



SOUTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

Center for Academic Success

General Documentation Guidelines

Southwestern University students who need access to accommodations in the university setting must apply with the Center for Academic Success (CAS). Part of the application process is the submission of medical documentation that substantiates the presence of a disability under the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and helps to outline the functional limitations experienced by the student. Documentation submitted to the CAS must adhere to the following guidelines.

Current Documentation:

Southwestern University requires that submitted documentation be within three years old, but will utilize common sense and discretion in accepting older documentation of conditions that are permanent or non-varying. For conditions that are likely to change in presentation, severity, and functional limitations over time (i.e., psychological disabilities, traumatic brain injury, some physical disabilities), documentation no older than one year is typically required. The University, therefore, reserves the right to request additional information in order to determine eligibility. For your convenience, we offer forms that can be used as a conversation point with your medical providers. We suggest that you sign a release of information with your medical providers.

Comprehensive documentation should:

- State the specific disability, as diagnosed, and when appropriate, should relate the disability to the applicable professional standards; for example, DSM, medical codes, and the like.
- Provide relevant educational, developmental, and medical history.
- Describe comprehensive testing and techniques used to arrive at the diagnosis. Include test results with subtest scores (standard or scaled scores) for all tests.
- Offer suggestions for accommodations and the rationale for the requested accommodations.
- Note: We will not accept a printout of medical history from the student's medical portal as sole documentation.

Evaluator Qualifications:

- The professional conducting the assessments and rendering diagnosis must have comprehensive training with regard to the specific disability being addressed.
- All providers must be impartial individuals who are not family members of the student.
- The name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about licensing or certification, the area of specialization, employment, and the state in which the individual practices should be clearly stated in the documentation.

Requests for Emotional Support Animals (ESAs):

- Please note that the University does not accept letters from the numerous online psychological companies that (in exchange for a fee) offer verification or certification of the need for a support animal. To warrant approval of a request for an emotional support animal, a student should be prepared to submit appropriate medical documentation that describes an active therapeutic relationship between the student and the clinician recommending the support animal. Please see our guiding document for ESAs, "Assistance (Emotional Support) Animal Policy for University Housing."

Documentation will ideally adhere to the following specifications:

1. The documentation should be typed on letterhead and cannot be provided by a relative. Handwritten notes are NOT accepted as documentation.
2. The documentation should outline the provider's credentials, and the credentials should be appropriate for the diagnosis under consideration.
 - Documentation can be provided by more than one provider, if there was a team approach to diagnosis or in the case of multiple disabilities.
3. The documentation should include the diagnosis or diagnoses, and a description and/or report of any assessments or tests run to reach the diagnosis.
 - If psycho-educational testing was conducted, the full report should be submitted.
4. From the professional opinion of the medical provider, the documentation should describe in detail the functional impact of the condition, including but not limited to how the condition impacts the student's ability to live (breathe, eat, sleep, ambulate), learn, and function.
5. The documentation should be reasonably recent.
 - If the condition was diagnosed many years ago, the medical or other personnel providing the documentation should be someone who has some history of working with the student in dealing with the condition in an ongoing fashion.
 - If a student has neither recent documentation nor a provider who has worked with them on an ongoing basis for a condition diagnosed long ago, new testing or documentation may be required before moving forward with the accommodation request.
6. The documentation can (but does not have to) include recommendations from the health care professional.
 - The student should be aware that recommendations given by a health care professional are not a guarantee that the recommendation will be followed. Any recommendations made must be determined to be reasonable before they will be followed.
7. Documentation should be provided in a timely manner to allow for review, follow up, and questions related to the documentation (ideally, at least one business day before the student's initial meeting with the Associate Director).
8. If a student used accommodations in high school or at another college, the student may submit verification of these accommodations as supporting documents. Generally, high school 504 plans and accommodations provided at other colleges are not considered sufficient documentation on their own, but all relevant information will be considered.

Documents may be provided to the Associate Director of Academic Success by:

- Uploading them to Southwestern's Online Services portal at: (<https://rainier.accessiblelearning.com/Southwestern/Default.aspx?SystemMessage=SessionExpired&#SystemMessage>); or
- Submitting them to Lou Djurdjevic, Associate Director of Academic Success, by email at djurdjevl@southwestern.edu; by fax at 512-863-1744; by mail to 1001 E. University Ave., Georgetown, TX 78626; or in person at the Center for Academic Success (located in the Prothro Center for Lifelong Learning, Suite 120).