



Cochise College Office of Disability Services

FACULTY GUIDE TO ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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INTRODUCTION

This guide focuses on the legal rights of individuals with disabilities attending post-secondary institutions and the faculty's role in classroom accommodations. It is an informational resource for faculty to increase understanding of the educational implications of making programs and facilities accessible to students with disabilities.

There are two federal laws which prohibit discrimination against individuals with disabilities: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990. Section 504 applies to schools that receive federal financial assistance and states, "*No otherwise qualified individual with a disability... shall solely by reason of his or her disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance...*" 29 U.S.C. § 794(a).

The Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, heretofore ADA, specifically Title II which covers state-funded postsecondary institutions, states, "*No qualified individual with a disability... shall be excluded from participation in or be denied benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity...*" 42 U.S.C. § 12132 (Supp.V).

If a postsecondary school receives federal assistance and is operated by a state or local government, then both Section 504 and Title II of the ADA apply to the institution.

In order to be protected from discrimination under these laws, a person must meet the definition of "disability" and be qualified for the school program. The qualified individual with a disability must have documentation of an actual disability from a certifying professional stating that the disability substantially limits at least one major life activity. Learning is included as a major life activity under the ADA. The person with the disability must be able fulfill the essential functions or requirements of the program either with or without an accommodation.

Also covered under the ADA are persons who have a history of a disability that substantially limits a major life activity, and those who maybe perceived as having such a disability.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

According to the ADA, a reasonable accommodation is a provision of an auxiliary aid or adaptation of the manner in which courses are taught that allows access to the educational programs, materials, activities, and degrees offered at the college. An accommodation that creates undue hardship on the institution in that it is unduly costly, substantial, disruptive, or that would fundamentally alter the nature of the course or program is not deemed reasonable under the ADA. However, when considering if an accommodation is too costly, the entire resources of the institution must be taken into account.

Postsecondary schools are required to provide auxiliary aids and services to ensure that no individual is excluded or treated differently. Some examples of accommodations may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Qualified sign language interpreters
- Readers, taped texts, or alternate formats such as large print or Braille versions of materials
- Acquisition or modification of equipment or devices
- Note takers
- Extended time for test taking and assignments
- Oral testing
- Quiet testing
- Use of tape recorder in class
- Spelling aids and/or calculators
- Assistive technology, e.g. computer software
- Allowing absences beyond usual attendance requirements
- Making facilities accessible to students with physical disabilities

Accommodations are highly individualized and are tailored to the individual student based on the student's experiences, documentation from a certifying professional, and the Director of Disability Services intake interview with the student. The law does not require that the school provide the exact accommodations requested by the student. Instead, the school must provide an effective accommodation(s) that offers the student an equal educational opportunity. The school must consider the student's preference but may legally select the least costly, effective accommodation even if it is not the student's first choice. Also, it must be understood that it is the student's responsibility to notify the school of his/her disability and to provide supporting documentation of a disability requiring accommodation. If faculty does have a question regarding the appropriateness of an accommodation, please call the Office of Disability Services. The Director will arrange a meeting with you, and the student if necessary, to discuss the issues involved.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Disclosure of a disability is a confidential matter. Students are not required to disclose specific disability information to faculty. The Director of Disability Services may not discuss the specifics of a student's disability or testing results with faculty without the expressed permission of the student in most cases. All communication regarding a student's disability is confidential and should only be discussed with those persons who have a legitimate need to know.

WAIVERS AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Students may request that certain classes be waived from a degree requirement if the students can produce the required documentation for this type of accommodation. Students requesting a waiver must submit medical documentation explaining how the disability would preclude taking the class and supporting the need for the requested

waiver. Course waivers and substitutions are not guaranteed accommodations even if the student provides the necessary documentation. The Department of Education/Office of Civil Rights has held that federal law does not require a college to waive required courses provided the college can show that the course is essential to the degree program. This ruling also applies for a request to waive certain elements of a class such as term papers or presentations. For example, a class that focuses on research principles and techniques, and basic reference sources for preparing a research paper is not required to waive that element of the class. However, extended time to complete the research project is a reasonable accommodation.

