



TEXAS A&M **INTERNATIONAL** UNIVERSITY

Office of Disability Services for Students

A Registration Guide to Services for Students with Disabilities



**For more Information:
Student Center 126
956-326-3086**

Disability Services for Students (DSS) Registration Process

It is important that you review these materials carefully so that you will know what your responsibilities are and what information is required from you.

Texas A&M International University (TAMIU) and the Office of Disability Services for Students are committed to make every effort to provide students with disabilities equal access to academic and other programs and services available to students who choose to attend TAMIU. In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, we have developed procedures that are in compliance with the aforementioned legislation.

Newly Registered or Transfer Students

Disability Services for Students encourages students who require accommodations to register with our office and submit supporting documentation **in advance of the semester** for which you plan to request accommodations. Barring unforeseen circumstances, DSS will review your request for accommodations within two weeks of receipt of all required documentation. Providing your accommodation request early should facilitate your planning and preparation.

Ongoing Students

You must request accommodations for each course at the start of every new semester at TAMIU in which you need accommodations, even if you have previously requested an accommodation and that request was granted. If you request exactly the same accommodation as previously granted at TAMIU, you may rely on previously submitted documentation provided that it meets TAMIU's Disability Services for Students current documentation guidelines.

Requesting additional or modifying accommodations

To request additional accommodations, new or other documentation might be requested by DSS to review your request. Students may modify their accommodation needs based on the nature and structure of the courses per semester.

Students who are minors (under the age of 18)

Students who are under the age of 18 years are required to be accompanied by a legal guardian/parent to register for disability services. Registration forms will be signed by both legal guardian/parent and student. Forms signed by a legal guardian/parent will expire when the student becomes of legal age; thereafter the student is required to renew registration forms without legal guardianship/parental consent.

Documentation

Evaluations and diagnostic information submitted to DSS for the purpose of documentation must be from a qualified professional. The qualified professional must be licensed or certified to diagnose the disability for which the student is requesting accommodations. **Documentation is highly supported by The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as a means to provide reasonable accommodations.**

*The office of Disability Student Services does **not** diagnose disabilities. However, you may contact DSS for assistance in obtaining a referral to a qualified professional in the community.

- **Documentation Practices**

In accordance with the *Guidance on Documentation Practices (2012)* by the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD), “No legislations require that documentation be requested or obtained in order to demonstrate entitlement to legal protections because of disability and seek reasonable accommodations. **The regulations acknowledge that postsecondary institutions may request a reasonable level of documentation.** However, requiring extensive medical and scientific evidence perpetuates a deviance model of disability, undervalues the individual’s history and experience with disability and is inappropriate and burdensome under the revised statute and regulations.”

Documentation must be on letterhead, typed, dated, and signed with evaluator’s name, professional credentials such as training of individuals conducting the evaluation should be provided, relevant diagnosis, address, and telephone number.

Forms of Documentation

Documentation that is current and relevant helps determine reasonable accommodations. Providing documentation for reasonable accommodations is a non-burdensome process at TAMIU and adheres to the documentation practices of the ADA.

- **Primary Documentation: Student’s Self-Report**

The Office of Disability Student Services at TAMIU recognizes that the “student is a vital source of information regarding how he or she may be ‘limited by impairment’. A student’s narrative of his or her experience with a disability and barriers is important when structured by interview or questionnaire and interpreted. In some cases, this may be sufficient for establishing disability and a need for accommodation.”

Students with primary documentation are provided with provisional accommodations for the semester that accommodations are requested. In addition, the student will receive information and referrals as needed to community resources for appropriate evaluations by a licensed professional if needed. In some instances, provisional accommodations may be extended to an additional semester.

- **Secondary Documentation: Observation and Interaction**

The Office of Disability Student Services at TAMIU recognizes that the impressions and conclusions formed by higher education disability professionals during interviews and conversations with students are important forms of documentation.

All students who request DS services at TAMIU will meet with the DSS Coordinator for an intake interview. The DS Coordinator will listen to the student's testimony and will work collaboratively with the student to establish the need for reasonable accommodations.

