

Vision Impairment – Documentation Guidelines

OVERVIEW

Students who are seeking disability services through the Office of Specialized Services (OSS) at Ramapo College on the basis of a diagnose of vision impairment are required to submit documentation to verify eligibility under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as amended. It is important to understand that a diagnosis of vision impairment in itself does not substantiate a disability. In others words, information sufficient to render a diagnosis might not be adequate to determine that an individual is substantially impaired in a major life activity. Current and comprehensive documentation must be provided in order for a student to be eligible for support services and consider protected under the law.

Secondary schools and post-secondary institutions are governed under different laws with regard to providing services to students with disabilities. A prior history of accommodation does not in and of itself warrant the provision of a similar accommodation at the post-secondary level. A student's high school Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 Plan is seldom sufficient documentation to establish the rationale for academic adjustments, auxiliary aids and/or services in the post-secondary setting. A possible exception would be an IEP, or 504 Plan that meets all of the requirements defined by these guidelines.

The following guidelines are provided in the interest of assuring that documentation is appropriate to verify eligibility and support requests for reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids at the postsecondary level. A documentation form has been developed as an alternative to a traditional diagnostic report. The form can be found at the OSS website ([OSS Website Documentation Guidelines](#)).

DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES

Clerical Requirements

All diagnostic reports must include the names, titles, and professional credentials of the evaluators and include the signature of the professionals and the date(s) of testing/assessments. The report must be typed and submitted on professional letterhead. Specific reporting format is left to the professional, but the required components must be clearly presented and easily discernable. Handwritten diagnostic reports are not acceptable.

Documentation of vision impairments must include a report from an optometrist or ophthalmologist. The report must reflect the current functional limitations of the impairment (documentation for vision impairments may require periodic updates,

especially if changes occur in the student's functioning). In addition, documentation of vision impairments must fully explain the following criteria of the student's impairment (if applicable)

- Diagnosis
- Visual acuity
- Duration (chronic, episodic, or short term) of the impairment
- History of the impairment and the symptoms related to the impairment
- Severity (mild, moderate, or severe) and an explanation of the severity
- Dates and frequency of contacts with the student
- Explanation of how the symptoms related to the student's condition cause significant impairment in a major life activity
- Detailed explanation of how the impairment limits the student's functioning for the college environment
- List of the student's relevant current medication (dosage, frequency, and adverse side effects) and an explanation of the extent medication mitigates the symptoms of the disorder
- Explanation of any significant limitations in functioning directly related to the prescribed medication
- Specific recommendations regarding academic adjustments, auxiliary aids, and/or services related to the student's condition and a rationale as to the reason these academic adjustments, auxiliary aids, and/or services are warranted based upon the student's functional limitations
- Indication as to the reason the stated academic adjustments, auxiliary aids, and/or services are necessary if the current treatments are successful
- Information regarding situations that may exacerbate the student's impairment

Documentation Retention

All submitted materials will be held in OSS as educational records under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Students have a right to review their educational record. However, students are encouraged to retain their own copies of disability documentation for future use as the college is not obligated to produce copies for students. Under current New Jersey record retention requirements, disability documentation is mandated to be held for only two years after a student has stopped attending the college.