

ILLINOIS WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY  
Services for Students with Disabilities

Introduction:

Illinois Wesleyan University (IWU) is committed to providing equal access to all students with a disability, as provided under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. This statement is provided for the benefit of all of our students with a disability but it may have particular importance for students who are new to the university. If you are a student with a disability, you need to be well informed about your rights and responsibilities as well as the responsibilities that the university has toward you. Being well informed will help ensure that you have a full opportunity to enjoy the benefits of this university's education experience without confusion or delay.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (including Section 504) is a law passed by Congress that prohibits discrimination on the basis of physical or mental disability (29 U.S.C. Section 794). It states:

No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States . . . shall, solely by reason of her or his 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 . . .

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) prohibits state and local governments (including public colleges and universities) from discriminating on the basis of disability. Title III applies to private colleges and universities. The requirements regarding the provision of auxiliary aids and services in higher education institutions described in the Section 504 regulation are generally included in the nondiscrimination provisions of the Title III regulation.

Because high schools and universities must both comply with these same laws, a student with a disability or the student's parents might believe that universities and high schools have the same responsibilities. This is not true; the responsibilities of universities are significantly different from those of high schools.

Moreover, a university student with a disability has responsibilities that such a student did not have as a high school student. IWU strongly encourages its students with a disability to know about their own responsibilities and those of the university under Section 504 and Title III. Doing so will improve the opportunity to succeed. The following information is provided to outline IWU's policies and the obligations of students with disabilities.

Summary of the IWU Process:

No student with a disability is required to disclose such a condition unless the student wants IWU to consider making an accommodation or needs available services. However, a university student with a disability who is in need of accommodations or auxiliary aids is obligated to provide notice of the nature of the disability to the university and to assist it in identifying appropriate and effective responses. As you may know or recall, in elementary and high schools, teachers and school specialists often arranged support services for students with disabilities. At the university level, the students themselves must identify the need for an accommodation or auxiliary aid and give adequate notice of the need. In addition, unlike elementary or high schools, universities may ask the student, in response to a request for auxiliary aids, to provide supporting diagnostic test results and professional prescriptions for auxiliary aids. A college also may obtain its own professional determination of whether specific requested accommodations or auxiliary aids are necessary. Our students with disabilities who do wish to receive services and accommodations at IWU must follow the procedures outlined below.

- It is the responsibility of the student with a disability to self-identify and request services or accommodations.
- Although a student may self-identify at any time through his or her collegiate career, it is recommended that the student contact the Associate Provost (who serves as Director of Disability Services) prior to the beginning of the first term of enrollment.
- The student seeking accommodations must normally provide appropriate and official documentation of the disability. The documentation must meet IWU's reasonable guidelines, which are described in a later section. Provision of accommodations begins with a review of the documentation, and cannot occur until documentation is submitted.
- When the student first self-identifies as a person seeking accommodations for a disability, and after the Associate Provost has had sufficient time to review the student's documentation, he or she will meet with the Associate Provost to determine the appropriate accommodations and services for the current semester.
- Accommodations are developed in an interactive process between the Associate Provost and the student seeking accommodations. An 'interactive process' is a dialog in which both parties can express their interests and concerns, and work toward a mutually agreeable resolution. The various rights and responsibilities of both parties that are described later come into play in this process.
- Once accommodations are approved, a memorandum containing detailed information on required accommodations will be prepared for each of the faculty the student has asked to be notified. These memoranda are provided to the student, who is expected to hand deliver them to the faculty. The student's confidentiality rights are safeguarded in this process. Faculty are encouraged to contact the Associate Provost with any questions or concerns.

- Accommodations are never retroactive, and can normally begin only after documentation is received and the accommodation plan has been developed.
- Accommodations are granted on a semester-by-semester basis. In other words, each semester the student must contact the Associate Provost's Office to renew the accommodations plan for that semester. Renewal of the accommodations plan does not occur automatically through an administrative process. In some cases, the required contact will be perfunctory only. In other cases, it may be necessary for the interactive process to resume.
- High school section 504 plans do not transfer to college. Furthermore, a section 504 plan by itself is not adequate documentation of a disability. However, a section 504 plan often provides information useful during the development of an appropriate collegiate accommodations plan and will be given appropriate consideration by IWU.

