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# DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY

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## STUDENTS SERVED AND DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES

The Disability Resource Center serves all students who provide documentation of a disability that substantially limits them in an educational setting. Students with verifiable disabilities, visible or hidden, qualify for services. Categories of disability include, but are not limited to the following:

• Mobility/orthopedic disabilities	• Learning disabilities
• Blind/low vision	• Deaf/hearing impairments
• Attention deficit disorders	• Emotional/psychological disabilities
• Head injuries	• Chronic health-related disabilities
• Autism spectrum disabilities	• Seizure disorders

In order to fully evaluate a student's eligibility for services and requests for accommodations and/or auxiliary aids, the Disability Resource Center requires documentation of a disability. Documentation must validate the presence of a disability, as covered under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and is necessary to support accommodation requests and provision of auxiliary aids and services.

The documentation should include an evaluation by an appropriate professional that makes evident the current impact of the disability as it relates to the accommodation(s) and/or services requested. Southern's documentation requirements may differ from other institutions and from Educational Testing Service's (ETS) documentation requirements. Depending upon a student's request for accommodations, additional documentation may be necessary to support the requested accommodations. Documentation required under IDEA or a high school 504 plan may not be sufficient for accommodations at a postsecondary level. All documentation is subject to review and evaluation on a case-by-case basis.

Appropriate professionals include school and/or clinical psychologists, educational therapists, special education teachers, licensed psychiatrists, neurologists, physicians and other rehabilitation professionals. Certified professionals cannot be family members.

***Please note:*** Documentation guidelines for students with learning disabilities are listed separately, following the general documentation guidelines.

***General Documentation Guidelines:*** The guidelines listed will assist in working with the treating/diagnosing professional(s) to prepare the information needed to evaluate a student's request. If, after reading these guidelines, there are any questions, call the DRC at (203) 392-6828, 392-6131 (TTY).

**1. A diagnostic statement identifying the disability:** The diagnosis should include a description of diagnostic methods and criteria utilized along with the date of evaluation.

If the most recent evaluation was not a full evaluation, indicate when the last full evaluation was completed.

**2. Current functional impact of the condition:** Describe the current relevant functional impact of the disability in an educational setting.

**3. The expected progression of the disability over time:** When appropriate, provide a description of the expected change in the functional impact of the condition over time. If the condition is variable, describe the known factors that may exacerbate the condition.

**4. Treatment:** List treatments, medications, accommodations/auxiliary aids, and/or services currently in use and their estimated effectiveness in addressing the impact of the condition. Include any significant side effects that may affect physical, perceptual, behavioral, or cognitive performance. List any additional recommendations/auxiliary aids along with a clear rationale of why they may be of benefit to the student. All recommendations will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

**5. Transfer Students:** In addition to your documentation, we encourage you to provide written verification from your previously attended school about the accommodations used.

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**Documentation for Students with Learning Disabilities:** The requested documentation profile for individuals with specific learning disabilities requires a comprehensive psycho-educational test battery. This assessment includes intelligence/ability testing and educational/achievement testing, along with a full diagnostic report that includes all subtest and standard test scores and the evaluator's narrative.

If you are providing information from school, include the most recent evaluation, Individual Educational Program (IEP), Summary of Performance, original eligibility evaluation, and any other assessments that include the results of a psycho-educational test battery. A diagnostic report for a learning disability should include:

1. An assessment normed for adults. What this means is that your assessment, ideally, should not be an assessment for children, but tests that are designed for adults, i.e. WAIS rather than WISC.
2. A diagnosis statement identifying the type of learning disability that is supported by test data, and includes a description of functional limitations.
3. A diagnosis made by a qualified professional i.e., licensed school psychologist, licensed psychologist, learning disabilities/educational specialist.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY AND RELEASE OF INFORMATION**

The DRC views all materials pertaining to the documentation of a student's disability as materials that are kept confidential within the DRC. This includes information pertaining to the identification of a disability, quantitative/qualitative information as to areas of impact and/or limitations, history, and clinical observations or recommendations helpful in serving the student.

Only those faculty or staff members directly involved in the provision of accommodations and/or auxiliary aids and services need to know that a student has a documented disability. However, specific details of a student's disability will not be revealed unless the student chooses to disclose this information.

Additionally, the DRC does not release such information to any persons, agencies, other students, parents or associates (including other University personnel) without permission from the student, except in certain cases as defined by law.

## **RETENTION OF STUDENT FILES**

All DRC student records and documentation are kept on file for no more than seven years from the date students were last registered at the University. All information in the file is the property of the DRC. Documentation that is sent to the DRC by prospective students is kept only for those students who subsequently attend Southern the following semester. Students requesting a copy of their disability documentation must submit their request in writing or in person to the DRC.