



**SEWARD COUNTY** COMMUNITY COLLEGE

# Accessibility Services

## Guidance for Faculty, Staff and Students

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# Faculty, Staff and Student Guide to Services

\*Parts of this guide were adapted from *College Students with Disabilities: A Desk Reference Guide for Faculty and Staff*, created by Project PAACS (Postsecondary Accommodations for Academic and Career Success), Wheelock College's Faculty Guide created by Samantha Daley, A Faculty Guide from Pine Technical College, and the Faculty Handbook used by the Office of Disability Services at Louisiana State University, available online at <http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/ods.nsf/index>.

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## Introduction

During the past ten years, colleges across the country have experienced an increase in the number of students served who have learning, psychological and physical disabilities. Many of these students have the opportunity to attend college due to a number of factors:

- Equal rights to education as delineated in the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- A better understanding of specific learning disabilities and appropriate accommodations.
- Advances in medications and therapies, which allow people with disabilities to function at higher levels.

People with disabilities are often uncomfortable disclosing their disabilities for fear that they may be stigmatized. Unfortunately, this lack of disclosure may lead to students doing poorly or dropping out of school all together. If the student discloses the disability, we have the opportunity and the legal obligation to help “level the playing field” by providing accommodations. The College is responsible for ensuring that the provisions of the ADA are followed and reasonable accommodations are provided.

These accommodations do not require an instructor to water down the course content, but instead, apply accommodations to minimize the effects of the disability without a change to the curriculum. With appropriate accommodations, a student can demonstrate what he or she knows about the subject.

To better understand what a student with a disability faces, we have compiled a brief review of some of the more common learning and psychological disabilities and possible accommodations that may be essential to their success and learning.

When a student discloses that he or she has a disability, the faculty may want to personally introduce the student to the Dean of Students and/or Learning Specialist on campus. The following outlines some of the responsibilities of the student, Dean of Students, Learning Specialist and faculty.

### Responsibilities of Student:

- Notify the Dean of Students early that he/she has a disability that may affect learning and success in college.
- Provide documentation of the disability to the Dean of Students.
- Make timely arrangements for accommodations by meeting with the instructors and Learning Specialist prior to each semester.
- Follow through with accommodations consistently.
- Meet with Faculty to discuss accommodations and strategies for success.

### Responsibilities of the Dean of Students:

- Determine if a student is eligible to receive reasonable accommodations /modifications and/or other support services.
- Obtain documentation from the appropriate professional verifying the disability. This is the required proof of eligibility.

- Respect individual confidentiality and maintain professional standards.
- Provide appropriate accommodations in classroom and for test taking.
- Notify the instructor about the necessary accommodations and or modifications in writing as soon as possible and discuss the implementation of accommodations needed.

#### Responsibilities of Advising Coordinator:

- Assist students in obtaining access to specific support services, such as tutoring and counseling, testing resources and accessible learning formats.
- Provide support to the faculty members for directive.
- Provide education to faculty and staff regarding campus commitment to implementing law and policy which assures non-discrimination of people with disabilities.

#### Responsibilities of Faculty:

- Follow the prescribed accommodations/modifications in a fair, non-judgmental and timely manner.
- Maintain the students right to privacy concerning the disability and any accommodations.
- Provide timely access to course materials (at the same time all other students receive the materials).
- Communicate with the Dean of Students and/or Advising Coordinator any questions or problems with implementing the accommodations.

#### Responsibilities of Academic Achievement Specialist: (Frances Brown)

- Meet with students who request tutoring services to arrange tutoring schedule.
- Train and educate tutors about students with disabilities.
- To assist the Advising Coordinator in providing accommodations to students with disabilities.

## Information about This Guide

This guide is designed to:

- Familiarize Seward County Community College faculty with the services and procedures in working with students with disabilities.
- Explain laws guiding services to students with disabilities and the implications for your courses.
- Provide tips to facilitate student learning, including the learning of students with disabilities.
- Describe common disabilities and accommodations that might be appropriate.
- Provide guidance about appropriate language and etiquette when interacting with students with disabilities.

## Introduction to Accessibility Services

### What is Accessibility Services?

Accessibility Services is the first check-in point for any student seeking accommodations. All accommodations must be approved through the Dean of Student Services to maintain confidentiality, ensure validity, and allow for proper record keeping. Any student with a documented disability or any student who believes he or she might have a disability is encouraged to meet with the Dean of Students as soon as possible to determine eligibility for services.