#### Summary of the Rights and Responsibilities Pertaining to Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities have the right to—

- Equal access to courses, programs, services, and activities offered through the University;
- An equal opportunity to learn, and to receive reasonable accommodations and academic adjustments in an effort to diminish the effect of the disability on academic functioning;
- Self-determine who will receive student released disability-related materials and information within and outside the University;
- All other rights and privileges available to other students at Illinois Wesleyan University.

Students with disabilities have the responsibility to—

- Meet qualifications and maintain essential institutional standards for courses, programs, and activities;
- Self-identify as a student with a disability when an accommodation is needed and to seek information, counsel, and assistance as necessary in a timely fashion;
- Demonstrate and/or provide documentation from an appropriate professional establishing how the disability limits participation in courses, programs, services, and activities;
- Follow published procedures for obtaining reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services.

Illinois Wesleyan University has the right to—

- Identify and establish essential functions, abilities, skills, knowledge, requirements, and standards for courses, programs, services, and activities, and to evaluate students on this basis;
- Request and receive, through Disability Services (Associate Provost's Office), current documentation that supports requests for accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services;
- Deny a request for accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services if the documentation demonstrates that the request is not warranted, or if the individual fails to provide appropriate documentation;
- Select among equally effective accommodations, adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services;
- Refuse as unreasonable any accommodation, adjustment, and/or auxiliary aid or service that imposes a fundamental alteration of a program or activity of the University.

Illinois Wesleyan University has the responsibility to—

- Provide information to students with disabilities in accessible formats on request;
- Ensure that courses, programs, services, and activities when viewed in their entirety are available in the most integrated and appropriate settings;
- Evaluate students on their abilities and not their disabilities;
- Provide or arrange for reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services for students with disabilities in courses, programs, services, and activities;
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality of records and communication except where permitted or required by law or when the student requests that such information is shared.

Confidentiality:

With the student's explicit written permission, the Associate Provost will inform faculty of a student's approved accommodations. The specific nature of a student's disability will be held in confidence unless the student grants permission for this information to be provided. The customary procedure for granting permission is for the student to sign a release for distribution of the actual text of the accommodations memorandum, including approved recipients.

Although the specific nature of a student's disability will remain confidential if the student so desires, students are strongly encouraged to discuss academic accommodations with their professors.

Documentation:

Documentation requirements depend on the nature of the disability being documented.

*A. FOR DOCUMENTATION OF MEDICAL DISABILITY; VISUAL IMPAIRMENT; HEARING IMPAIRMENT; ORTHOPEDIC DISABILITY; CHRONIC ILLNESS; PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDER—*

We require a statement, on office letterhead, from a medical professional that includes the following information:

- A description of the student's disability (DSM-IV diagnosis for psychological disorders). The documentation must clearly establish that the disability substantially limits some major life activity.
- A medical history of the disability (duration and severity of the disability; relevant developmental, historical, and familial data; relevant medical and medication history including the individual's current medication regimen, side effects (if relevant), and response to medication).
- A statement of how the disability is expected to affect the student academically.
- Recommendations for accommodations.
- The medical professional's signature and date when the statement was prepared.

Documentation written on a prescription pad is not acceptable. The documentation needs to be current (no more than three years old).

Examples of acceptable forms of documentation include: (a) for hearing impairment—audiogram accompanied by audiologist's report documenting a hearing loss that necessitates support services in order to participate in class; (b) for visual impairment—report from ophthalmologist/optometrist documenting the need for services other than corrective lenses; (c) medical disability—documentation of a disease, illness, etc. from an appropriate physician listing any functional limitations and their impact; (d) psychological disability—clinical diagnosis by a licensed psychologist, psychiatrist, or neurologist based on the DSM-IV criteria indicating functional limitations and how the disability impacts ability to function as a college student in a learning environment.

