responsible for providing documentation; the College is not required to pay for any assessment/testing.

3. *Who is qualified to provide information regarding a student's disability?*

Only a qualified professional may conduct testing or assessment and provide appropriate documentation to support an accommodation request. Qualified typically means a licensed individual with expertise in working with an adult population. The appropriate professional evaluator may vary according to the type of disability. For example, a physician or audiologist would be appropriate for those with hearing disabilities; a psychologist, neurologist, or psychiatrist would be appropriate for ADD/ADHD; and a physician or medical specialist would be appropriate for those with medical or chronic health conditions. The critical factor is whether the evaluator has the appropriate training, experience, and clinical information to provide a diagnosis and accommodation recommendations for an adult population.

4. *Is there a specific time frame for documentation?*

Documentation should be current. The goal is to determine the student's current level of functioning in academic settings so the College can provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations or auxiliary aids. In some cases, students may be asked to provide annual updates. For example, if a student's medical condition changes, updated documentation may be necessary. Specific questions about whether or not information is considered current should be directed to the Access and Disabilities Services staff.

Documentation older than three years is generally not acceptable.

Students transferring from another higher education institution, who have received accommodations in that setting, are encouraged to submit their accommodation records from that institution.

5. *Is an IEP or a 504 Plan acceptable documentation?*

The IEP or 504 Plan by itself may or may not be sufficient documentation to identify a disability and a student's needs for academic or living accommodations in the postsecondary setting. Documentation must be reviewed by A & D staff to determine if it is adequate or if additional documentation is necessary. However, IEPs or 504 Plans are always useful during the interactive process between student and Access and Disability Services staff as strengths, needs, and appropriate accommodations and supports are discussed.

6. *What if there is a change in the student's condition or a new condition arises?*

Students may submit any additional documentation they or any appropriate care provider believe will be helpful or necessary. Students are encouraged to discuss any changes with the Access and Disability Services staff.

7. *When should a student submit documentation and where is that documentation kept?*

As soon as possible after an incoming student has been admitted to the College, he or she should submit documentation to the Access and Disability Services Coordinator. All documentation is securely maintained.

8. *How often does a student meet with the Access and Disability Services Coordinator?*

Students will engage in an initial meeting with the Disability Services Coordinator to review strengths and needs and to develop appropriate accommodations through an interactive process. Additional resources and supports on campus will also be discussed.

At Elmhurst College, students are required to meet with the Access and Disability Services at the start of **each** semester to develop appropriate accommodations.

9. *What is the responsibility of the student versus the professor in seeing that accommodations are provided?*

Once accommodations are officially developed, the Access and Disability Services Coordinator will notify the student's current professors, through electronic correspondence, of the accommodations approved; it is the student's responsibility to initiate use of any accommodation available to him. No information about the nature of a student's disability is disclosed.

10. *Will submitted documentation be acceptable in the future for other agencies such as those administering the GRE or MCAT?*

Students planning to take standardized tests for professional schools need to contact the specific testing agency. These groups have their own requirements for documentation of disabilities and may require different information from that maintained by Elmhurst College. However, the Access and Disability Services Coordinator may be helpful in documenting disability information on file and completing certification of disability paperwork.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR DOCUMENTATION

Documentation is provided by a licensed or credentialed professional who has appropriate training and experience. For example, a physician would be in the best position to document a physical problem such as a chronic disease; a licensed clinical psychologist would not be.

Appropriate documentation should include a statement identifying the disability as well as a description of the diagnostic methodology. The methodology consists of the evaluation methods, procedures, tests and dates of administration, observations, and specific results. Formal instruments, medical examinations, structured interview protocols, and unstructured interviews are among the acceptable methods that will help the College determine reasonable accommodations.

Most important is the description of how the disability currently impacts the student in the learning or living environment. For physical disabilities, it is helpful to know the expected changes and/or duration caused by the disability. While students are not required to reveal this information, it may help the College better prepare to address student needs as they may change.

Documentation may also include the history of past accommodations, services, or medications. Recommendations for current accommodations will also be considered as the College makes the determination of accommodations on case by case basis.

Documentation should be provided on appropriate professional letterhead or through a professional email account. It should include the evaluator's name, title/license number, address, phone number, and email address. The letter on the following page may be presented to the evaluator(s) the student has chosen to document a disability.