### Mission Statement

The mission of the Accessibility Services at Seward County Community College is to ensure that all students with disabilities can freely and actively participate in all facets of college life. In addition, our aim is to provide and coordinate support services and programs that enable students with disabilities to maximize their educational potential and to increase the level of awareness among all members of the college community.

Students are encouraged to be independent individuals who know their learning strengths and to develop appropriate coping strategies for academic success.

When working with students, our two major goals are to help them function as independently as possible and to assist them in developing their self-advocacy skills.

### Who is eligible for services through Accessibility Services?

To gain access to accommodations a student must:

- Apply and be accepted for admission to SCCC through the regular admissions process;
- Provide current and comprehensive documentation of a temporary or permanent disability that requires accommodation; and
- Schedule an initial meeting with the Dean of Students to discuss needs and register for services.

## Overview of Relevant Laws

A student with a disability is entitled to equal access to College services and programs. Two laws protect students with disabilities in postsecondary education.

### Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973:

#### Section 504, 29 U.S.C. §794, states:

No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States... shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

Section 504 is a civil rights law. Its purpose is to protect individuals with disabilities from discrimination for reasons related to their disabilities. It specifically applies to any program or activity offered by an institution receiving federal funds.

### Americans with Disabilities Act (1990):

#### The Americans with Disabilities Act, as it applies to public entities, states:

##### Section 12132. Discrimination

Subject to the provisions of this subchapter, no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by any such entity.

ADA broadened the agencies and businesses that must comply with the non-discrimination and accessibility provisions of the law.

## Definition of a disability

The ADA defines a person with a disability, as an individual who:

- has a physical or mental impairment that "substantially limits one or more of such person's major life activities."
- has a record of such impairment which means that a person has a history of or has been classified as having a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, or
- is regarded as having such an impairment

Major life activities include reading, learning, writing, performing math calculations, walking, seeing, hearing, and speaking.

### What the Legal Guidelines Mean in Your Courses

- You should never feel required to fundamentally alter the content or goals of your course.

For example, consider the scenario of teaching an education course that involves a classroom observation. You have a student with a visual impairment in class. Does the course require visual observation of the classroom? Is it sufficient to have someone describe the scene to the student, who would be responsible for writing the summary and making conclusions? Would hearing the situation be sufficient? Your objective is to determine what activities are essential to your course and why. This will help determine reasonable accommodations.

- Students with disabilities should be graded by the same standard as all other students.

Because students with disabilities are considered "otherwise qualified" to be enrolled in college, they should be evaluated by the same criteria as any other qualified individual. This is true regardless of the means of submission of the assignment (i.e., on tape or orally rather than written). You may choose to modify a deadline for an assignment or make other modifications that appear to be appropriate given a certain student's disabilities, but these are not always mandated by law and should not be considered in grading unless you have explicitly explained the potential effect when making the accommodation.

- Keep in mind that accommodations are designed to level the playing field, not to provide a certain student with advantages over her/his peers.

Accommodations are created based on documentation provided to the Dean of Students. They compensate for a recognized disability by allowing equal access to educational materials and activities. They are not unfair to students in the course who do not have accommodation letters.

- An extended deadline on an assignment is very rarely an appropriate accommodation, while extended time on tests is often appropriate.

The difference between these two types of extensions is significant when considering application in an employment setting after college. Most students recognize this and recognize that it is not appropriate to expect deadline extensions. You may allow these extensions yourself, but this is very rarely necessary according to documentation and legal requirements.

## Confidentiality

SCCC is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of all disability-related information. Documentation will be housed in the Dean of Students Office and will be treated as medical information, which may not be released without written or verbal authorization from the student.

While the records of evaluation and other documentation will not be released without student consent, registration with the Dean of Students and receipt of faculty accommodation letters does give the Office a basic level of implied consent to discuss necessary accommodations with others on campus. Specific details of a disability will not be released, but relevant information may be shared. Faculty members, Student Support Services and others on campus may have reasonable reason to know certain information in order to best provide accommodations. No information will be provided to individuals outside of the SCCC community, including a student's parents, without express consent of the student.

### Of note for faculty:

- Disability-related documentation should be submitted only to the Dean of Students. If a student provides you with medical or psychological records or other documentation of a disability in the form of an evaluation, refer her/him to the Dean of Students. This helps to ensure that confidentiality is maintained. On the same note, a letter requesting accommodations should only come from the Dean of Students or Advising Coordinator. Any student with a letter from another source should be referred back to the Dean of Students or Advising Coordinator.
- A student who discloses information about a disability to you may not choose to disclose the same information to other faculty members or students. It is NOT safe to assume that another instructor or student who knows the individual knows about the disability or knows the specific information that has been shared with you. Any information about a disability diagnosis, how a disability affects a student, or what assistance is needed should be kept strictly confidential. If you have questions about what information can or should be shared with whom, please speak with the student, Dean of Students and/or with the Advising Coordinator.



