

COLLEGE STUDENTS with DISABILITIES

A Resource Guide for Faculty, Administrators and Staff

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INTRODUCTION

The Resource Guide for Faculty, Administrators and Staff is intended to be a reference guide for you to use when working with a student with a disability. It also gives you information about support services available to you and the students. It reflects current legislation and is updated as needed. Please read the section in this guide that relates to specific accommodations listed on the Alert Form. If you need any additional information, please contact the Disability Services Office at X2730.

The first step in teaching students with disabilities seems obvious: treat them as you would all students. They come to college for the same reasons others do and they bring with them the same range of backgrounds, intelligence and scholastic skills. However, unfounded or inappropriate attitudes reduce or color our expectations of the individual's performance. Such attitudes define the person by the disability, not by the person's humanness, as if a disability comprises the entirety of his or her being. These attitudes lead us to isolate and segregate people with disabilities; to hurt their pride and their confidence.

MISSION OF THE DISABILITY SERVICES OFFICE

The **mission** of the Disability Services Office is to ensure, in compliance with federal and state laws, that no qualified student with a disability be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of services, programs or activities of Brookdale Community College, or be subjected to discrimination by the College or its personnel. To accomplish this mission, the purposes of the Disability Services Office are to:

- Coordinate a high quality of **individualized accommodative services** for eligible individuals with disabilities (those with Alert Forms) in the least restrictive environment possible
- Advocate and implement the **removal of attitudinal and physical barriers** to assure campus-wide accessibility
- Provide **consultative and support services** to the institution's faculty, administrators, and staff.

YOUR ROLE IN ASSISTING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Assisting students with disabilities does not mean lowering standards and expectations. A grade should reflect the student's academic performance with due allowance for reasonable adjustments. The following are general guidelines for working with students with disabilities:

- **Announce** at the beginning of the first classes and include in course syllabus this statement: "If you have a documented disability and would like to request accommodations, contact the Disability Services Office at (732) 224-2730 (Voice) or (732) 842-4211 (TTY) for an appointment."
- **Accept** the Alert Form from the student and have the student initial and date the form. Meet privately to discuss the provision of the accommodations listed on the Form. Students have been advised to schedule an appointment to meet with the instructor at the beginning of the semester. If you have any concerns about the accommodation jeopardizing the integrity of the course, contact the Disability Services Office immediately.
- **Check** that the Alert Form is from Brookdale and for the current semester. Forms from a previous semester are not valid. Direct students with non-Brookdale or outdated forms to the Disability Services Office.
- **Direct** questions or concerns about providing an accommodation to the Disability Services Office before providing the accommodation.
- **Provide** only the accommodations listed on the Alert Form. **Do not provide any other accommodation unless you are prepared to provide the same accommodation for all students in the course.**

- **Refer** students who tell you that they have a disability and are requesting accommodations without giving you an Alert Form to the Disability Services Office. Explain that you cannot provide accommodations until you receive the Form. Instructors legally cannot provide any services without an Alert Form.
- **Do not ask** a student if he or she has a disability.
- **Channel** any suspicion that a student in your class has a disability but has not given you an Alert Form or told you that he/she has a disability to the Disability Services Office. They will contact the student (if the student has registered in the Office) and encourage the student to give his/her Alert Form to you. If the student has not registered, you may encourage the student to seek assistance in the same manner as other students (e.g., Writing Lab, Math Lab, etc.).
- **Return** the Alert Form to the Disability Services Office at the end of the semester. It is important to document the fact that you have provided an accommodation. If you choose to make a copy for your own file, it must be kept for seven years after the student becomes inactive at the College. The Alert Forms will be kept in the student's file.
- **Direct** emergency situations to the campus police if you need assistance with providing help to students with disabilities.

ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The goal is to provide reasonable accommodations necessary for ensuring complete access to and full participation in the educational process and is not intended to require the instructor to compromise academic standards when evaluating academic performance. Rather, the accommodations make it possible for a student with a disability to truly learn the material presented and for an instructor to fairly evaluate the student's understanding of the material without being influenced by the disability.