Dear Evaluator:

Thank you for agreeing to assist _____, an Elmhurst College student, in documenting the educational impact of his or her disability.

The College uses the documentation as a tool for identifying strategies, including reasonable and appropriate accommodations, which will facilitate access to courses, programs, and services. Documentation is also used to establish the presence of a disability.

Please note that, although the College does not require the use of any specific tests for documentation purposes, following these guidelines will prove most useful:

1. Use direct language when indicating the diagnosis.
 - Avoid terms such as “appears,” “suggests,” or “is indicative of.”
 - Avoid terms such as “learning styles,” learning differences,” “academic problems,” and “test difficulty/anxiety” which are not recognized as disabilities.
2. Before making a diagnosis, rule out emotional, attention, or motivational problems that might interfere with academic performance but do not constitute a disability.
3. Recognize that accommodations are determined in conjunction with the specific learning situation.
 - Providing information on previous accommodations is helpful in understanding the student’s history and will be used in discussions to determine strategies for facilitating access.
 - Accommodations which were appropriate in previous settings may not be reasonable at the College or in specific courses or programs.
4. Provide as much detail from psycho-educational tests as possible.
 - Attach specific test and subtest scores in standard scores.
 - Specific scores are often important in understanding the relationship between the disability and the requested accommodation.

The information you provide will be maintained in the individual student’s confidential file in Access and Disability Services, consistent with the requirements of the disability and medical confidentiality laws. If you have questions or need additional guidance, please contact Access and Disability Services at 630-617-6448.

The completed form should be mailed to:

Access and Disability Services
Elmhurst College
190 Prospect
Elmhurst, IL 60126
disability.services@elmhurst.edu

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS FOR DOCUMENTATION

The following additional suggestions may be helpful to students and potential evaluators in preparing requests for accommodations or auxiliary aids. These suggestions are organized by type of disability, and evaluators should use their professional judgment in determining what to provide in an individual situation. Students and evaluators are encouraged, however, to provide the College with sufficient information to allow for a productive interactive process between the College and the student. They are assured that all such information is maintained confidentially, consistent with the requirements of the disability and medical confidentiality laws.

ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)

- Specific classification for type of ADHD
- Date of first diagnosis/Date of current evaluation
- Summary of the diagnostic interview and evidence of alternative explanations ruled out
- Methods used to determine current impact on student's ability to function in an academic environment
- Current medications including any functional limitation due to those medications
- Discussion of co-morbid conditions, if appropriate

DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

- Statement of diagnosis
- Date of onset
- Date and results of last audiological exam
- Description of any current technology used by the student (e.g. Cochlear implants, hearing aids)
- Summary of functional limitations of hearing loss and degree of limitation
- Specific suggestions regarding academic adjustments or auxiliary aids

LEARNING DISABILITIES

- Statement of diagnosis as distinct from symptoms/behaviors
- Date(s) of current and prior evaluations
- Specific evaluations including, but not limited to, intellectual functioning, achievement, information processing, language proficiency reported in standard scores
- Justification for how functional limitations relate to specific recommendations

MEDICAL AND/OR CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS

- Statement of diagnosis
- Date and/or age of onset of the condition
- Discussion of the nature, frequency, and severity of symptoms

- Progressive nature of condition, if applicable
- Explanation of how student's difficulties may impact functioning in an academic environment
- Description of any medications or treatments which may impact student functioning

PHYSICAL MOBILITY/DEXTERITY IMPAIRMENTS

- Statement of diagnosis
- Date and/or onset of impairment
- Discussion of the nature, frequency, and severity of condition
- Explanation of how student's difficulties may impact functioning in an academic environment

PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS

- Statement of diagnosis of impairments as per DSM-V
- Date and/or age of onset/Date of last psychiatric evaluation
- Discussion of any pertinent background information
- Description of current medications which may impact student functioning
- Clinical summary which (1) explains limitation posed by the disability in an academic or living environment, (2) suggests how these limitations may be accommodated, and/or (3) shows how the effect of the disorder is mediated with recommendations

VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

- Statement of diagnosis
- Date and/or age of onset
- Date and report of most recent ophthalmologist examination
- Low vision evaluation of residual visual function, if appropriate
- Discussion of student visual acuity
- Recommendations and rationales for academic adjustments to mediate student functional limitation in academic environments