## Reasonable Accommodations

### What is a reasonable accommodation?

Accommodations are adjustments to the standard methods used to access educational opportunities at Seward County Community College.

Individual accommodations are determined through a series of questions. The answer to each question must be “yes,” or the accommodation is not appropriate.

- Does the student have a disability as defined by Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act?
- Has the student provided appropriate documentation?
- Is the student “otherwise qualified” to participate in the program or course?
- With the requested accommodations, can the student perform the essential tasks of the course?
- Is the requested accommodation reasonable?

### An accommodation is reasonable if it:

- is based on documented individual needs; AND
- allows the most integrated experience possible; AND
- does not compromise the essential requirements of a course or program; AND
- does not pose a threat to personal or public safety; AND
- does not impose undue financial or administrative burden; AND
- is not of a personal nature.

Determination of reasonable accommodations is made on a case-by-case basis. Accommodations are not provided based simply on diagnosis, but are provided according to consideration of an individual’s specific needs.

### Denial of Accommodation Requests

Requests for accommodations may be denied if the answer to any of the above questions is “no.” This may occur if the accommodation would fundamentally alter the course or program, if the accommodation would impose undue financial burden, or if the accommodation is of a personal nature.

## Grievance Procedure

Any student who feels she or he has been discriminated against on the basis of a disability or who has concerns about compliance with applicable laws should file a grievance.

### Types of Disabilities/Possible Accommodations

Please note that the determination of accommodations is made on a case-by-case basis rather than by diagnosis. Two students with the same diagnosis are likely to be provided with different accommodations.

## Learning Disabilities

### Definition:

A learning disability is a permanent neurological disorder that affects the manner in which information is received, organized, remembered, retrieved, or expressed. Students with learning disabilities possess average to above average intelligence. The disability is evidenced by a significant discrepancy between expected and actual performance in one of the basic functions (memory, oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading, reading comprehension, mathematical calculation, or mathematical reasoning)

### Characteristics of students with learning disabilities include:

- Average to above average intelligence.
- Significant discrepancy between intellectual capacity and achievement.
- Difficulty with receiving, processing, organizing, and/or expressing information.

### Difficulties may be seen in one or more of the following areas:

- Processing speed
- Decoding and letter-sound relationships
- Reading comprehension
- Slow reading rate
- Poor vocabulary and word recall
- Written expression
- Difficulty taking notes in class
- Difficulty following directions
- Problems with organization and time management
- Difficulty with concepts of time and money
- Mathematical calculation
- Mathematical reasoning
- Difficulty remembering a series of events or instructions in sequence
- Low frustration level
- Low self-esteem
- Visual processing
- Memory (long-term or short-term)

### Reasonable accommodations may include:

- Extended time on tests or quizzes
- Testing in a separate location
- Books or articles on tape or in an alternative format
- Priority registration
- A note taker
- Oral exams and assignments
- Clarification of directions on exams
- Additional time to formulate oral responses in class
- Use of a calculator when basic calculation is not being tested
- Use of a word processor for in-class writing

## Student Learning Strategies:

The following suggestions may be helpful for students with Learning Disabilities:

- Seek support from the Learning Specialist and to set up and provide accommodations as early as possible.
- Use a planner to stay organized. Record assignments and test dates in the planner.

### Reading

- Underline or highlight important ideas for later review.
- Read the chapter summary or end of chapter questions before starting the chapter.
- Use notes or symbols within the text to identify key information and note areas needing clarification.
- After reading two or three paragraphs, stop to check for understanding, re-read if necessary, paraphrase the information.
- Use scan and read software or read aloud and record on tape.

### Writing

- Use word processing software to help with organizing, editing and spell checking.
- Make use of an electronic dictionary and thesaurus.
- Use a tape recorder to study spelling: read and spell the work on the tape, write the word and replay the tape to check spelling.

### Math

- Use a calculator when applicable.
- Make use of cue sheets steps to follow, formulas, etc.
- Read work problems aloud and think out loud when solving.
- Schedule time to study with a peer or tutor.
- Listen, look at the speaker, take notes, ask questions.
- Use a tape recorder to record lectures and instructions.

