



Accommodations and Resource Center (AARC) Documentation Guidelines

Blind/Low Vision Disabilities

Introduction

The Accommodations and Resource Center (AARC) at Western University of Health Sciences is committed to providing accommodations and services to qualified students and employees with disabilities in order to eliminate any disadvantages that may occur as a result of an individual's disability. In determining reasonable accommodations, AARC is guided by the federal definition of disability, which describes an individual with a disability as someone who has:

A physical or mental impairment that **substantially** limits one or more major life activities of such individual, a record of such impairment or is regarded as having such an impairment.

Any student or employee may request accommodations from AARC. In order to establish disability status and eligibility for specific accommodations, academic adjustments, ergonomic furniture/equipment and or auxiliary aids/services, AARC requires **current** and **comprehensive** documentation of the student's or employee's impairment(s). Disability documentation is reviewed by the Assistant Director AARC, and the determination of accommodations is made on a case-by-case basis based on the functional limitations of the disability. It is the student's and employee's responsibility to obtain and provide this information. If a student or employee cannot present current and comprehensive documentation, the Assistant Director may refer him/her to a qualified professional for assessment.

Disability documentation is credible evidence from a qualified practitioner that attests to the existence of a disability, the impact of the alleged disability on academic and job performance, and related competencies and recommendations for accommodations.

Guidelines for Disability Documentation

Ophthalmologists are the primary professionals involved in diagnosis and medical treatment of individuals who are blind or experience low vision. Optometrists provide information regarding the measurement of visual acuity as well as tracking and fusion difficulties. The diagnostician must be an impartial individual who is not a family member of the student or employee.

The following guidelines are provided to assist the service provider in collaborating with each student or employee to determine appropriate accommodations. Documentation serves as the foundation that legitimizes a student's or employee's request for appropriate accommodations; therefore the following should be included:

1. A clear statement of vision-related disability supporting numerical description that reflects the current impact blindness or vision loss has on the student's or employee's functioning; (the age of acceptable documentation is dependent upon the disabling condition, the current status of the student or employee, and the student's or employee's request for accommodations).
2. A summary of assessment procedures and evaluation instruments used to make the diagnosis and a summary of evaluation results including standardized scores.
3. Present symptoms which meet the criteria for diagnosis.
4. Medical information relating to the student or employee needs and the status of the individual's vision (static or changing) and its impact on the demands of the academic program or job performance.
5. Narrative or descriptive text providing both quantitative and qualitative information about the student's or employee's profile including the use of corrective lenses and ongoing visual therapy (if appropriate).
6. Prior receipt of accommodations does not guarantee receipt of the same accommodations at Western University of Health Sciences.
7. Missing disability documentation information may result in a delay in reviewing a student's or employee's request for accommodations.
8. A statement of the functional impact of limitations of the disability on learning, working or other major life activity and the degree to which it impacts the individual in the learning or working context for which accommodations are being requested.

Further assessment by an appropriate professional may be required if coexisting disabling conditions are indicated. The student or employee

and the Assistant Director/AARC collaborate regarding accommodations.