



ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

HANDBOOK

Located in IL 220
www.smsu.edu/accessibility

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WELCOME!

For students with disabilities, entering college is like entering a new world with different responsibilities, and a different educational environment. During the K-12 years, students with disabilities receive accommodations and services through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a Section 504 Plan. Parents must have input into v and must approve them. It is the responsibility of the parents and the school personnel to ensure students with disabilities are receiving the accommodations and services for which they are entitled. It is also the responsibility of the school to evaluate the effectiveness of the accommodations and to ensure that the students use accommodations.

Post secondary institutions are not required to provide students with IEP's or 504 plans. Many of the responsibilities performed by parents and school personnel in K-12 are now the responsibility of the college student. College students with disabilities must choose to disclose their disability must request academic accommodations and must provide documentation that supports the need for accommodations. Students must adhere to the procedures for using accommodations and they have full responsibility for using the accommodations for which they are entitled.

To be eligible for academic accommodations, students with disabilities must provide Accessibility Services with disability related documents from an appropriate licensed professional to certify a student as having a disability. Documentation should be current (obtained within the last three years) and should include the diagnosis, approximate length of recovery if the disability is temporary, functional limitations and recommended accommodations.

This handbook is available in alternate format upon request.

ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Accessibility Services for Students with Disabilities is to assist Southwest Minnesota State University in its federally mandated responsibility to provide equal access to SMSU's programs, activities, and services. Accessibility Services also serves as a resource on disability issues to the University and the community.

ABOUT US

At Southwest Minnesota State University, Accessibility Services is the designated office that obtains and maintains files containing confidential disability-related documentation, certifies eligibility for academic accommodations and services, determines reasonable academic accommodations, and coordinates the provision of such academic accommodations.

Accessibility Services provides or arranges for a variety of auxiliary aids and services to the University community, such as sign language interpreting, document conversion, assistive technology, test proctoring, and academic assistance. Accessibility Services also acts as a resource for disability-related issues which include, but are not limited to: the provision of in-service training to faculty, staff and administration; liaison between students with disabilities and community agencies; consultations on academic and programmatic access issues and general disability awareness.

WHO WE ARE



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CONFIDENTIALITY AND RELEASE OF INFORMATION

Accessibility Services is committed to ensuring that all medical, educational, and psychological information regarding the student's disability is maintained as confidential as required or permitted by law. Guidelines about the treatment of such information have been adopted by Accessibility Services and are strictly followed and shared with students. These guidelines incorporate relevant state and federal regulations and guidelines.

1. No one has immediate access to student files at Accessibility Services except appropriate Accessibility Services staff. Any information regarding a disability is considered confidential and will be shared only with others within the University on a need-to-know basis. Disability-related information is to be treated as medical information as defined in Section 503 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act. This information is also protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and the Minnesota Government Data Privacy Act.
2. Information in files will not be released except in accordance with federal and state laws, which require release in the following circumstances: if a student reports or describes intent to harm him/herself or another person(s); reports or describes any physical abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse of children or vulnerable adults within the last three years (this includes the occurrence of abuse or neglect to the student if he or she was under the age of eighteen at the time of the abuse); reports or describes sexual exploitation by counseling or health care professionals.
3. A student's file may be released pursuant to a court order or subpoena.
4. A student may give written authorization for the release of information when she or he wishes to share it with others. Before giving such authorization, the student should understand the information being released, the purpose of the release, and to whom the information is being released. Information will not be released without consent unless federal or state law requires release.
5. Accessibility Services will retain a copy of all disability-related information provided. If a student wishes to have a record expunged, he or she must make a written request to the director, who will decide whether it is necessary for the office to retain the record.
6. A student has the right to review his or her own file.

ELIGIBILITY FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

To be eligible for academic accommodations and services, students with disabilities must provide Accessibility Services with disability-related documents from appropriate licensed professionals to certify a student as having a disability and to determine reasonable academic accommodations. Accessibility Services has the right to establish guidelines for documentation and to decide if the documentation is sufficient to determine the extent of the disability and the appropriate academic accommodations and services. Pending receipt of documentation, Accessibility Services reserves the right to deny academic accommodations and services.

Students are not required to disclose the nature of their disability to faculty, only to discuss the academic accommodations they will be using. In cases where faculty may have questions as to whether a student has been certified as having a disability, faculty may contact the Coordinator of Accessibility Services and request written and/or verbal verification of the disability and the appropriate reasonable academic accommodations.

