

DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

Guidelines for Documentation of an Autism Spectrum Disorder

Each student requesting accommodations through the Disability Resource Center is required to submit documentation to verify eligibility under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As defined by Section 504 and the ADA, an individual with a disability is a person who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits a major life activity, including learning. Academic adjustments and other accommodations are implemented to provide equal access to college programs and services.

In order to establish eligibility as an individual with a disability, the student must submit documentation that is comprehensive and clearly specifies the presence of a disability, and is appropriate to the post-secondary setting.

Any specific recommendations for accommodations must be based on significant functional limitations and must be supported by the diagnostic assessment. Accommodations and academic adjustments cannot be implemented until the student's documentation meets these criteria. Prior history of having received an accommodation does not, in and of itself, warrant or guarantee its continued provision. An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is not sufficient documentation of a disability.

Documentation of an autism spectrum disorder (Asperper's Syndrome and other pervasive developmental disorders) should be current. In most cases, this means completed within the past three years. The evaluation must be performed by a professional who has training and direct experience working with adults on the autism spectrum. This would include psychiatrists, neurologists, clinical psychologists, neuropsychologists, etc. Diagnostic reports must be on official letterhead and include the name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator. All reports must be signed and dated.

The diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder does not rely on one test or a specific battery of tests. As a result, it requires a multi-faceted approach. The guidelines that follow are provided to assure that evaluation reports are fair and appropriate to determine eligibility.

Documentation must include the following information:

- **Diagnosis** – a complete DSM-IV diagnosis with an accompanying description of the specific symptoms experienced by the student and their impact on academic, social, behavioral and emotional functioning. The diagnosis should be based upon a comprehensive clinical interview and, where clinically appropriate, psychological testing.
- **Current Treatment** – Identification of treatment, medications, or other services and/or interventions currently prescribed or in use.
- **Evaluation of Impact** – Identification of the substantial limitation on a major life activity presented by the disability, and a description of the current functional impact of the disability in a college setting. The assessment should validate the need for services based on the impact of the student's disability and level of functioning in an educational setting.

- **Specific Recommendations** – Suggested accommodations and/or academic adjustments, with an explanation supporting the need for each accommodation to achieve equal access. Diagnostic information must support the need for the recommended accommodations.