LEARNING DISABILITIES

Learning disabilities (LD) are neurological disorders that can make it difficult to acquire certain academic and social skills. These limitations can show up in many ways—as specific difficulties with spoken and written language, coordination, self-control, or attention. Such difficulties extend to schoolwork and can impede learning to read or write, or to do math.

SOME FACTS ABOUT LEARNING DISABILITIES:

- Difficulty with basic reading and language skills are the most common LD.
- Learning Disabilities may be inherited.
- Learning Disabilities affect girls as frequently as they do boys.
- Kids don't outgrow or get cured of Learning Disabilities.
- With support and intervention, kids with Learning Disabilities can be successful in learning and life.

Some Myths of Learning Disabilities:

- Attention disorders, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and learning disabilities often occur at the same time, but they're not the same.
- Learning disabilities are not the same as mental retardation, autism, hearing or visual impairment, physical disabilities, emotional disorders, or the normal process of learning a second language.
- Learning disabilities aren't caused by lack of educational opportunities, such as frequent changes of schools, poor school attendance, or lack of instruction in basic skills.

DYSLEXIA

Dyslexia is a learning disability characterized by problems in oral or written language. Problems may emerge in reading, spelling, writing, speaking, or listening. Dyslexia is not the result of low intelligence. Dyslexia is defined as a gap between learning aptitude and achievement that cannot be attributed to behavioral, psychological, motivational or social factors. Research suggests that dyslexia is caused by differences in the structure and function of the brain. People with dyslexia may have a difficult time translating language into thought or thought into language.

Characteristics:

- Lack of awareness of sounds in words, sound order, rhymes, or sequence of syllables
- Difficulty decoding words (single word identification)
- Difficulty encoding words (spelling)
- Poor sequencing of numbers or letters in words (when read or written)
- Problems with reading comprehension
- Difficulty expressing thoughts in written form
- Delayed spoken language

People with dyslexia do not “see in reverse.” Dyslexia is not a visual impairment. These students respond best to a multi-sensory delivery of language content.

Classroom Accommodations May Include:

- Allow student to tape record lectures
- Allow for frequent practice or “over learning” for mastery of skill
- Audio Books
- Use audio-visual and visual demonstrations whenever possible
- Allow students to complete tests and assignments on tape, orally or through demonstration
- Allow extra time to complete tests/exams
- Design test so that subject knowledge is assessed rather than reading, writing, or spelling

HEARING IMPAIRMENTS

The term “hearing impaired” refers to any person with any type or degree of hearing loss. The major challenge facing the deaf student is communication. Many students with a hearing loss can lip-read, but at best, they can read only 30-40% of the sounds of spoken English. Many, but not all, deaf persons use American Sign Language. Many students who use sign language will have difficulty with grammar rules, particularly the placement of articles in written language, as they are not used in signing.

Interpreters in the classroom:

- Interpreters consider all information from an interpreting situation as confidential.
- Interpreters maintain an impartial attitude while interpreting.
- The interpreter should not be considered part of the conversation and is not permitted to use voice personal opinions or enter the conversation.
- Remember the interpreter is a few words behind the speaker, allow him/her time to finish so that the deaf person has time to understand and respond.
- Only one person at a time should speak so that the interpreter can follow the conversation accurately.

Classroom Accommodations May Include:

- When possible, provide a list of new vocabulary words before class. Often the interpreter and student will need to create a new “sign” for technical vocabulary.
- Speak at a moderate rate and in a normal tone of voice.
- Allow preferential seating to maximize student’s residual hearing and lip-reading ability. And insure the Interpreter(s) is in the consumer’s line of sight
- Orient class to the presence of the interpreter. The deaf student should be part of the class, not the center of attention.
- Speak directly to the student, not the interpreter.
- Be aware that if you turn to the chalkboard and continue speaking, the student who lip-reads will not know what you are saying.
- Use visual aids whenever possible. **(Videos need to be captioned for full access)**
- Identify a reliable student note taker if it appears on the accommodation letter.
- Be aware that deaf or hard of hearing students often have difficulty reading and writing at grade level. American Sign Language generally does not use parts of speech (e.g., articles) in the same way as written English.

VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

The legal definition of blindness indicates that a person's vision with corrective lenses cannot be improved beyond 20/200 or that the person has a field of vision less than 20 degrees. A person with vision problems may have significant difficulty doing necessary classroom assignments. Students with visual problems may be unable to use standard printed materials (textbooks, classroom handouts, references, and supplemental readings). They may be unable to obtain information written on a black or white board. Often tests cannot be taken in standard form or in the allotted time frame.

Interacting with a blind or visually impaired student:

- If the person needs assistance, identify yourself and offer your services.
- If you are walking with the person, let him/her take your arm just above the elbow, and walk in a relaxed manner.
- When giving directions, use descriptive words such as "straight, forward, left." Avoid the use of vague terms such as "over there."
- Guide dogs are working animals. It is hazardous for the dog to be distracted. Do not pet or touch the dog without permission.
- Feel free to use words like "see" or "look" when speaking to a blind person.
- Do not assume the person will recognize your voice. Identify yourself by name.
- It is helpful to speak directly to the person and maintain eye contact.

Classroom Accommodations May Include:

- When lecturing be as clear and descriptive as possible.
- When using the board or overhead projector, verbalize as you go. Spell out new or technical terms.
- Make tests and assignments available to the Office of Disability Services ahead of time if they will need to be enlarged or converted to alternative format.
- Give verbal notice of room changes, special meetings or new assignments not given in the syllabus.
- Audio Textbooks
- Large print assignments and handouts or materials ready for scanning (one page of text per page. Do not copy materials with two pages shrunk down to fit one page- screen-reading software is unable to read in this format)
- Note taker
- Tape recorder
- Oral tests and exams
- Voice Recognition Software, Screen Reader Software, and Talking Calculators may be Necessary.
- Extended time for test taking and assignments
- Preferred seating
- Low vision aids

***Text books ordered for a class must be available in alternative format in order to be in compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act. Please consult with the Office of Disability Services before ordering text books for your class.**

ORTHOPEDIC (Physical) IMPAIRMENTS

Though most disabilities of this type are obvious to the observer, some are not. A condition such as chronic back pain or arthritis may not be visible to the observer but is a covered disability, depending on the limiting aspects, under the ADA. Disorders under this category may result in limitations in walking, manual dexterity, strength, coordination, and range of motion. Students may use wheelchairs, crutches, braces, walkers or canes. These students need all architectural barriers to classroom access removed. The ADA guarantees access to all programs and services. Please keep this in mind if you plan to take a class trip. The Office of Disability Services can assist in making arrangements for access to the remote site. If access is not possible, an alternative assignment that provides the same information and learning experience as the field trip must be provided.

Common barriers for students with orthopedic impairments:

- Inaccessible classrooms, desks, chairs, or tables
- Impaired verbal communication
- Impaired hand-to-eye coordination, fine motor coordination
- Decreased physical stamina and endurance
- Classes scheduled close together, or the unavoidable necessity of taking a roundabout route to class.

Interacting with students that have orthopedic impairments:

- Sit down, if possible, and speak at eye level to students in wheelchairs.
- If it appears that a student needs assistance, ask if they want your help.
- It is not necessary to avoid using words like “running’ or “walking.”
- If the student’s speech is difficult to understand, do not hesitate to ask that he/she repeat the communication.
- If you open a door for a person, go through the door first and then hold the opened door so that you do not impede mobility.

Classroom Accommodations May Include:

- Use of a tape recorder
- Note takers
- Extra time for tests
- Allow students with communication barriers extra time to participate in class discussions
- In a lab setting, allow someone to assist the physically challenged person with pouring, lifting, etc.
- When arranging classroom furniture, avoid creating barriers to the student who may be using mobility devices such as wheelchairs, crutches, walkers, leader dogs, etc..

SYLLABUS STATEMENT

All course outlines/procedure sheets should contain a disability statement.

Sample statement:

Students With Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and feel you may need an accommodation in order to effectively participate in your class(es), please contact the Office of Disability Services, (800) 966-7943 for additional information and/or to schedule an intake appointment with the Director.

NOTE: Some accommodations take longer to process than others, so the sooner you contact Disability Services the sooner your request will be processed.