

Information Regarding Specific Disabilities

1. Attention Deficit / Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
 2. Specific Learning Disabilities
 3. Psychological / Psychiatric Disabilities
 4. Orthopedic/Mobility Impairments
 5. Deaf / Hearing of Hearing
-

Attention Deficit / Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Attention Deficit Disorder (with or without hyperactivity) (ADD/ADHD) is a neurologically based medical problem which can affect behavior and performance. It does not affect intelligence. It may interfere with academic achievement, self-esteem, and relationships. It is a developmental disability characterized by inattention, impulsivity, and sometimes (not always) hyperactivity. The results can lead to lifelong problems. Students with ADD may demonstrate one or more of the following characteristics which may range from mild to severe: easily distracted, difficulty concentrating, often appears to not listen, procrastinates, difficulty carrying through with routines or tasks (loses interest), disorganization, difficulty following directions, difficulty making transitions, restless, daydreams, fidgets, impatient, short term memory problems, excessive talking, hyperactivity, has difficulty interacting with others, and experiences difficulty producing work at a consistently normal level.

Difficulties these students may encounter in the classroom setting:

1. Distracted by noises within the classroom so it is to the student's advantage to sit in front of the class in close proximity to the instructor
2. Missing portions of a lecture due loss of focus/attention- as a result, does not have a good set of class notes
3. Not able to fully comprehend class lectures or assigned textbook readings due to loss of concentration or poor task focus
4. Has difficulty with setting priorities and time management
5. Procrastination
6. Staying seated and giving instructor his full attention for the entire class period.
7. If the student is taking medication for his ADHD, he may face side effects that can affect his academic performance.

How Student Support Services can assist:

- Refer students to physician to determine whether or not ADD exists
- Assist with registration- encourage shorter class periods (50 minute versus 3 hour)
- Loan tape recorders and other assistive technology to student
- Provide a notetaker for the course

- Collaborate with the instructor and student regarding strategies the student can use to stay on task, complete assignments and ultimately fulfill requirements for the course
- Provide and proctor tests with accommodations (reduced distraction and extended time)
- Assist with time management and other study skills

Accommodations may include:

- Preferential seating (either near the instructor or near the door for frequent breaks)
- Tape record lectures or have a notetaker
- Extended time and/or distraction reduced testing environment for tests and exams
- May need to take breaks to maintain attention (student will leave and return quietly so other students will not be disturbed)

Students with attention deficit disorder should be held to the same academic and behavioral standards as any other student.

Specific Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities is a general term characterized by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, and/or mathematical abilities. Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability. Students with learning disabilities possess average to above average intelligence. The disability is demonstrated by a significant discrepancy between expected and actual performance in one or more of the basic functions: memory, oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skills, reading comprehension, mathematical calculation, or mathematical reasoning. It is difficult at times for some students to process information. This can be seen as students misunderstand information presented visually or orally.

Students with a learning disability may have problems with:

Dyslexia - problems with reading

Dyscalculia - problems with arithmetic

Dysgraphia - problems with writing (written expression)

Dysphasia - problems with speaking and understanding language (oral communications)

Suggestions for working with students with a learning disability:

1. Do not lower your academic standards for a student with a learning disability. They should be held to the same standard as any other student. Students with a learning disability just learn differently.
2. Begin each lecture with an outline of material to be covered that period. At the end of class, briefly summarize key points.
3. Give assignments in both written and oral form to avoid confusion.
4. Present material in as many ways as possible (orally, visually, hands-on, group).
5. Encourage students to sit in the front of the classroom, preferably in the front row.

How Student Support Services can assist:

- Obtain textbooks on cassette or CD for the student to borrow
- Refer students to various testing sites for an evaluation to determine whether a learning disability exists.
- Provide notetakers and/or tape recorders for taped lectures
- Provide assistive technology for student use
- Proctor tests using accommodations
- Provide scribe and/or reader for tests
- Identify appropriate and reasonable accommodations

Accommodations may include:

- Reduced course load
- Priority registration
- Notetaker for lectures
- Test taking: reader, scribe, extended time, reduced distraction environment
- Course substitution
- Recorded textbooks
- Extended time for in-class assignments
- Do not penalize for spelling errors but point out for correction
- The use of a calculator for a student with a disability in the area of math processing
- Oral testing

Students with learning disabilities should be held to the same academic and behavioral standards as any other student.

Psychological / Psychiatric Disabilities

Psychological disorders cover a wide range of disorders which may be considered “invisible disabilities” and may have little or no impact on learning. With proper diagnoses and treatment, students with psychological disorders are generally productive and successful in the academic environment. Sometimes it may be necessary for a student to receive an accommodation for a course. If a student self-discloses to the

instructor, it may be appropriate to discuss problems and side effects associated with medications. Sometimes medications can cause drowsiness or inattentiveness. If the instructor notices a change in behavior, it could be caused by new medication or a change in dosage. Several disorders may impact the student's ability to attend classes, concentrate, process rapidly, or control behavior.

Psychological disabilities may include:

Panic Attacks - sudden onset of paralyzing terror or impending doom with symptoms that closely resemble a heart attack

Obsessive-Compulsive disorder - persistent distressing thought (obsessions) that a person attempts to alleviate by performing repetitive, intentional acts (compulsions) such as hand washing

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) - a psychological syndrome characterized by specific symptoms that result from exposure to terrifying, life-threatening traumas such as an act of violence.