Student accommodations listed on the Alert Form are based on individual documented need and may include, but are not limited to:

- ***Additional Time to Complete In-Class Assignments*** - additional time (time and a half) should be given if the assignment is to be completed during the class period. Additional time for outside assignments, if approved will be listed separately on the Alert Form. In most cases, additional time for outside assignments will be approved on a case by case basis and the appropriateness will be determined collaboratively by each instructor, the department chairperson and the Disability Services Office.
- ***Assistive Computer Equipment*** – allow the use of assistive computer equipment in class and/or for testing. You may contact the Disability Services Office for assistance.
- ***Assistive Listening Equipment*** – allow the use of assistive listening equipment in class and/or for testing. You may contact the Disability Services Office for assistance.

- **Calculator** - allow the use of a calculator in class and/or for testing.
- **Change of Classroom** - arrange for a change of classroom if the room is not accessible for a person with a disability. Students are encouraged to notify the instructor prior to the beginning of the semester.
- **Extended Time for Testing** - provide extended time for quizzes and tests (time and a half is standard). The instructor may administer the test, have the student take the test in the Testing Center, or delegate the proctoring of the test to someone in the department. Ideally the instructor or someone in the department (often a Learning Assistant) will administer the test and be available to answer appropriately any questions the student may have about the test questions. When a test is proctored through the Test Center, the proctor is only allowed to give the instructions concerning the test that have been stated by the instructor and is not allowed to answer any questions about the test questions themselves. A tutor who has worked with the student in the subject area is never an appropriate proctor for a test. The faculty member and student should meet to arrange a time to take the test with accommodation. The time of the test should never conflict with the lecture, lab or any other courses. This may mean the student may have to take the test before or after class or on a different day. To maintain the integrity of the test, tests should not be sent through inter-office mail and should always be kept in a secure place.
- **Interpreter** - if an interpreter has been provided by the Disability Services Office, work with the student and the interpreter to arrange the best seating possible. Do not walk between the student and the interpreter when you are speaking. Repeat questions and comments from other students in the class. Face the class when speaking.
- **Large Print** - enlarge exam questions and notes, and other class handouts for students who are visually impaired or have acquired brain injury. If you do not have access to a copy machine with an enlargement feature, contact the Disability Services Office for assistance.
- **Oral Testing - Question Read or Tape Recorded** – email the test to the Test Center to utilize text to speech software that will read aloud the test to the student or tape record the test for the student. Specific directions will be listed on the Alert Form. You may contact the Disability Services Office for assistance.
- **Oral Testing - Answer Given Orally or Tape Recorded** - arrange to have the student respond to test questions orally or use a tape recorder. You may contact the Disability Services Office for assistance.
- **Preferential Seating in the Classroom** - students may need to sit in the front of the room, near a door, etc.
- **Recorded Texts** – electronic text books are available to students. Students will need to contact the Disability Services Office in advance to receive E-texts prior to the start of the term.

- **Scribe for Testing** - a scribe may be needed to fill in answer sheets or write essay question answers if the student is not capable of doing so due to a physical or learning disability or if they have acquired brain injury. The scribe may be assigned by you or you may contact the Disability Services Office for assistance.
- **Scantron with Scribe** - a scribe may be needed to fill in Scantron answer sheets if the student is not capable of doing so due to a physical or learning disability. Faculty may allow the student to circle the answer on the test or record answers on a separate sheet. If a scribe is used, the scribe may be assigned by you or you may contact the Disability Services Office for assistance
- **Shared Notes** - shared notes are provided on a volunteer basis. The **instructor** will identify a student in class who can make a photocopy of their notes at the end of the class and provide the notes to the instructor. The instructor will have the notes available for the student requesting the accommodation. This procedure helps insure the student's privacy is protected. Students with this accommodation have also been told that copies of the notes can be made at the college at no cost to them or the other students. They may go to any academic office or the Disability Services Office to make copies.
- **Stand, Stretch or Walk** - students with physical disabilities or chronic illnesses may need to stand, stretch or walk to relieve discomfort during class. If this movement is disruptive, you may discuss and/or suggest more appropriate ways to allow the accommodation. If you have questions or would like additional input, contact the Disability Services Office.
- **Table in the Classroom** - students often need a table and/or chair in the room because they cannot use a tablet arm chair. The Disability Services Office will provide them at the beginning of the semester if the student has requested it. If no request for a table has been made and one is needed, contact the Disability Services Office.
- **Take Breaks** - students may need to take a break during the class session in addition to the one you have scheduled. Usually the break is needed based on a physical disability. If this accommodation is disrupting the class, contact the Disability Services Office to discuss possible alternatives.
- **Tape Record Lectures** - allow students to tape record lectures using their own tape recorder. Students are not permitted to tape group discussion. Students have been notified that tapes are for class preparation and may not be sold or shared. The tapes are only for students who are attending classes. Faculty may determine that a contract be drawn up between the instructor and the student. Such a contract would determine how the tapes will be used, what could be taped, how the tapes should be destroyed, etc.
- **Testing in an Environment with Minimal Distractions** - arrange for testing in a quiet environment for students who have difficulty with distractions or contact the Disability Services Office for assistance.

