

Documentation Guidelines for Accessibility Eligibility

Per the authority given to public institutions of higher education under Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments (ADAAA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, St. Mary's College of Maryland requires students requesting academic, housing, or dining accommodations to submit substantiating documentation.

Rationale

SMCM acknowledges that once a person is diagnosed as having a disability or disabling medical condition, the impact on their lives is often permanent. SMCM's interest in substantiating documentation is based on the following goals:

- To develop an awareness of an individual's unique situation
- To understand how an individual's disability/health need intersects with the structure and expectations of our campus and educational environment
- To allow for an informed decision about which accommodations will provide the student with access to the SMCM academic/campus experience given their unique needs.

Substantiating Documentation

Broadly, students requesting academic, housing, and/or dining accommodations must provide documentation from non-related third-parties who are qualified to diagnose and/or treat the disability/health condition for which the student is seeking accessibility considerations. While diagnostic information is important, SMCM is particularly interested in understanding how the disability/health condition impacts learning and daily life; paperwork should help us understand the 'functional limitations' you need to navigate on a regular basis.

For all disabilities/health conditions, the submitted documents must include:

- The individual's history of the disability/health condition (e.g., when diagnosed, how it was diagnosed, treatment history)
- Description of the current impact and functional limitations as it relates to meeting the various demands of higher education and residential living (academic, social, emotional, physical, medical)

- How the condition influences (or not) the 6 primary Activities of Daily Living (eating, bathing, toileting, transferring, continence, and getting dressed)
- Notation of medications, if any, and potential impact on learning and/or side effects
- Implications of existing co-morbid/concomitant conditions
- Additional observations and/or recommendations for appropriate accommodations that LINK the functional limitations (not the diagnosis) to the requested accommodations.

In many situations, a 504 Plan, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Summary of Performance (SOP) provides most of this information. Our office will typically work with documentation that is up to 5 years old for initial requests, though we reserve the right to request newer documentation depending on the situation. If a 504, IEP, or SOP is not available or does not address all of the above points, any substantiating documentation must include the full credentialing and contact information of the clinician(s). SMCM reserves the right to request that these documents be furnished on official letterhead.

If the student has already attended a post-secondary institution and has received accommodations in that setting, those accommodation letters can be used to support the request, but additional documentation is likely to be needed to help us understand the link between your disability/health condition and the limitations you navigate.

Documentation requirements if IEP, 504, SOP or equivalent is not submitted:

Specific Learning Disability (of any type)

- A psychoeducational evaluation preferably no more than 5 years old and/or using adult scales (if older than 5 years) that establishes achievement/aptitude discrepancies within any perceptive, processing, and/or expressive dimensions related to learning.
- The results of a Response to Intervention (RTI) protocol may be submitted in lieu of a psychoeducational evaluation so long as the protocol clearly establishes the functional limitations of the individual's learning.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

- If a 504 or IEP is not otherwise available, please use the **Accessibility Eligibility Verification for ADHD** form to provide the necessary information.

Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Standardized scale of symptoms of ASD

- (Recommended, but not required) Functional behavior analyses/behavior intervention plans

Medical or Mental Health conditions (e.g., depression, anxiety, PTSD)

- A treating professional is asked to complete the **Accessibility Eligibility Verification Form for Mental Health Disabilities or Physical Health Disabilities**.

For Blind and Low Vision and Deaf and Hard of Hearing

- Please describe any special equipment, O&M, or personnel needs that are required in a letter. This may be submitted by the individual, though we reserve the right to request additional documentation from a clinician, if need be.

Temporary disabilities/disabling conditions

SMCM is able to extend to support to students under ADA if they have a temporary disability/disabling condition (e.g., injuries sustained in an accident). The student should contact the Office of Accessibility Services to determine what documentation may be needed, but in many of these situations, letters from health care providers and/or hospital discharge paperwork can provide a starting point for this process.

Other information

Decisions about permanent recommendations for accessibility eligibility cannot be made until, at a minimum, the required written documentation is provided and the student completes an initial intake interview with a member of the Office of Accessibility Services; please refer to our Accessibility Eligibility Process for more information.

Because SMCM recognizes that barriers exist in relation to the access of some of the required third-party documentation, SMCM will work to try to provide some support on a temporary basis while a student works to secure the full complement of needed paperwork. In a limited capacity, Accessibility Services can provide references to third-party personnel who may be able to help with documentation needs.

The Office of Accessibility Services reserves the right to request additional documentation/information in order to support specific accommodation requests.