### Speaking

- Use cue sheets or notes to prepare; time management is important.
- Practice speaking ahead of time; use a mirror, videotape, or ask a family member or close friend to listen.

## Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD)

### Definition:

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurologically based disorder that affects learning and behavior throughout all aspects of a person's life. Hyperactivity or impulsivity may be present. ADD is characterized by poor attention, impulsivity, disorganization, or restlessness. Students with ADHD may exhibit over-activity, be easily distracted, disorganized and have difficulty completing tasks.

### Characteristics of students with AD/HD may include:

- Difficulty concentrating.
- Difficulty sitting still, tendency to fidget.
- Difficulty attending to an activity or lecture.
- Impulsivity.
- Tendency to daydream.
- Tendency to interrupt or speak out of turn.
- Poor organization skills.

### A student with AD/HD may:

- Perform better at certain times of the day.
- Benefit from sitting at the front of the classroom.
- Improve organization through the use of assignment organizers.
- Benefit from using structured lists and schedules.
- More easily understand instructions and assignments that are broken into small steps.
- Need assignments in writing.

### Instructional strategies/considerations:

- Break down instructions and assignments into small, manageable steps.
- Put assignments in writing, even if you say them out loud. This includes any changes to assignments in the syllabus.
- Allow scheduled breaks during class.

### Reasonable accommodations may include:

- Accommodations listed previously under Learning Disabilities.
- Preferential seating at the front of the classroom.

### Student Learning Strategies:

- Before lectures, look over notes of the previous lecture and read the course material pertaining to the lecture topic.
- Resist distractions by sitting in the front of the room and by focusing on the instructor by active listening and note taking.
- Schedule time to go over lecture material immediately after class.
- Schedule a weekly review for each course.
- Organize course materials.
- Use a three ring notebook and organize all of the handouts and notes from class by topics or chapters.

## Psychological Disorders

### Definition:

Psychological disorders include a wide range of disorders such as neuroses, psychoses, and personality disorders. These disorders reach the level of disability when they result in the substantial limitation of a major life activity. Psychological disorders include, but are not limited to: depression, schizophrenia, anxiety, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Effects of these disorders vary significantly.

Difficulties may be seen in one or more of the following areas:

### Instructional strategies/considerations:

- Disclosure of a psychological disorder is often difficult for students because they fear stigmatization and judgment by the instructor. Allow them to discuss their needs in a private, non-threatening environment.
- Discuss in advance what is expected and acceptable. Communication is essential in conveying expectations.
- The nature of some psychological disorders may lead students to miss classes, leave early, or arrive late. Students are responsible for missed work and should be clearly informed of due dates. Students are responsible for making up missed assignments and tests.

### Reasonable accommodations may include:

- Preferential seating either at the front of the class or near an exit.
- Incompletes or late withdrawals in the event of prolonged absences.
- Extended time for testing and assignments/testing in a separate, distraction free environment.

### Student Learning Strategies:

- Seek the support to set up and provide accommodations as early as possible.
  - Seek some type of therapy; this could include individual therapy or cognitive-behavioral treatment or a combination of both.
  - Learn deep breathing techniques to control the anxiety and other relaxation methods to keep the anxiety in check.
  - Learn the skills that will help cope with anxiety.
  - Focus on one class at a time and break tasks into smaller parts; the student will make steady progress.
- 
- Before lectures, look over the notes of the previous lecture and read the course material pertaining to the lecture topic.
  - Schedule time to go over lecture material immediately after class.
  - Review the material for each course on a weekly schedule...maybe get involved in a study group.
  - Use all of you sense to learn material: listen to a lecture, write and recopy notes, read text and course materials and explain the material to someone else.

## Deafness/Hearing Impairments

Students may present a wide range of hearing loss, from minimal to complete deafness. Hearing loss is measured in decibels and may be mild, moderate, or profound. A person who is born with a hearing loss may have language deficiencies and poor vocabulary or syntax. Many students with hearing loss rely on lip reading or hearing aids. Some others may require an interpreter.

### Interpreting Services

An Interpreter facilitates communication between a deaf or hard of hearing individual and a hearing individual. Their role is similar to a foreign language translator, who bridges the communication gap between two parties. Interpreters assist deaf or hard of hearing people with understanding and communication not received through an audio medium. Interpreter also assists hearing people with understanding messages communicated by deaf or hard of hearing individuals. Sign language interpreters use language and finger spelling skills; orally interpreters silently form words on their lips for speech reading. Interpreters will interpret all information in a given situation and also voice for deaf people if requested.