- **Testing in Sections** - allow students to take tests in sections whenever possible if the test is lengthy. In almost all cases the testing can be completed in one day with appropriate rest periods.
- **Use Computer Whenever Possible** - allow the use of a computer or laptop in class, for tests and/or written assignments and to enhance the overall level of access and participation in the classroom.
- **Other Appropriate Reasonable Accommodations** - these are handled on a case-by-case basis (often a course-by-course basis) and are listed in a specific manner on the Alert Form.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

All students are ultimately responsible for their own academic achievement. The College makes every effort to accommodate students who are eligible. However, students must meet all academic requirements. Each student must be responsible for class attendance, assignments, and all other course materials. It is up to the individual student to seek help and to utilize agreed upon classroom accommodations.

- Students with disabilities are responsible for informing the College through the Disability Services Office of disabilities that require reasonable accommodations in the educational process.
- Students have the right to choose **whether or not** to disclose to instructors that they have a qualifying disability that would make them eligible for accommodations.
- Students have the right to choose **when** to submit their Alert Form and disclose to instructors that they have a qualifying disability that would make them eligible for accommodations.
- Students with disabilities must contact the Disability Services Office and provide appropriate documentation of the disability that requires accommodation. The documentation could be provided by the high school Child Study Team, a private evaluation, a doctor or other educational institutions. Some students are evaluated while they are in college.
- Students fill out the self-identification and consent for release of confidential disability related information form and then consult with the Disability Services Office who approves specific accommodations that are reasonable and appropriate at the college educational level based directly on the documented need.
- Before the beginning of each semester, Alert Forms will be mailed to the students who have requested them. Students are responsible for giving the Alert Form to the instructor or anyone else they select. The students have been informed that they are also responsible for discussing the accommodations they are entitled to with each person who has been given an Alert Form.

- The Alert Form informs faculty members that the student has followed the procedures of the Disability Services Office and is entitled to the accommodation(s) listed, **IF THE PROVISION OF THE ACCOMMODATION(S) DOES NOT JEOPARDIZE THE INTEGRITY OF THE COURSE.** If there is any question, the faculty member should contact the Department Chairperson and the Disability Services Office (and other appropriate persons) to discuss the problem and a decision about how to appropriately accommodate the student’s need will be made jointly. Students have been informed that the provision of accommodations may be denied in some cases.
- Students are responsible for requesting accommodations in a timely manner so that instructors and/or the Disability Services Office can plan for those accommodations. Students are instructed to remind their professors a WEEK before each examination to allow them and/or Disability Services Office to plan for testing accommodations.
- Students with disabilities must maintain the same responsibility for their education as other students. These responsibilities include maintaining the academic integrity of courses and following the Student Conduct Code.

APPROPRIATE TERMINOLOGY

People with disabilities prefer that you focus on their abilities, not their disabilities. The term handicapped is falling into disuse and should be avoided. The terms able-bodied, physically challenged, and differently abled, are also discouraged.