Manic-depressive illness (also referred to as bipolar disorder) - alternating episodes of mania ("highs") and depression ("lows")

Schizophrenia - a highly complex illness. Most people initially develop the symptoms between the ages of 15 and 25. Symptoms include social isolation or withdrawal, loss of motivation, hallucinations, delusions, and a flat or inappropriate mood/disposition.

How Student Support Services can assist:

- Identify appropriate and reasonable accommodations
- Provide a notetaker when the student will experience absences related to their disability
- Provide out-of-class testing services
- Identify on-campus and community resources
- Assist instructors in managing inappropriate student behavior

Accommodations may include:

- Extended time for tests
- Distraction reduced testing area with a proctor
- Seating arrangements that enhance the learning experience of the student
- Assistance with time management and study skills
- Encouragement to use relaxation and stress reducing techniques during tests
- Flexibility in the attendance requirements in case of health-related absences
- Flexibility in established deadlines in case of health-related incapacity

Students with psychological disabilities should be held to the same academic and behavioral standards as any other student.

Orthopedic/Mobility Impairments

A variety of mobility related disabilities result from congenital conditions, accidents, or progressive neuromuscular diseases. These impairments include spinal cord injury, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, amputation, cardiac conditions, cystic fibrosis, paralysis, polio, and stroke. Students with any of these may face difficulties such as decreased eye-hand coordination, decreased notetaking and test-writing ability due to weakness or paralysis, impaired verbal communication, and decreased physical stamina and endurance.

Suggestions for working with students with mobility impairments:

1. If a student uses a wheelchair, conversations at different eye levels are difficult. If a conversation continues for more than a few minutes and if it is possible to do so, sit down, kneel, or squat so that you can share eye level.
2. If a student's speech is difficult to understand, don't hesitate to ask him/her to repeat.
3. Speak directly to a student with a disability as you would any other student.
4. A wheelchair, cane, and walker are part of the person's body space. Don't automatically hang or lean on the chair. Don't automatically move the cane, walker, or wheelchair. Wait for them to ask for help.
5. When it appears that a student needs assistance, ask if you can help. Most students will ask for assistance if they need it. Accept a "No, thank you" graciously.
6. Be aware that if breaks between classes are short (10 minutes or less), the student who uses a wheelchair may frequently be a few minutes late. If the student is frequently late, it is appropriate to discuss the situation with the student and seek solutions.

How Student Support Services can assist:

- Assist with ensuring the classroom is accessible
- Provide a scribe for assignments and tests
- Provide a notetaker for lectures
- Identify appropriate and reasonable accommodations

Accommodations may include:

- Tape recording or typing answers to tests and class assignments
- Extended time to complete a test
- Using a scribe to record answers for assignments and tests
- Extra time to complete assignments due to slow writing speed

- Taped lectures or the use of a notetaker
- Taped textbooks
- Special seating in the classroom
- Accessible location for the classroom and place for faculty to meet with student
- Extra time to get from one class to another, especially in inclement weather
- Assistance in laboratory components of classes

Students with mobility impairments should be held to the same academic and behavioral standards as any other student.

Deaf / Hearing of Hearing

A hearing impairment is any type of or degree of auditory impairment while deafness is an inability to use hearing as a means of communication. The causes of hearing impairment are varied. Hearing loss may be sensorineural, involving an impairment of the auditory nerve; conductive, a defect in the auditory system which interferes with sound reaching the cochlea; or a mixed impairment, involving both sensorineural and conductive. Hearing loss is measured in decibels and may be mild, moderate, or profound. The major challenge that faces the individual with a hearing impairment is communication. A person who is born with a hearing loss may have language deficiencies and exhibit poor vocabulary and syntax. Many students with hearing loss may use hearing aids and rely on lip reading. Students with profound deafness may communicate using American Sign Language (ASL) and may require a sign language interpreter.

Suggestions for working with students with deafness/hearing impairments:

1. Encourage the student to sit in the front row.
2. Speak clearly at a normal rate but do not exaggerate because overemphasis of words distorts lip movements, making speech reading more difficult.
3. While speaking, try to avoid movements which will impede speech reading. For example: pacing, turning your back to the class, putting your hands in front of your face, etc
4. Don't be embarrassed to communicate with the student by writing notes back and forth. Getting the message across is more important than the medium.
5. When a hearing impaired student doesn't understand a word or phrase, repeat it once or twice and, if the student still doesn't understand it, reword your statement. Some words and sounds are more difficult to speech read.
6. When other students ask questions during class, repeat the question before answering it.
7. Try to avoid standing in front of a light source, such as a window. The bright background and shadows on your face make speech reading difficult. Also, whenever the room is darkened, some light will be needed for speech reading and/or to see the interpreter clearly.

8. When the student is using an interpreter, be sure to speak to the student instead of to the interpreter. You don't want the student to feel ignored or left out.
9. When a student uses an interpreter, he should be able to see both the speaker and the interpreter simultaneously.

How Student Support Services can assist:

- Provide an interpreter.
- Provide a notetaker for class lectures.
- Provide assistive living device (ALD) – wireless FM transmitter system
- Identify appropriate and reasonable accommodations

Accommodations may include:

- Preferential seating - close to the instructor
- Interpreter signing test questions for student
- Tutoring sessions to accommodate for language and communication difficulties
- Written supplement to oral instructions, assignments, and directions
- Visual aids as often as possible
- Speaker facing class during lectures
- Speaker repeating questions of other students before answering
- Unfamiliar vocabulary written on the board or a handout
- Interpreter seated where the student can see the interpreter and the lecturer
- Excess noise reduced as much as possible to facilitate communication
- Notetaker for class lectures

Students with deafness or hearing impairments should be held to the same academic and behavioral standards as any other student.