### Requesting an Interpreter

Deaf or hard of hearing students should request interpreters from the Dean of Students when they register for classes or at least four weeks prior to the first day of classes in order to ensure interpreter coverage. In the unlikely event that a student shows up for the first day of class with an interpreter, the student should be referred to the Dean of Students where he or she can make their interpreter request.

College departments that receive request or that anticipate needing an interpreter for public meetings or events should also contact the Dean of Students. To ensure availability of interpreters the Dean of Students request that you contact them at least four weeks in advance of anticipated date of interpreter service.

### Tips for working with interpreters:

- When a student discloses a hearing impairment to you, the first thing to do is to ask the student what strategies would benefit him or her.
- Make sure all videos or films shown have closed captioning. If you are unsure of how to use this technology, please contact the A/V or IT department or the Learning Specialist.
- If asked to wear an FM system or other type of assistive listening device, be sure you understand its operation and determine a means for the student to discretely notify you if the system is not working during class. The most common type of device requires you to wear a small microphone around your neck or clipped to your shirt. The student has a receiver and headphones or a device that plugs into his/her hearing aid. Your movement is not restricted and other students in the class are not distracted.
- Use written supplements to oral instructions and assignments as much as possible.
- Be conscious of students with hearing impairments when planning fieldwork or class outings.
- Always face the student when speaking. Relax and talk normally noting that there maybe a lag time between the spoken message and the interpreter.

- Make sure interpreters are seated where the student can see the interpreter and you.
- Try to reduce ambient noise, including fans, open windows, and other background noise.
- Speak in a regular tone and at a regular pace. When talking through an interpreter to a deaf or hard of hearing individual look at and speak directly to the person who has a hearing impairment and not the interpreter. Avoid phrases such as “ask him” or “tell her”.
- Allow the student to participate in discussion. Do not hesitate to ask for repetition if the student’s speech is difficult to understand. Do not pretend you understand if you do not.
- Repeat the questions that other students ask so the student with a hearing impairment can follow the conversation in class.
- Consider modifications to assignments such as oral presentations to allow the student to tape-record a presentation or type it on the computer and play it using text-to-speech software.
- When referring to objects or written information, allow time for the translation. Replace terms such as “here” and “there” with more specific terms ie: on the second line, or in the left corner.

Reasonable accommodations may include:

- Preferential seating at the front of the classroom.
- Use of a note taker.
- Use of an FM system or other assistive listening device.
- A sign language interpreter.
- Reduction in excess background noise.

## Blindness/Visual Impairments

### Definition:

Visual impairments vary widely. Visual impairments include disorders in the sense of vision that affect the central vision acuity, the field of vision, color perception, or binocular visual function. The American Medical Association defined legal blindness as visual acuity not exceeding 20/200 in the better eye with correction, or a limit in the field of vision that is less than a 20 degree angle (tunnel vision). Legal blindness may be caused by tumors, infections, injuries, cataracts, glaucoma, diabetes, vascular impairments, or myopia.

### Instructional strategies/considerations:

- Ask the student where the ideal seating location would be to allow for the greatest handling of materials and clearest vision.
- Be conscious that nonverbal cues rely on visual acuity.
- Repeat aloud what is on overheads, the board, or handouts.
- Make sure the classroom layout is accessible, free of obstructions, and unchanging without notice to the student.
- Ask the student before providing assistance. The student will be best able to tell you what kind of assistance is needed.
- Plan field trips well in advance and ask the student what kinds of accommodations will be necessary.
- Notify the student in advance of any schedule or location changes.

### Reasonable accommodations may include:

- Reading lists or syllabi in advance to allow for printing of materials in alternative formats.
- Preferential seating at the front of the class.
- Tape recording of lectures and class discussions.
- Use of a note taker or note taking device.
- Handouts in the medium that the student prefers.
- Testing accommodations, including taped tests, reading of tests, scribe, extended time, enlarged print, separate location, and word processing software with speech access.
- Lab assistance.



## Orthopedic and Mobility Impairments

Mobility and orthopedic impairments include a variety of physical disabilities that substantially limit performance of one or more major life activities. Difficulty may be seen in walking, standing, climbing stairs, or using the hands for fine motor activities (writing, moving game pieces, playing an instrument). These disabilities may result from congenital conditions, accidents, or progressive neuromuscular diseases. Conditions resulting in orthopedic or mobility impairments include spinal cord injury (paraplegia or quadriplegia), cerebral palsy, spina bifida, amputation, muscular dystrophy, cardiac conditions, cystic fibrosis, paralysis, polio/post-polio, and stroke.