A reasonable academic accommodation is a modification or adjustment to a course, academic program or activity, service, or campus student employment that enables a qualified student with a disability to have an equal opportunity. An equal opportunity means an opportunity to attain the same level of performance or to enjoy equal benefits and privileges as are available to a similarly situated student without a disability. Southwest Minnesota State University is obligated to make a reasonable accommodation only to the known limitation of an otherwise qualified student with a disability.

The provision of appropriate academic accommodations is a shared responsibility and requires the expertise of both faculty and Accessibility Services. As part of this joint effort, Accessibility Services may seek information from University faculty, staff, and administrators regarding essential standards for courses, academic programs, campus student employment, academic activities, etc. Final determination of reasonable academic accommodations is made by Accessibility Services. Accessibility Services makes this determination by examining the following:

- The barriers from the interaction between the student's documented functional limitations and the academic environment
- The possible academic accommodations that might remove the barriers
- Whether or not the student has meaningful access to the course, academic program, activity, services, etc., without the accommodation
- Whether the essential elements of the course, academic program, services, or academic activity are compromised or substantially altered by the academic accommodation

PROCEDURES FOR OBTAINING ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

- I. Students with disabilities are required to request academic accommodations in a timely manner. Requests for accommodations should be made to the professor and to the Coordinator of Accessibility Services. Students are encouraged to make requests prior to the beginning of the semester. Accessibility Services, at the student's request, will provide individualized letters to faculty members verifying the student's disability and stating the determined reasonable academic accommodations.
- II. Students with disabilities will provide documentation to Accessibility Services of their disabilities and of how the disabilities limit participation in courses, academic programs, activities, campus employment, etc.
- III. Accessibility Services will maintain a confidential file for each student's documentation of disability and for all other disability-related information. These documents are protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 1988, the Minnesota Government Data Privacy Act, and Section 503 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, and are shared with University personnel on a limited and need-to-know basis only.
- IV. Accessibility Services will assess the needs of each student requesting academic accommodations. The assessment will determine reasonable and appropriate testing accommodations, classroom accommodations and auxiliary aids. Other academic and support services may be recommended as needed. This assessment will be discussed with the student.
- V. Academic accommodations will be provided in a timely manner. The Coordinator of Accessibility Services will work with faculty and students to implement reasonable and appropriate recommended academic accommodations.
- VI. When students with disabilities are not satisfied with the method of provision of an academic accommodation, or do not agree with the decision to deny a requested academic accommodation, or if an instructor challenges an accommodation that has been determined to be appropriate, there is a disagreement and the disagreement resolution process commences.

DISAGREEMENT RESOLUTION

Students will be responsible for contacting the Coordinator of Accessibility Services in a timely manner.

OR

In cases where faculty or staff challenge an accommodation on the basis that the accommodation will alter the essential elements of an academic course, program or activity, the faculty or staff member will be responsible for contacting the Coordinator of Accessibility Services.

OR

When a request for an academic accommodation is denied by Accessibility Services on the basis of inadequate documentation, additional documentation will be requested to reevaluate reasonable and appropriate accommodations.

The Coordinator of Accessibility Services will work with students and faculty to resolve any disagreement regarding academic accommodations. The Coordinator's resolution will be communicated to the student verbally and in writing. Faculty will be informed in writing about the above resolution of the disagreement.

When students, faculty, or staff are not satisfied with the outcome of the resolution, they may appeal to the Department Chair and then to the Dean of Students.

Appeals to the Coordinator of Accessibility Services, should be made in writing stating why the accommodation is/is not reasonable, or why the requested accommodation does/does not alter the essential elements of the course, program or activity.