- **Tertiary Documentation: Information from External or Third Parties**

- a) Specific diagnoses supported by documentation
- b) Current documentation(in most situations, within **three to five years**)
- c) Specific findings in support of all diagnoses including relevant history, tests administered, test scores (including subtest scores), test results, and the interpretation of those test results, etc.
- d) A description of the student's functional limitations as they are directly related to the given disabilities. A description of the expected progression or stability of the impact of the disability over time should be included.
- e) Treatments, medications, assistive devices/services currently prescribed or in use. A description of treatments, medications, assistive devices, accommodations and/or assistive services in current use and their estimated effectiveness in removing the impact of the disability. Significant side effects that may impact physical, perceptual, behavioral or cognitive performance should also be noted.
***Note: Prescription notes may not be deemed substantial forms of documentation and additional information may be required.*
- f) Specific recommendations for accommodations for curriculum, instruction and testing, including an explanation of why these specific accommodations are needed.

Requesting Existing or Additional Documentation

Students may also be asked to sign an Authorization to Obtain or Release Form authorizing the qualified professional to disclose or release information to the Disability Services for Students Coordinator.

Should a student request copies of existing documentation from the DSS office, they may be provided with documentation that the student brought in when they initially registered for services. Authorization to Obtain or Release Form will be required beforehand. DSS staff will process the student's request within two weeks of receiving a written request. The student may be contacted to meet with the DSS staff should additional information be needed prior to releasing information.

- **Disability Services for Students Specialist Forms**

In order to assist students with the completion of supporting documentation, DSS has a specialist form to be completed by a licensed professional. It is considered as an option when no other documentation is available or the need for additional information is needed.

Arranging Accommodations

1. Accommodations are **not retroactive**. Accommodations are effective on the date of registration or renewal.
2. Accommodations are reviewed on a case by case basis per semester to meet the needs of the student per course.
3. The provision of accommodations is an interactive process based on the student's requested accommodations, the review of the documentation from the qualified professional by DSS staff, and the student's course schedule for the particular semester.
4. It is the student's responsibility to turn in the accommodation letter titled "**Memorandum to Faculty**" to the professor/instructor as this will initiate a dialogue between the student and the professor about the accommodations. Students are not required to disclose their disability to their professors. Accommodation forms are provided to students in a sealed envelope. Copies are provided to the student for record keeping.

Personal Care Attendants (PCA) on Campus

According to Sec.504 of the Rehabilitation Act and ADA in higher education, "Unlike elementary and secondary schools, colleges are not responsible for providing personal aids and services, including bathing, dressing, or other personal care such as attendants, individually prescribed devices or readers for personal use or study" ¶946.

DSS strongly encourages students who require personal attendants to make arrangements as soon as possible in preparation for every semester. Students who require personal attendants may qualify for home health service programs that provide daily personal attendants or may also qualify for services from the Texas Workforce Solutions- Vocational Rehabilitation Services (Previously DARS).

Medical Emergencies

As first responders, University Police will provide initial assessment and contact to other emergency personnel as needed. The Student Health Services' trained personnel may also be contacted to respond during medical emergencies. University Police may be reached at 956-326-2100 (non-emergency); 326-2911 (emergency)

Students Taking Medication

Students are responsible for administering their own medication. For medication that requires refrigeration, the student may contact Student Health Services for storage of medication. University administration, staff, and faculty are not authorized to administer any type of medication to students. Student Health Services may be reached at 956-326-2235.

Service Animals

Beginning on March 15, 2011, **only dogs** are recognized as service animals under titles II and III of the ADA. A service animal is a dog that is housebroken and individually trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability. Generally, title II and title III entities must permit service animals to accompany people with disabilities in all areas where members of the public are allowed to go. **Under the ADA, service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the individual's disability prevents using these devices.** In that case, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective control.

Confidentiality and Protection of Privacy

All documentation provided to DSS to determine eligibility for disability services and appropriate accommodations is kept confidential. The information is not part of the student's academic file. DSS is the department that is responsible to determine a student's eligibility for accommodations. It is not required that the student disclose his/her diagnosis of the disability to any other TAMU department, staff, or faculty in order to receive accommodations. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974, also known as the Buckley Amendment, protects the privacy of students' records. The Act provides for the right of the student to inspect and review his/her education records, the right to seek to amend these records when and where appropriate, and only allows for limited disclosure of information among professional staff, faculty, and administration when protecting the student and those near him/her from imminent harm and danger during crisis/emergency conditions. All regulations for FERPA can be found in 34 CFR Part 99 and apply to all institutions that receive federal funding.

For more information, contact the Office of Disability Services for Students at (956) 326-3086