### Explanations of common conditions that result in orthopedic or mobility impairments:

Cerebral Palsy: This term applies to a number of non-progressive motor disorders of the central nervous system. The effects can be severe, causing inability to control bodily movement, or mild, only slightly affecting speech or hearing. The term is a general classification for stable cerebral lesions that usually occur at or before birth.

Spinal cord injury: The extent of paralysis and sensory loss in a spinal cord injury is determined by the location of the injury. Injuries below the first thoracic nerve root (T1) level result in paraplegia, a spastic paralysis of the lower extremities. Injuries above the T1 level result in quadriplegia, a spastic or flaccid paralysis of the lower and upper extremities.

Degenerative diseases: Progressive diseases include muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis. These conditions may limit gross motor functions and/or fine motor activity.

Motor neuron diseases: A group of disorders that includes Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), Progressive Bulbar Palsy (PBP), Progressive Spinal Muscular Atrophy, and Charcot-Marie-Tooth Disease. These conditions often produce pain, numbness, weakness, loss of upper and lower motor functions, and problems in breathing.

### Instructional strategies/considerations:

- Make sure the classroom layout is free from obstacles and obstructions.
- Allow the student to determine the best seating arrangement for him/her.
- When field trips are included in the course, plan early and verify accessibility. Consult with the student and Learning Specialist if assistance is needed in this planning. If the College provides student transportation, it must provide accessible transportation on a field trip.
- Keep in mind that fatigue may be a significant factor in a student's ability to complete an assignment in a given time.

### Reasonable accommodations may include:

- Accessible location for the classroom and place for faculty to meet with student.
- Extra time to get from one class to another, especially in inclement weather.
- Special seating in the classroom.
- Use of a note taker, tape recorder, or laptop computer.
- Testing accommodations, including a scribe, extended time, and/or keyboard modification.
- Adjustable lab tables or drafting tables.
- Lab assistance.
- Accessible parking in close proximity to the building.
- Texts in alternative formats.

## Traumatic Brain Injury

Traumatic brain injury is typically a consequence of an accident, but can also be caused from a stroke, lack of oxygen, poisoning, tumor, or an infection. At least 1.5 million people sustain traumatic brain injuries in this country every year. Students often display problems with attention deficit, memory and concentration.

The effects of the injury are highly individual depending on the area of the brain affected. They may experience frustration and anger often characterized by a quick temper. They typically exhibit discrepancies in abilities such as reading or spelling. Although there is a great variation in the possible effects of a head injury for an individual, many students with TBI will exhibit some, but not all of them. However, most injuries result in some degree of difficulties in the following functions:

- Memory
- Cognitive/Perceptual communication
- Speed of thinking
- Communication
- Spatial reasoning
- Conceptualization

In college, students may need additional strategies to cope with new found frustrations. They may want to discuss this with the campus Counselor, Deb Stafford, or Learning Specialist.

These are important differences that affect the educational program of a student with TBI. In college they may need:

- Established routines with step by step directions.
- Books and lectures on tape.
- Repetition or some type of reinforcement of information to be learned.
- Common accommodations.
- Extended time for tests.
- Testing in a separate distraction free environment.
- Audiotape textbooks and lectures.
- Text-to-speech computer programs.
- Scribe.

## Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is the name for a group of developmental disorders. ASD includes a wide range, “a spectrum,” of symptoms, skills, and levels of disability.

People with ASD often have these characteristics:

- Ongoing social problems that include difficulty communicating and interacting with others
- Repetitive behaviors as well as limited interests or activities
- Symptoms that typically are recognized in the first two years of life
- Symptoms that hurt the individual’s ability to function socially, at school or work, or other areas of life

Some people are mildly impaired by their symptoms, while others are severely disabled.

- **Avoid taking behaviors or statements personally**  
Students with Asperger’s Syndrome typically have difficulty with interpreting figurative language, sarcasm, and humor. Reciprocal conversation is often difficult for students with this disorder. They may not respond in a way that other students in the class may typically respond to the same situation or conversation.
- **Minimize environmental distractions whenever possible**  
Interruptions or noises that are seemingly insignificant to you may make it impossible for these students to focus on what is being said in class or at a meeting.
- **Explicitly state classroom/campus rules and expectations**  
Students with Asperger’s Syndrome have difficulty incidentally learning social rules and conduct. Do not assume that the student will “discover” this information.
- **Whenever possible try to use a multi-modality approach with maximal use of visual tools**  
The visual domain tends to be a strong input modality for students with Asperger’s Syndrome. Handouts, power point slides, hands-on experiences, pictures, and or class notes that are available prior to class are helpful to these students.
- **If instructors plan to deviate from a syllabus, it is helpful if the student is notified in advance**  
Change in routine or schedules can be disturbing to a student with Asperger’s Syndrome. Advance notification of changes gives the student time to process the change and to prepare for it.
- **Consider alternative ways to assess learning**  
Group work and essay exams are particularly difficult for students with Asperger’s Syndrome. They often have difficulty taking the perspective of others. Essay formats are problematic because these students have trouble inferring the intent of the essay question and have difficulty writing to that purpose.

