

Guidelines for Documenting Mental Health/ Psychological Disabilities

1.) **A Qualified Evaluator.** Professionals conducting assessments, rendering the diagnosis of psychiatric, psychological, behavioral, and emotional disorders/syndromes, and making recommendations for appropriate accommodations, must be qualified to do so. These are licensed professionals with comprehensive training and expertise in mental health, skilled in differential diagnosis of psychiatric disorders, such as (neuro) psychologists, psychiatrists, clinical social workers, counselors, and psychiatric nurse practitioners. The report must meet these criteria:

- include evaluator's name, title, professional credentials, license and/or certification number
- be presented on the professional's letterhead, typed, dated, signed, and legible
- the evaluator may not be a member of the student's immediate family

2.) **Current Documentation.** Reasonable accommodations are based on the current impact of a disability; therefore, it is of utmost importance for psychological documentation to address an individual's current level of functioning and present need for accommodations. Due to the changing nature of psychiatric disabilities, a full report from a treating mental health professional completed within the past twelve months is considered current. The documentation may require an annual update using the **DRC 102 Form**, depending on the nature of the condition.

3.) **Comprehensive Documentation.** The documentation **must** include:

- A **clear** diagnosis of psychiatric disorder based on *DSM-V* or *ICD-10* criteria, including:
 - a **clearly stated** diagnosis, subtype if applicable, and diagnostic code,
 - a list of the *DSM 5* or *ICD-10* diagnostic criteria as the basis for the diagnosis,
 - a description of how the diagnosis substantially impacts a major life activity/activities,
 - **CANNOT INCLUDE** wording such as "seems to indicate" or "suggests,"
 - **NOTE:** Test anxiety, stress, and "feeling anxious", in and of themselves, are not accommodated disabilities.
- A description of current and past treatments, therapeutic techniques, assistive devices, medications, etc. used to manage the impact of psychiatric disability.
- A description of current functional limitations of the individual in an academic environment (e.g., impact on study skills, test-taking and organizational skills). Functional limitations should be determined **WITHOUT** consideration of

mitigating measures (e.g., medication). If the condition is episodic in nature, level of functioning should be assessed based on active phase of symptoms.

- Appropriate, specific recommendations for academic accommodations including:
 - detailed explanation as to why each accommodation is recommended,
 - a correlation to previously discussed functional limitation in life activity
- A discussion of any of the following, as applicable:
 - relevant developmental, historical, and familial information
 - evidence of current functional impairment
 - duration and severity of the disorder
 - expected progression or stability of the impact of the condition over time
- Suggestions of reasonable accommodation(s), which might be appropriate at the post-secondary level, are encouraged. These recommendations should be supported by the diagnosis.

4.) **Psychological Instruments.** Though not explicitly required, psychological instruments may be useful in helping the evaluator render a more accurate diagnosis and, therefore, better recommendations for accommodation. If such tests are used, results should be included in the report.

5.) **Supporting Documentation.** The qualified evaluator's report, while necessary, is by no means the only documentation we can use to better understand and accommodate the student with a mental health or psychological disability. Other helpful documents may include records of accommodations from previous institutions, high school 504 plans or IEPs, and previous psycho-educational evaluations. Please see the **DRC 102 General Medical and/or Mental Health Documentation Form**, should you wish to add this to your supporting documentation.

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*Please note that the on-campus DRC office is currently closed. Students must submit documentation as an attachment to drc@emich.edu prior to their scheduled appointment. Please visit the [DRC website](#) for additional information.