*B. FOR DOCUMENTATION OF A LEARNING DISABILITY (ADD, ADHD, DYSLEXIA, LD)*

The standards of adequate documentation of a learning disability as outlined below have been adapted from the standards employed by the Educational Testing Service. ETS guidelines are available at: <http://www.ets.org/disability/criteria.html>

Documentation provided to substantiate a disability must meet all of the following criteria:

- *Documentation must clearly state the diagnosed disability.* Nonspecific diagnoses, such as individual “learning style,” “learning differences,” “academic problems,” “test anxiety,” or “slow reader” are insufficient. The evaluator is encouraged to cite the specific objective measures used to help substantiate the diagnosis. The evaluator should use definitive diagnostic language, avoiding such wording as “suggests” or “has problems with.”
- *Documentation must describe the functional limitations resulting from the disability.* In order to access the rights guaranteed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, an individual must present documentation indicating that the disability substantially limits some major life activity. Major life activities include such things as walking, sitting, standing, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, and—most important for the educational setting—*learning*.
- *Documentation must be current.* Normally this means that the diagnostic evaluation must have been completed within the past three years. If the student has had a 504 plan or an IEP during previous schooling, the most recent copy or copies of this material should be provided, although by itself a 504 plan or IEP is insufficient.
- *Documentation must include a complete educational, developmental, and medical history relevant to the disability for which accommodations are being requested.* Information should include a history of the presenting symptoms; duration and severity of the disorder; relevant developmental, historical, and familial data; relevant medical and medication history including the individual’s current medication regimen, side effects (if relevant), and response to medication. If relevant to the educational setting, a description of the expected progression or stability of the condition over time should be included. Because ADHD is (by definition in the DSM-IV) first exhibited in childhood and manifests itself in more than one setting, relevant historical information is essential. Historical information establishing long-term symptoms indicating ADHD can be garnered from transcripts, report cards, teacher comments, tutoring evaluations, and past psycho-educational assessments.
- *Documentation must include a list of all test instruments and/or procedures used in the evaluation report.* The data must logically reflect a substantial limitation to learning for which the student is requesting the accommodation. Data must be interpreted relative to standard scores or percentiles of the measure in the general or reference population. Testing must be reliable, valid, and standardized for use with the adolescent/young adult population.
- *Documentation must describe the specific accommodations requested.* The evaluator must describe the impact of the diagnosed disability on a specific major life activity. The diagnostic report must include specific recommendations for accommodation(s).

- *Documentation must state why the disability qualifies the student for the accommodations requested.* The diagnostic report should include a detailed explanation of why each accommodation is recommended. Recommendations should be supported by reference to specific test results or clinical observations.
- *Documentation must be typed or printed on official letterhead and signed by an evaluator qualified to make the diagnosis* (including information about license or certification and the area of specialization).

Regarding learning disabilities that are being treated with medications, it should be noted that medication treatment may reduce the symptoms to the point at which they are no longer disabling. Consequently, where appropriate the documentation should address the student's level of functioning with medication.

Examples of Accommodations:

Procedural accommodations that may be considered—

- Extended time for completion of exams
- Spelling forgiveness (for dyslexia)
- Enlarged type copies of class material (for visual impairment)
- Preferential seating
- Early announcement of paper assignments and other syllabus materials

Examples of Auxiliary Aids:

Auxiliary aids and services that might be considered include—

- taped texts; note-takers; interpreters; readers; videotext displays; television enlargers; talking calculators; electronic readers; Braille calculators, printers, or typewriters; telephone handset amplifiers; closed caption decoders; open and closed captioning; voice synthesizers; specialized gym equipment; calculators or keyboards with large buttons; reaching device for library use; raised-line drawing kits; assistive listening devices; assistive listening systems; telecommunications devices for deaf persons.

Technological advances in electronics have vastly improved participation by a student with disability in educational activities. IWU is not required to provide the most sophisticated auxiliary aids available; however, the aids provided must effectively meet the needs of a student with a disability. IWU has flexibility in choosing the specific aid or service it provides to the student, as long as the aid or service selected is effective. These aids should be selected after consultation with the student who will use them.

Frequently Asked Questions from Students:

*Q. Doesn't having ADD automatically qualify me as 'disabled?'*

A. No, it does not. As with any potentially disabling condition, disability status depends on the severity of the symptoms and whether, e.g., symptoms are significantly ameliorated through medication.

*Q. Does my ADD/ADHD or learning disability qualify me for a private room?*

A. Generally speaking, having ADD/ADHD or a learning disability does not qualify a student for a private room. If students are concerned about minimizing distractions to enhance studying, we encourage them to study in locations designed specifically for this purpose such as The Ames Library.

*Q. My ADD responds well to medication. Why should that prevent me from getting the same accommodations as someone for whom medication doesn't significantly help?*

A. Actually, the Supreme Court decided that issue (*Sutton et al v. United Air Lines*, June 22, 1999), when they said that “the determination of whether an individual is disabled should be made with reference to measures that mitigate the individual’s impairment.” For example, some people are nearsighted and can’t read well without their glasses. But we don’t provide extended examination time to nearsighted students if their glasses correct their visual impairment. It’s the same thing with medications and a range of other treatments and remedies.

