

Guidelines for Documenting a Learning Disability

Transcripts from any and all post-secondary education should accompany your documentation. Every report should be on **letterhead, typed, dated, signed and otherwise legible**, and be comprised of the following elements:

Recent Assessment

Recent assessment of the student's current progress is necessary to ensure that s/he will receive accommodations that are appropriate at this time. The report must provide adequate information about the student's **current level of functioning**. If such information is missing, the student may be asked to provide it.

Diagnostic Interview Summary

The interview should focus upon relevant family history and the student's developmental and educational history, including any persistent academic or emotional problems. Comorbid conditions should be discussed and there should be a statement explaining whether the learning disability or the other condition is the primary diagnosis.

Testing

There should be a discussion of all tests that were administered, observations of the student's behavior during testing, and **a listing of subtest and index or cluster scores must be represented in standard scores or percentile ranks or both** (grade-equivalent or age-equivalent scores presented alone are not considered sufficient).

At a minimum, tests must be normed, age-appropriate and should include:

- **aptitude testing** (also known as “tests of cognitive ability”, “intelligence testing” or a “psychological evaluation”) – examples include the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scales and the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Ability
- **academic achievement** (sometimes called an “educational evaluation” or “academic testing”) – examples include the Wechsler Individual Achievement Tests, the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Academic Ability, and the Nelson-Denny Test of Reading (the Wide Range Achievement Test, or WRAT, is not considered an appropriate assessment tool)

Additionally,

- requests for extended time for exams should be supported by testing that shows scores for both timed and untimed conditions
- requests to use a keyboarding device for exams should be accompanied by appropriate testing to demonstrate a substantially limiting fine motor problem (i.e. sloppy handwriting is generally insufficient evidence of a need for accommodation)

Informal assessment, an individualized education plan (IEP), and/or a 504 plan may help to supplement a more comprehensive test battery but are generally insufficient documentation in and of themselves (please see “IDEA, IEP’S, and Section 504 Plans: What Happens at College?” at www.disabilityservices.rutgers.edu for more information on this topic).

Clinical Summary and Diagnosis

The clinical summary should integrate the elements of the battery with background information, observations of the client during the testing situation, and explain how the student's performance demonstrates a need for accommodation at the post-secondary level. This summary should present evidence of a substantial limitation to learning and explain how the patterns of strength and weakness are sufficiently significant to substantiate a learning disability diagnosis.