General Documentation Guidelines

Indiana University’s Office of Disability Services for Students (DSS) requests documentation of a disability for the purpose of demonstrating that a student is covered under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act as Amended. This information is used to provide effective accommodations, auxiliary aids and services for qualified students with a disability. The purpose of these services is to provide equitable access to all aspects of the University’s programs. Federal law defines a disability as “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities” and have an expected duration of more than six months.

In order to aid in understanding how the disability may impact a student and provide reasonable accommodations, the documentation must establish the presence of a substantially limiting condition and describe its current impact on the student’s academic success. *A clinical diagnosis is not synonymous with a disability. Evidence sufficient to render a clinical diagnosis might not be adequate to determine that an individual is substantially limited in a major life activity.* In general, the less obvious the disability, the more information may be required to assess a student’s needs and make accommodation recommendations. Reasonable accommodations are individually determined through an interactive process and may vary from student to student. Documentation will be reviewed in the order it is received; therefore it is recommended that it be submitted in advance of any accommodation needs. Accommodations are not retroactive.

While Indiana University has no obligation to provide or adopt recommendations made by outside entities, those that are congruent with the institution’s courses, programs, and services may be appropriate. DSS may substitute another accommodation if it is considered to be effective and parallel to the one recommended or deny the recommendation if it goes beyond the scope of equitable and inclusive services. The office does not modify requirements that are essential to the program of instruction or provide accommodations for persons whose impairments do not substantially limit one or more major life functions. All documentation pertaining to an individual’s disability will remain confidential and will be used only to provide the student with reasonable accommodations.

To meet DSS’s general criteria, all documentation must:

- Meet specific guidelines as outlined on the DSS website for: learning disabilities; attention deficit/hyperactive disorder; autism spectrum disorder; psychiatric, mobility, hearing, vision, neurological, or medical impairments/conditions.
- Accommodations for temporary conditions, while not covered under federal regulations, need to meet specific guidelines in order to determine suggestions for reasonable academic adjustments, auxiliary aids and/or services.
- Be prepared by a professional (unrelated to the student) who is licensed to practice within a field directly related to, and associated with, the student’s condition.
- Be printed on either official stationery or the appropriate DSS form and include printed name, contact information, and signature of the provider.
- Generally, be completed within the last four years. Conditions subject to episodes of progression or improvement may require updated documentation every six to twelve months. Sensory and/or mobility conditions unlikely to change significantly over time, provided the documentation adequately establishes the presence of significant limitations, may be acceptable if more than four years old.
- Contain a clearly defined logic relating provider recommended accommodations/strategies to specific functional limitations.
DSS does not accept the following documentation:

- Handwritten letters from licensed professionals
- Handwritten patient records or notes from patient charts
- Documentation provided by a member of the student’s family
- Diagnoses on prescription pads
- Self-evaluations
- Research articles
- Correspondence from educational institutions or testing agencies not directly addressed to DSS

Please note that recent secondary school documentation, such as an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan, may assist in DSS determination for services, but their sole submission may not meet DSS documentation requirements. A possible exception would be an IEP, CER, or 504 Plan that meets all of the requirements defined in the documentation guidelines as outlined on the DSS website.

The cost of obtaining documentation is the responsibility of the student; this includes any additional information requested if the initial documentation does not determine the extent of the disability or support the need of the requested accommodations. If the student has financial needs which prohibit them from obtaining medical documentation, please notify DSS.

Please submit documentation to the address below via fax or postal services. We do not recommend sending documentation via email because it is not secure.