

Steps for Requesting Disability Accommodations

(3/30/2009)

The Disability Services Coordinator is the designated contact person for students with disabilities at Ohio Dominican University. Services for students with disabilities focus upon providing individualized accommodations and services while promoting student responsibility, independence, and self-advocacy. The Disability Services Office views the provision of reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and auxiliary aids and services for students as a collaborative effort involving faculty, staff, and students.

Admission to Ohio Dominican University

The application process for admission to Ohio Dominican University is the same for all students including students with disabilities. Universities and colleges cannot make pre-admission inquiries regarding disability. Disclosure is optional and voluntary. However, students may disclose a disability if they feel that their previous academic performance was adversely affected due to circumstances pertaining to disability. If students choose to disclose, they should provide the information on a separate sheet of paper and include it with their admissions application.

Students with disabilities seeking accommodations must follow established policies and procedures including:

- Meet qualifications for admission
- Register with Disability Services and disclose their disability
- Provide documentation verifying disability and supporting the request for accommodations
- Engage in an interactive process with Disability Services to determine *reasonable and appropriate accommodations*
- Request accommodations in a timely manner
 - Sign language interpreters and alternative textbooks should be requested at least 8 weeks before the semester starts. If requests are not received in a timely manner it may be difficult to provide the requested accommodations by the start of the semester
 - **For all other accommodations (testing, etc...) please request before the semester starts so that we may have your accommodations in place before you need them**
- Follow established policies and procedures for disability services
- Meet with faculty **at the beginning of each semester** to discuss implementation of accommodations
- Notify Disability Services regarding any problems with implementing accommodations or needed changes

Registering with Disability Services

It is important to understand that disclosure of a disability during the admission process does not register students with Disability Services or entitle them to accommodations. Registering with Disability Services and establishing eligibility for accommodations and services is a separate process that is done independently of the admissions office. Students desiring accommodations and services must self-disclose to Disability Services and establish eligibility by providing documentation of disability. Documentation should be sent directly to the Disability Services Coordinator.

Establish Eligibility

A disability, as defined by federal law, is a physical or mental impairment that "substantially limits" one or more major life activity such as walking, hearing, seeing, speaking, or learning. A student must self-disclose and provide current documentation of the disability to Disability Services.

The Purpose of complete documentation

The primary mission of The Disability Services Office (DSO) is to determine if a student's request for disability-related accommodations is appropriate. An important piece in making this determination is documentation that the student provides to DSO. Disability documentation for the purpose of providing accommodations must both establish disability and provide adequate information on the functional impact of the disability so that effective and appropriate accommodations can be identified. The documentation needs to provide DSO with a basic understanding of the student's disability and enough information to anticipate how the current impact of the disability is expected to interact with Ohio Dominican University's requirements.

**DSO used information and guidelines from the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) in developing these guidelines.*

Documentation that is submitted to DSO should:

- clearly state the diagnosed disability or disabilities
- describe the functional limitations resulting from the disability or disabilities
- be age-appropriate — describing how the disability or disabilities currently affect the student in an educational setting
- be comprehensive- including complete educational, developmental, and medical history relevant to the disability for which accommodations are being requested
- include a list of all test instruments used in the evaluation report and relevant subtest scores used to document the stated disability (this requirement does not apply to physical or sensory disabilities of a permanent or unchanging nature)
- describe the specific accommodations requested
- adequately support each of the requested accommodations
- be typed or printed on official letterhead and be signed by **an evaluator qualified to make the diagnosis** (include information about license or certification and area of specialization).

Note: Ohio Dominican University does not provide diagnostic services to students who suspect they may have a disability. Please ask your family doctor for a referral to a specialist.

Disability Services grants reasonable and appropriate accommodations

An accommodation is a modification, adjustment, and/or auxiliary aid that minimizes or eliminates the impact of a disability, allowing the student to gain equal access and opportunity to participate in the University's courses, programs, services, activities, and facilities.

A "reasonable and appropriate accommodation" is one that **does not**:

- require a substantial change or alteration in the curriculum
- require a substantial change to an essential element of a course or program
- fundamentally alter the nature of the service provided
- pose an undue financial hardship or administrative burden
- pose a direct threat to the health and safety of others

Self-Disclosure

Self-disclosure in a ***timely and reasonable manner*** is important for several reasons:

- The process requires time to acquire the necessary information to establish eligibility
- Certain types of accommodations such as housing, e-text, and interpreters require advance notice to arrange
- **Accommodations are not retroactive**

Students who choose not to self-disclose when they enter Ohio Dominican University do not forfeit their right to identify themselves and to receive accommodations at a later date.

Early self-disclosure to Disability Services is particularly helpful for students with chronic medical conditions that are episodic in nature. These students may be fine at the beginning of the term but may experience flare-ups of their condition as the term progresses. Having a plan in place, should a flare-up occur, eliminates surprises. This gives the student and faculty member the opportunity to consider options to mitigate the impact of such a flare-up and help the student manage coursework and other academic responsibilities.

Registering with Disability Services and establishing eligibility does not obligate a student to use approved accommodations. However, waiting to begin the accommodation process until one experiences difficulties in meeting academic responsibilities or fails an exam may not be the wisest decision.

Remember, accommodations are not retroactive

Please register with Disability Services when you enter the University, or as soon as you realize you need accommodations for your disability.

Faculty Rely on the Disability Services Office for Verification of Disability

A disclosure of disability or request for an accommodation made by a student to a faculty or staff member will not be treated as a request for an accommodation. Faculty rely on Disability Services to verify eligibility and the need for accommodations. Students must self-disclose to the coordinator of Disability Services and follow established procedures and guidelines to establish eligibility.

Self-Advocacy

Students with disabilities are expected to take an active role in developing strategies for reasonable accommodations. For example, a student with a documented learning disability is expected to make an appointment with faculty at the beginning of the semester to discuss learning needs and accommodations. The student should be

prepared to discuss strengths, weaknesses, and the types of accommodations that will be necessary. This meeting will give a student's faculty a better understanding of the student's needs and the opportunity to discuss effective and appropriate accommodations. Students who understand their disability are better equipped to self-advocate.

Should any concern arise during the term regarding the provision of an accommodation and/or its effectiveness, it is the student's responsibility to immediately contact the faculty member and Disability Services to make them aware of the concern. Doing this in a timely manner is important to allow both faculty and the Coordinator of Disability Services the opportunity to address the situation.

Right to Privacy and Release of Information

The Coordinator of Disability Services respects the right to privacy of individuals with disabilities and the confidential nature of information conveyed verbally or in writing. Disability Services Office is committed to ensuring that all documentation including medical, educational, and psychological information regarding a student's disability is maintained as private. Information will not be released except in accordance with state and/or federal law.

Information acquired is used solely for establishing eligibility for protection under Federal law and to determine reasonable and appropriate accommodations at the University. Students are informed that if they request Disability Services to facilitate accommodations on their behalf, disability-related information may need to be shared. Information is shared only with others within the University on a need-to-know basis for the purpose of meeting the student's disability-related needs per the student's request and permission.

Adapted from Cedarville University, Cedarville Ohio