GUIDELINES FOR CLINICAL DOCUMENTATION

1. All documentation must appear on letterhead and be typed, signed and dated, clearly stating the assessor's name, title, and professional credentials.
2. Documentation must be current. For most students, documentation should be *no older than three years*. If a student is 21 years old or older and has thorough and relevant documentation reflective of an adult level of performance, it may be acceptable for the Coordinator of Accessibility Services to extend the length of time the documentation will be considered valid. Disabilities that are subject to change may require more frequent evaluations as needed to verify current symptoms, functional level, and prognosis for accommodation changes.
3. Assessment procedures and instruments must be listed. Assessment procedures, evaluation instruments and a summary of the results used to make the diagnosis must be included.
4. Generally, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 Plan from a secondary school by itself does not provide adequate information for the provision of academic accommodations at the post-secondary level. These can be used as supporting documents.
5. Disability documentation needs to include assessment of aptitude, academic achievement, information processing abilities, diagnosis, clinical summary, and recommendations.
6. Attention Deficit Disorder or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity disorder should be diagnosed with a comprehensive assessment. In addition, the evaluation may include tests that address attention, concentration, and impulse control. Education and behavioral history, developmental information, clinical observation, and medication trial will generally play an important role in the diagnosis.
7. Psychiatric/Psychological disability documentation needs to clearly state a DSM-IV diagnosis on Axis I or II and must verify interference with a major life activity. The current symptoms and prognosis need to be identified with a summary of the functional implications of the diagnosis and impact of medication and/or treatment on educational functioning.
8. Physical disability documentation needs to clearly state the diagnosis and verify interference with a major life activity, affecting ability to participate in the education process. The symptoms, functional implications, and impact of medication and/or treatment on educational functioning should be included.
9. Clinicians should include suggestions for accommodations. It is extremely helpful when clinicians provide suggestions for reasonable accommodations appropriate at the post-secondary level of education. Such recommendations should be supported by the assessment results and by the diagnosis. Suggested accommodations must be reasonable and cannot fundamentally alter the basic nature or essential curricular components of an institution's courses or programs.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

Academic accommodations are individualized and intended to minimize the impact a disability has on an individual's performance in an educational setting. Academic accommodations must be reasonable and appropriate and must provide students with disabilities meaningful access to the University's academic programs. Commonly used academic accommodations include:

I. Classroom Accommodations

- A. Note takers (not available for online classes)
- B. Tape-recorded lectures/One Note
- C. Alternative print formats (large print, Braille, etc.)
- D. Use of computers and spell checkers for in-class writing assignments
- E. Alternative ways of completing assignments (e.g., oral presentation versus written papers)
- F. Advance notice of assignments
- G. Accommodations statement on class syllabi

II. Testing Accommodations

- A. Alternative testing formats
- B. Computer use
- C. Spell checkers
- D. Examinations administered in multiple parts
- E. Reduced distraction environment
- F. Recorded examination
- G. Scribes
- H. Extended testing time

III. Programmatic Accommodations

- A. Extended time to complete a program or parts of a program
- B. Advance access to syllabi
- C. Course substitution
- D. Priority registration
- E. Early advising

IV. Auxiliary Aids

- A. Assistive computer technology
- B. Taped textbooks
- C. Interpreter
- D. Talking calculators
- E. Electronic readers
- F. Voice synthesizers
- G. Voice-activated software
- H. Screen-reading software

NOTETAKERS

Students are Responsible for:

- Contacting Accessibility Services to request notetaking accommodations.
- Filling out the "Request for Notetaker"
- Attending class on a regular basis
- Picking up notes on a regular basis
- Informing the Coordinator if/when the volunteer notetaker is not attending class

PRIORITY REGISTRATION

Students are Responsible for:

- Contacting Accessibility Services to request priority registration as an accommodation.
- Notify respective academic advisors about eligibility for priority registration.
- Make sure there are no holds barring registration, i.e. library fines, immunization records up to date, etc.

ALTERNATE PRINT FORMAT

Students are Responsible for:

- Contacting faculty of their need for early syllabi and textbook information no later than two weeks after Priority Registration.
- Filling out the "alternate format Request Form"
- Contacting Accessibility Services for availability of required materials.
- Requesting other required reading materials, i.e. journal articles in a timely manner.
- Obtaining training on screen readers.

TEST PROCTORING

Students are Responsible for:

- Contacting Accessibility Services to request testing accommodations.
- Knowing the testing accommodations that have been approved for her/him.
- Informing faculty at the beginning of the semester the testing accommodations he/she will be using.
- Correctly filling out test proctoring form four (4) days in advance for each exam.
- Arranging with faculty for getting the exams to Accessibility Services.
- Requesting assistance when problems or questions arise about testing accommodations.

GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR TEST PROCTORING

- Examinations will not be given if test-proctoring forms are not filled out correctly and on time (4 days prior to test).
- Examinations will not be given at alternate times without the permission of the instructor.
- Students who are caught cheating will have their examinations taken away and the situation will be immediately reported to the instructor.
- Once an examination begins students will not be allowed to leave Accessibility Services until the test is completed, unless previously approved by the Coordinator of Accessibility Services.
- Books, notes, (unless specified by the professor on the proctoring form) are not allowed in the testing room. This includes auxiliary aids, i.e., personal computers, Braille and Speak, etc.
- Auxiliary aids needed during testing such as interpreters, scribes, readers, etc. will be hired and trained by Accessibility Services.

RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Rights and Responsibilities of Students with Disabilities

1. Students with disabilities have the right to:

- a. Equal access to University facilities, courses, programs, services, jobs, activities, and facilities offered by and to the University;
- b. An equal opportunity to work, learn, and receive reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services;
- c. Information, reasonably available in accessible formats;
- d. Appropriate confidentiality of all information regarding their disabilities, and the right to choose to whom the information about their disabilities will be disclosed, except as disclosures are required or permitted by law.

2. Students with disabilities at SMSU have the responsibility to:

- a. Meet qualifications and maintain essential institutional standards for courses, programs, services, jobs, and academic-related activities;
- b. Self identify as an individual with a disability when accommodations are needed, seek information, counsel, and assistance as necessary;
- c. Demonstrate and/or document, from an appropriate professional, how the disability limits participation in courses, programs, services, campus employment, and other academic-related activities;
- d. Follow published procedures for obtaining reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services.

A. Rights and Responsibilities of SMSU

1. SMSU has the right to:

- a. Identify and establish essential functions, abilities, skills, knowledge, and standards for courses, programs, services, jobs, academic-related activities; and to evaluate students on this basis;
- b. Deny a request for accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services if the documentation demonstrates that the request is not warranted, or if the individual fails to provide appropriate documentation;
- c. Select among equally effective accommodations, adjustments, and/or aids and services;
- d. Refuse unreasonable accommodations, adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services that impose a fundamental alteration on a program or activity of the University.

2. SMSU has the responsibility to:

- a. Provide information in accessible formats to students with disabilities upon request;
- b. Ensure that courses, programs, services, campus employment, and academic-related activities, when viewed in their entirety, are available and usable in the most integrated and appropriate settings;
- c. Evaluate students, and prospective students, on their abilities and not their disabilities;
- d. Provide or arrange reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services for students with disabilities in courses, programs, services, jobs, and academic-related activities;
- e. Maintain appropriate confidentiality of records and communications, except where permitted or required by law.

*You are responsible to make sure your needs are met.
Two federal civil rights laws can assist you in reaching your educational goals.
Become familiar with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.*

TENNESSEN WARNING

Accessibility Services is asking you to provide documentation regarding your disability. The Coordinator of Accessibility Services will evaluate the information and determine eligibility for services based on the information provided. This information is considered private information under state and federal law. You are not legally required to provide the information Accessibility Services is requesting and you may refuse to provide some or all of the information. If you do not provide sufficient information, Accessibility Services will provide services based on the documentation that is provided. Accessibility Services cannot provide services if you refuse to provide any documentation.

With some exceptions, unless you consent to further release of private information, access to this information will be limited to the Accessibility Services office. However, federal and state law does authorize release of private information without your consent to:

- Other school officials, within the College who have legitimate educational interests in the information;
- Federal, state, or local education officials for purposes of program compliance, audit, or evaluation;
- As appropriate in connection with your application for, or receipt of financial aid;
- The juvenile justice system, if you are a juvenile, and the information is necessary, prior to adjudication, to determine the juvenile justice system's ability to serve you;
- An alleged victim of sexual assault, if you are the alleged perpetrator and the release is the result of a disciplinary proceeding against you related to the alleged crime;
- Your parents, if your parents claim you as a dependent student for tax purposes;
- A court, grand jury, or state or federal agency, if the information is sought with a subpoena;
- An institution engaged in research for an educational institution or agency related to testing, student aid, or improved instruction;
- An accrediting organization in connection with its accrediting functions;
- Appropriate persons in connection with an emergency, if necessary to protect your health or safety of the health or safety of others;
- If required by a court order, or permitted by other state or federal law.

For more information visit us on campus in IL 220 or online at www.smsu.edu/accessibility