



Guidelines for Documentation of ADHD

Academic accommodations for students with ADHD are provided by the Bryant University Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008.

To request academic accommodations, the student must schedule an appointment to meet with the ACE Assistant Director of Access Services and submit current documentation to verify ADHD. Students make appointments by coming to ACE located on the first floor of the Unistructure in Room 275 in the Center for Teaching and Learning or by calling (401) 232-6746.

Documentation must be comprehensive and submitted in the English language. Individual Education Programs/Plans (IEPs) and Section 504 plans are useful but not sufficient to establish the rationale for accommodations.

Bryant University has adopted guidelines for documentation based on the *Seven Essential Elements of Quality Disability Documentation* published by the Association on Higher Education and Disability (2004) and the *Educational Testing Service Policy Statement for the Documentation of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder in Adolescents and Adults* (2008). The diagnostic criteria as specified in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, (5th edition, DSM-V [American Psychiatric Association], 2013) are used as the basic guidelines for determination of ADHD.

- **A qualified professional must conduct the evaluation**

Quality documentation will be provided by a licensed or otherwise properly credentialed professional who has undergone appropriate and comprehensive training in the differential diagnoses of ADHD and other psychiatric disorders, has relevant direct experience in the diagnosis and treatment of adolescents and adults with ADHD, and has no personal or familial relationship with the individual being evaluated. The following professionals *generally* would be considered qualified to evaluate and diagnose ADHD: licensed psychologists, neuropsychologists, psychiatrists, and other relevantly trained medical doctors.

- **A diagnostic statement identifying the disability**

The documentation should build a case for and provide a sound rationale for the ADHD diagnosis. The evaluation should provide a broad, comprehensive understanding of the



applicant's relevant background including family, academic, behavioral, social, vocational, medical, developmental, and psychiatric history. Checklists and/or ADHD symptom rating scales can be a helpful supplement in the diagnostic process, but by themselves are not adequate to establish a diagnosis. Documentation must include interpretation and discussion of the diagnostic findings with clear evidence of clinically significant impairment in social, academic, or occupational functioning and symptoms which are not better accounted for by another disorder. Individuals who only report problems with daily organization, test anxiety, difficulty with timed testing, memory, or concentration in selective situations do not fit the prescribed diagnostic criteria for ADHD. Similarly, while executive function issues are commonly seen in students who have ADHD, these students with executive function issues who do not meet the DSM criteria for ADHD would not qualify under the ADHD classification. A positive response to medication by itself does not constitute a diagnosis, nor does the use of medication in and of itself either support or negate the need for accommodation(s).

- **A description of the diagnostic methodology**

Quality documentation will include a description of the diagnostic criteria, evaluation methods, procedures, tests and test scores, and dates of administration, along with a clinical narrative, observation, and specific results. Neuropsychological or psycho-educational assessment is important in determining the current impact of the disorder on an individual's ability to function in academically related settings. Such assessments might include testing of intellect, achievement, processing speed, fluency, executive functioning, language, memory and learning, attention, etc. Based upon the information from the assessment/s and utilizing DSM-IV criteria, the student has been identified as having ADHD.

- **A description of the current functional limitations**

Because the provision of reasonable accommodations and services is based upon assessment of the current impact of the ADHD on the student's academic performance, it is necessary to provide "recent" and appropriate documentation. In most cases, this means that a diagnostic evaluation must have been completed within the past three years of the date of enrollment. If documentation is inadequate in scope or content, or does not address the individual's current level of functioning and need for accommodations, reevaluation may be required. In cases where observed changes may have occurred in the individual's performance since the previous assessment or new treatments may have been prescribed or discontinued since the previous



assessment was conducted, it may be necessary to update the evaluation report.

- **A description of current and past accommodations, services and/or medications**

The most comprehensive documentation will include a description of both current and past medications, auxiliary aids, assistive devices, support services, and accommodations, including their effectiveness in ameliorating functional impacts of the disability. In addition to a comprehensive diagnostic evaluation, the report should also address the history of prior accommodations the person has received and the objective of those accommodations. While accommodations provided in another setting are not binding on the current institution, they may provide insight in making current decisions.

- **Each accommodation recommended by the evaluator must include a rationale**

The provision of reasonable accommodations and services is based upon clear evidence of current functional impairment and the current impact of the disability on the student's academic performance. If connections are not obvious, a clear explanation of their relationship can be useful in decision-making. A prior history of accommodations without demonstration of a current need does not in itself warrant the provision of like accommodations. If no prior accommodations were provided, the qualified professional and/or the candidate must include a detailed explanation of why accommodations are needed at this time. While the post-secondary institution has no obligation to provide or adopt recommendations made by outside entities, those that are congruent with the programs, services, and benefits offered by the college or program may be appropriate.

Please direct questions to:

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