The following terms are some recommendations:

- The preferred usage, “**people with disabilities**,” stresses the essential humanity of the individuals and avoids objectification. Alternatively, the term “disabled people” is sometimes still used, but note that this term still defines people as disabled first, and people second. USE people who are deaf. USE people who are visually impaired.
- Do not use the article **THE** with an adjective to describe people with disabilities. **NOT the deaf.** **NOT the visually impaired.**

If it is appropriate to refer to a person’s disability, choose the correct terminology for the specific disability:

- People who are blind, visually impaired, deaf, hard of hearing, mentally challenged, physically disabled.
- People with or who have: Cerebral Palsy, Downs Syndrome, mental illness, paraplegia, quadriplegia, partial hearing loss, seizure disorder, specific learning disability, or speech impairment.

Be careful not to imply that people with disabilities are to be pitied, feared, or ignored, or that they are somehow more heroic, courageous, patient or “special” than others.

- A person in a wheelchair is a “wheelchair user” or “uses a wheelchair”.
- Do not use the term “normal” in contrast. NOT Chris held her own while swimming with normal children. USE Chris qualified for her “Swimmer” certificate.
- Avoid terms that define the disability as a limitation. Do not use the terms “victim” or “sufferer” to refer to a person who has had a disease or disability. This term dehumanizes the person and emphasizes powerlessness. NOT victim of AIDS or AIDS sufferer. USE person with HIV/AIDS. NOT Polio victim. USE had polio.

THE MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Question: Am I obligated to comply with a student’s request for specific accommodations?

Answer: If a student has given you an Alert Form, you must respond under the ADA legislation of 1990 and 2008 as well as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. If you have any question about exactly what constitutes an appropriate accommodation for your class, consult the Disability Services Office.

Question: What are the consequences if I do not provide the requested accommodations?

Answer: The student can take legal action against you and the institution.

Question: Is it fair to other students to grant academic accommodations to those students who are disabled?

Answer: It is unfair not to grant accommodations to those students who have given you an Alert Form. The accommodation “evens the playing field” and insures that the student’s knowledge is being tested, not his/her disability. A student with a disability learns and performs more successfully with certain classroom accommodations which would be unlikely to aid a non-disabled student. For example, one of the most frequently requested academic adjustment is for additional testing time. Studies have shown that giving additional time to non-disabled students will not affect their performance on an exam. However, students with disabilities receiving additional time perform better.

Question: What about students who believe that they have a learning disability and were never identified or tested in high school?

Answer: Students who were never tested for a learning disability in high school need to be evaluated by a qualified professional. Please refer any student to the Disability Services Office if they express a desire for information concerning a learning disability evaluation.

Question: How can I tell when a student is “faking” a disability?

Answer: That students feign disabilities in order to receive special consideration is a common myth. No student who truly understands the nature of a disability would want to “fake” having one. All students who have Alert Forms have a disability that has been documented by a qualified professional. If you have any reason to question whether or not a student has a disability, contact the Disability Services Office.

Question: Must I evaluate the academic work of a student with a disability differently from other students who do not have a disability?

Answer: In fact, you should not evaluate the academic work of a student with a disability differently. A good rule of thumb in evaluating a student’s academic performance is to treat all completed work equally. All students must ultimately perform at the same level if they are to receive the same grades.

Question: I want to give students with specific learning needs as much assistance as possible, but where do I draw the line on insuring that students take advantage of available help and accommodations?

Answer: **All students are responsible for their own academic achievement.** Each student must be personally responsible for class attendance, assignments, and all other course material. It is up to the individual student to seek outside help and to utilize agreed upon accommodations.

Question: What are some guidelines regarding confidentiality of disability related information?

Answer: Any disability related information must be considered confidential and shared only with faculty or staff on a need-to-know basis. Faculty members should not expect to see diagnostic information for a particular student. Of course, faculty members need to know what academic accommodations are necessary and appropriate in meeting an individual student’s needs, **but only if the student chooses to give them the Alert Form.** Any discussion that you have with students about their disability and/or accommodations should not be in a public setting such as the classroom.

Question: Can a faculty member forbid a student with a disability to use a tape recorder?

Answer: No, not if it has been recommended as an appropriate academic accommodation. Tape recorders are specifically mentioned in Section 504 as a means of assuring full participation in educational programs. Faculty members concerned about their right to privacy may work with the Disability Services Office to draw up a contract between the student and the faculty member. Such a contract could detail specific, limited use of the tapes and arrange for their disposal at the end of the term.

