

Texas Christian University

Coordinator of Student Disabilities Services
Center for Academic Services



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Documentation Guidelines for TCU Students with Disabilities

Physical and Systemic Illness/Injury

Texas Christian University is committed to providing accommodations and services to qualified students with disabilities. In determining reasonable accommodations, the University is guided by the federal definition of “disability” which describes an individual with a disability as someone who has (1) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one of more major life activities; (2) a record of such impairment; or (3) is regarded as having such impairment. Any student with a disability may request accommodations from Student Disabilities Services.

Documentation Process

In order to establish disability status and eligibility for specific accommodations, academic adjustments and or auxiliary aides/services, Student Disabilities Services requires current and comprehensive documentation of the student’s impairment(s). Disability documentation is reviewed by the Disabilities Services Review Committee, and determination of accommodations is made on an individualized, case-by-case basis based on the functional limitations of the disability. It is the student’s responsibility to obtain and provide this information.

Approved accommodations are not retroactive; they begin when the student meets with her/his professor(s) to discuss their letter of accommodations.

Currency of Documentation for Physical and Systemic Illness/Injury

Typically, documentation less than 6 months old is considered current. However, this time frame may vary based on the nature of the disability. Although some medical disorders are chronic or permanent diagnoses, documentation must be provided that addresses the individual’s **current** level of functioning. For example, some medical disorders are progressive and worsen with time, while others are episodic in nature. Medications and other treatments/therapies may change the impact of the disorder on the individual and may necessitate additional consideration. Accommodations are based on current functional limitations and not on diagnosis alone.

Updated documentation is generally requested every 6 to 12 months for physical and systemic illness/injury. Determination will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Confidentiality

Student Disabilities Services is the University agent charged with the responsibility for collecting and maintaining the confidentiality of disability documentation. This information is kept in secure files with limited access within Student Disabilities Services. The expressed written consent of the student will be required prior to releasing medical documentation to a third party.

Guidelines for Disability Documentation

Documentation guidelines for **Physical and Systemic Illness/Injury** include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The student's disability information should be provided in a typewritten report, signed by the evaluator, and on professional letterhead bearing the name, license number and professional credential(s) of the evaluator. Please attach the professional's business card.
- It is not appropriate for professionals to evaluate family members.
- Physical disabilities and/ or systemic illnesses are considered to be in the medical domain and require the expertise of a physician.
- The diagnosing professional should be a medical specialist such as an endocrinologist, gastroenterologist, immunologist, neurologist, internal medicine specialist, or other medical specialist with 1) comprehensive training and relevant expertise in the area of disability and 2) appropriate licensure/certification in the area for which accommodations are being requested.
- Examples of a qualified professional would be a gastroenterologist for Celiac Disease, an orthopedic specialist for a back injury, a neurologist for Multiple Sclerosis, a rheumatologist for Rheumatoid Arthritis.
- Documentation requires a specific diagnosis. Clinicians are encouraged to cite the specific objective measures used to help substantiate the diagnosis.
- Include a description of the symptoms that meet the criteria for diagnosis.
- Include the history of the student's physical/systemic disorder, including but not limited to date of original diagnosis, date of most recent appointment, and a history of treatment options used.
- Include a statement of the current functional impact of the disorder on learning and other major life activities and the degree to which the disorder impacts the student in the academic setting.
- Include relevant information regarding any medications and the degree of impact on academic functioning.
- Include relevant information regarding current treatment for this or any other conditions, and the degree of impact in the academic setting.

- Evidence that alternative etiologies or explanations have been considered in a differential diagnosis and ruled in or out as appropriate. Such alternative explanations may include substance abuse; medication effects; psychiatric, learning, and attention disorders; and motivational factors affecting performance/functioning.
- A summary of any suggested accommodations and a rationale for each recommended accommodation based on the student's current functional limitations.
- Accommodations should be appropriate for a University setting.
- When applicable, medical professionals are encouraged to submit any prior assessments and/or evaluative reports together with the current documentation.
- A Summary of Performance (SOP), Individualized Education Program (IEP) and/or a 504 Plan are not considered fully adequate documentation, but these may be submitted by the student as supporting documentation of the impairment history.
- Prior receipt of accommodations (e.g., in high school) does not guarantee receipt of the same accommodations at TCU. While the law requires that consideration be given to the specific methods requested by a student, it does not imply that a particular accommodation must be granted if it is deemed not reasonable or other suitable techniques are available.
- Missing disability documentation information may result in a delay in reviewing a student's request for accommodations.