

Documentation Guidelines For Students With Learning Disabilities

Professionals conducting assessments and rendering diagnoses of specific learning disabilities and making recommendations for appropriate accommodations must be qualified to do so. Comprehensive training and direct experience with an adolescent/adult LD population is essential. The name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about license or certification as well as the areas of specialization, should be clearly stated in the documentation. The following professionals would generally be considered qualified to evaluate specific learning disabilities provided that they have additional training and experience in evaluating adolescent/adult learning disabilities: clinical or educational psychologists; school psychologists; neuropsychologists; learning disabilities specialists; medical doctors with training and experience in evaluating adolescent/adult learning disabilities; and other masters or doctoral level education professionals with training and experience in the assessment of learning problems in adolescents/adults.

Because the provision of all reasonable accommodations and services is based upon the assessment of the current impact of the disability on academic performance, it is in the individual's best interest to provide recent and appropriate documentation. In most cases this means that a diagnostic evaluation has been completed within the past three years. Flexibility in accepting documentation, which exceeds a three-year period, may be appropriate under certain conditions if the previous assessment is applicable to the current or anticipated setting. If the 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 warranted.

The documentation of a specific learning disability should be comprehensive and should address each of the following domains using the recommended tests:

1. Aptitude:

- The *Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery - Revised: tests of Cognitive Ability* or The *Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale - Revised (WAIS-R)*

2. Achievement:

The *Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery - Revised: Tests of Achievement* or The *Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT)*

Or specific achievement tests such as:

- The *Nelson-Denny Reading Skills Test*
- The *Stanford Diagnostic Mathematics Test*
- The *Test of Written Language - 3 (TOWL-3)*
- The *Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests - Revised*

3. Information Processing:

Specific areas of information processing (e.g., short- and long-term memory; sequential memory; auditory and visual perception/processing; processing speed; executive functioning; motor ability) should be assessed. Acceptable instruments include, but are not limited to: the *Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude - 3 (DTLA-3)*; information from subtests on the *WAIS - R* or the *Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery - Revised: Tests of Cognitive Ability*, as well as other relevant instruments, may be useful when interpreted within the context of other diagnostic information.

4. Other Assessment Measures:

Other formal assessment measures may be integrated with the above instruments to help support a differential diagnosis or to disentangle the learning disability from co-existing neurological and/or psychiatric disorders.

Finally, the evaluator should describe the impact the diagnosed learning disability has on a specific major life activity as well as the degree of significance of this impact on the individual. The diagnostic report should include specific recommendations and/or accommodations.