- **Build in examples that will help the student link classroom information to what they already know**

Generalization of information from one situation to another can often be difficult for students with Asperger's Syndrome. Competence in some areas does not guarantee competence in other areas that may possibly seem less advanced.

*Adapted from UW Colleges Accessibility Services & Nat'l Institute of Mental health*

## Student Learning Strategies

Students with TBI usually have problems with memory and organization. They also may not realize their limitations. The following suggestions may be helpful.

- Work in pairs, teams or small groups in order to learn from others and participate socially.
- Break down large assignments in to more manageable segments and work on small parts at one time.
- Use a planner to stay organized. Record dates for assignments and tests in the planner. Voice recorders may also help with memory.
- Have a buddy or mentor to contact for reminders and support.
- Try to think aloud technique, cue cards and verbal reminders when studying and doing assignments.
- Work with a tutor to review the material and to help organize thoughts.

### Other Disabilities

Because the definition of a disability is any condition that substantially limits, has a record of limiting, or is regarded as limiting performance of one or more major life activities, several conditions that do not fall into other categories qualify as disabilities. The degree to which these conditions affect a student in the academic setting vary widely. Some conditions fluctuate in severity, and sometimes the medication taken for a condition impairs academic performance. Reasonable accommodations for students with these conditions are determined on a case-by-case basis.

A partial list of other disabilities:

- Eating Disorders
  - Speech/Language Disorders
  - Chronic Illnesses:
    - AIDS
    - Diabetes
    - Lupus
    - Sickle cell anemia
    - Epilepsy
    - Cardiovascular disorders
    - Hemophilia
    - Fibromyalgia
- Asperger's Syndrome
- Asthma
- Arthritis
- Burns
- Cancer
- Chronic pain
- Dissociative Disorders
- Stroke
- Tourette's syndrome

Reasonable accommodations for any of these conditions may include any of the accommodations listed under other categories. Determinations are made on a case-by-case basis.

## Tips to Facilitate Student Learning

Many teaching strategies that assist students with disabilities are known to also benefit non-disabled students. The following teaching strategies are likely to benefit all students in an academic setting.

### On the syllabus:

- Include a statement instructing students to inform you of special needs as soon as possible to ensure that needs are met in a timely manner.

### Examples:

If you have a disability and require accommodation in this course, please let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Dean of Students. Once I receive an accommodation letter, please arrange a time to see me so we may discuss your needs.

or

Any student with a documented disability needing accommodations is requested to produce an accommodation letter and speak with the instructor. All discussions will remain confidential. If you do not have an accommodation letter, please contact the Dean of Student Services.

### Required text:

- Try to select a text that is available in electronic format. Check with the publisher about this issue when making your selection.
- Try to select a text with a study guide.

### Ideas for before the lecture or class session:

- Write key terms or an outline on the board, or prepare a lecture handout.
- Create study guides.
- Assign advance readings before the topic will be discussed in class.
- Give students questions that they should be able to answer by the end of each lecture.

#### During the lecture or class session:

- Remember that instruction provided in an array of approaches will reach more students than instruction that relies on one method.
- Attempt to provide information that will reach visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners.
- Briefly review material covered in the previous class session.
- Use visual aids such as overheads, diagrams, and charts.
- Allow the use of tape recorders.
- Emphasize important points, main ideas, and key concepts.
- Face the class when speaking.
- Explain technical language and terminology.
- Pause in speaking to allow students time for taking notes.
- Periodically leave time for questions.
- Give assignments in writing as well as orally.

#### Assignments and papers:

- Consider creating an outline for assignments and papers to ensure clear understanding of expectations.
- Try breaking assignments into small steps, especially at the beginning of the semester and encourage students to do the same for themselves later on.
- Encourage student self-monitoring for improvement in skills. Try focusing on a few skills to be improved between each assignment.