*Q. Aren't I in the best position to say what accommodations I need? Why the 'interactive process'?*

A. Certainly the student has a privileged view of the challenges of his or her disability. However, sometimes the most ‘obvious’ accommodation may prove not to mitigate but to exacerbate the effects of the student’s disability. For example, students diagnosed with ADHD often have difficulties with time management. This difficulty may contribute to the student being chronically late on handing in assignments such as papers. To such a student it might seem plausible to ask for routine deadline forgiveness. However, were that to be provided, it is at least possible that the student’s time management would become worse, not better, with further adverse effects on academic work. By being forgiven for chronically late work, the student will risk getting out of sync with the rest of the class, working on an old assignment when everyone else has moved on to something new. Such a student is likely to be unprepared for class discussions, and won’t be ready to participate in activities like peer editing of a new paper assignment when still working on the previous one. There are better ways to work with time management problems.

*Q. Does Illinois Wesleyan University grant general education waivers for foreign language requirements?*

A. Under no circumstances does Illinois Wesleyan University waive foreign language requirements. In exceptional circumstances and with submission of appropriate documentation, however, the University will consider allowing a student to substitute approved culture courses for foreign language courses.

*Q. Does the University guarantee me the same accommodations I had in high school?*

A. No, you are not guaranteed accommodations identical to those provided in high school. The University may take into account the accommodations you received, but will make its own determinations about accommodations based on your documentation and current needs within this university setting.

*Q. About how many students with disabilities are receiving accommodations at Illinois Wesleyan University?*

A. The number is not large. Currently, we are providing support services to fifteen or twenty students per semester. Most have ADD or learning disabilities, although a few have physical disabilities.

Frequently Asked Questions from Faculty:

*Q. Do I have to provide accommodations in my classes to students with disabilities? Why?*

A. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) work together to ensure “reasonable accommodation” and non-discrimination for students with disabilities in higher education. Because Illinois Wesleyan University receives Federal funding through grants and financial aid for our students, we are required as a matter of law to provide these accommodations.

*Q. I have students coming to me who say they have disabilities, but the University isn't providing me with any verification or backup. What should I do?*

A. All students with documented disabilities who request and qualify for accommodations are provided with a memorandum from Disability Services which details their approved accommodations. When a student speaks to you about accommodations but does not provide you with a copy of this memorandum, this suggests that the student has not sought disability services from the University through our established procedures. *Under such circumstances you are not responsible for devising your own accommodations, and you should not do so.* Instead, you should direct the student to the Associate Provost's office where disability services are coordinated.

*Q. Why doesn't the University cut through the red tape and just send out a master list of students with disabilities each semester?*

A. Disability information is confidential. The University cannot distribute any information on the disability status of students without the student's express written consent, including an identification of those with whom the information can be shared. By the same token, faculty of students with disabilities who have received official notification from the University should treat this information as privileged and confidential. Under no circumstances should the student's disability be publicly acknowledged by comments to other students in the class, nor should it be discussed with other faculty or staff.

*Q. The disability information I receive doesn't always tell me exactly what is wrong with the student; it just lists accommodations. Who can I call to get the straight story on these students?*

A. Again, the requirements of confidentiality prevail. Students with disabilities are not required to divulge their diagnosis to their faculty. Although you may feel you can do a better job with a student if you know the student's diagnosis, it is the student's right to withhold this information from you.

*Q. Am I required to drop my academic standards to accommodate to students with disabilities?*

A. No. Accommodations are provided to students with disabilities in order to "level the playing field." For example, a student with a learning disability may process written information slower than the average student. As such, the student may qualify for an accommodation of extended time on examinations. However, the examination performance of such a student should be evaluated according to the same standards applying to all the other students in the class. The point is to "level the playing field" but not to "lower the bar."

*Q. The accommodations that I received for one of my students don't exactly fit the way I teach my course. What should I do?*

A. First speak with the student and see if you can agree on an interpretation of the accommodation for your special situation. If that proves troublesome then by all means call the Associate Provost. We are always ready to work through the implications of unique situations.

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directly incorporated into the foregoing text. We hope these schools and organizations will accept this acknowledgement as sufficient.

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