#### Grading and evaluation:

- Be sure the student has arranged any special testing accommodations with faculty or Learning Specialist before scheduled tests or quizzes.



## Strategies for Interacting with Individuals with Disabilities

### General considerations:

- Do not assume a person with a disability needs your help. Ask before doing.
- If assistance is offered and the person declines, do not insist. If the person accepts, ask how best to help and follow directions.
- When introduced, offer to shake hands. People with limited hand use or artificial limbs can usually shake hands. It is an acceptable greeting to use the left hand for shaking.
- Avoid patronizing a person who uses a wheelchair by patting her on the shoulder or touching her head. Never place your hands on a person's wheelchair, as the chair is a part of the body space of the user.
- Keep in mind that wheelchairs, including motorized chairs, are not toys. References to the user that a chair's use "looks like fun" or that he or she is "speedy" are inappropriate.
- If possible, sit down when speaking with a person who uses a wheelchair so that you are at his or her eye level.
- Relax. Don't be embarrassed to use common expressions that seem to draw attention to a disability. It is appropriate to ask a person in a wheelchair to go for a walk or to ask a blind person if she sees what you mean.
- When talking with a person with a speech impairment, listen attentively, ask short questions that require short answers, avoid correcting, and repeat what you understand if uncertain.
- When first meeting a person who is blind, identify yourself and any others with you.
- When speaking with a person with a hearing impairment, look directly at the person and speak slowly. Avoid placing your hand in front of your mouth and do not feel that you have to exaggerate your mouth movements.
- To get the attention of a person with a hearing impairment, tap the person on the shoulder or wave your hand.
- Treat adults as adults. Call a person by his/her first name only when extending this familiarity to everyone present.
- When a student uses a service animal, remember that it is a working animal rather than a pet. It should be left alone unless the student states otherwise.

### Appropriate language:

- People with disabilities are people first. The Americans with Disabilities Act officially changed the way to refer to people with disabilities. The person first, then the disability. For example, say "student with a hearing impairment" rather than "hearing impaired student."
- The word "handicapped" is not appropriate when referring to a person with a disability. A handicap is a barrier or obstacle to a student's performance of an objective.
- Avoid labeling people as victims or sufferers. Say, "a person with polio," rather than "a polio victim."
- Avoid the term "wheelchair bound." Most people who use wheelchairs consider them liberating rather than confining.

- When it is appropriate to refer to an individual's disability, choose the correct terminology for the specific disability. For example, rather than "spastic," "crazy," "deformed," or "crippled," use "person with a seizure disorder, mental illness, spina bifida, or quadriplegia."

In most cases, if you are unsure of what to do or say, ask the person with the disability. He or she is the most knowledgeable about what is comfortable and appropriate.

## Frequently Asked Questions

1. What should I put on my course syllabus regarding students with disabilities?

Disability Services encourages you to include a statement on your course syllabus that instructs students with disabilities to see you at the beginning of the semester. It might also include contact information for the Dean of Students/Advising Coordinator.

2. What do I do if a student requests accommodation, but I have not received an accommodation letter from the Dean of Students?

Refer the student to the Dean of Students immediately. Explain that documentation of a disability is required in order to receive accommodations and that all accommodations are handled through the Dean of Students. You are not obligated, nor encouraged, to provide accommodations to students who have not registered for the accommodations.

3. Doesn't providing accommodations to some students give them an advantage over their peers?

No. Accommodations are designed to level the playing field and allow equal access to educational opportunities.

4. What do I do when I receive an accommodation letter?

Try to set up a time to meet with the student in a private setting to discuss her/his needs. Bring up any potential problems you foresee in your specific course.

5. What do I do if a student in my class requests a note taker?

If a student in your class has a note taker listed as an accommodation on his or her accommodation letter, you may be asked to assist in identifying an appropriate person. The recommended method for doing this is to announce that a student in the class needs a note taker and that anyone who is interested should see you after class. Briefly review the student's notes to check on their quality. If the notes are acceptable, provide the contact information for the student in need of notes. The two students will arrange a system for making copies. Do not, under any circumstances, announce the name of the student with a disability in front of the class.

6. If a student with a disability gives me an accommodation letter in the middle of the semester, do I need to make changes to assignments and tests I have already given?

No! Accommodations are not retroactive and are only effective from the date of the accommodation letter.

7. What do I do if a student with a disability is failing my course?

Treat the student as you would treat any other student having difficulty. Invite him or her to meet with you and suggest campus resources to use for assistance. Students with disabilities should be held to the same academic standards as other students on campus.