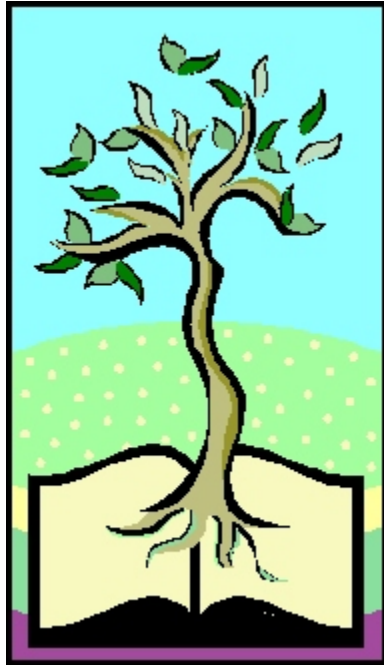


# **DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES**



## **A MANUAL FOR FACULTY AND STAFF**



Gwynedd-Mercy College

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## Introduction

Gwynedd-Mercy College Disability Support Services hopes that the information offered in this guide will facilitate communication between you and the students whom you serve. We invite your input and inquiry into the needs of students with special needs and we look forward to working with you and your students with disabilities.

Disability Support Services serves to coordinate the needs of students with documented disabilities with faculty, staff and administration to ensure equal educational access. The purpose of this guide is to provide basic information and guidelines about the procedures and practices for faculty, staff and administration at Gwynedd-Mercy College.

Each student with a disability may have a different level of functioning- even within the same disability category. The degree of compensatory skills developed as well as the degree of limitation due to the disability will vary widely from student to student. In order to support these students and maintain their dignity as an individual, it is essential to recognize and respect these differences. Each student comes to Gwynedd-Mercy College with an educational history, and some experience with what has facilitated their learning experience. Our goal as educators and leaders is to continue to facilitate that learning experience so that they can become independent learners and successful adults.

Disability Support Services endeavors to make that success possible. Please feel free to contact the Coordinator of Disability Support Services in Counseling Services on the Second Floor of the Griffin Complex, at 215-646-7300 ext. 427.

## Policy and Procedure at Gwynedd-Mercy College

At the time of a student's acceptance to Gwynedd-Mercy College, or anytime thereafter, a request can be made for accommodations for learning, psychological and physical disabilities. It is important for students to allow sufficient time for administrative processing of requests. Within the bounds of its resources, GMC intends to provide accommodations to meet those challenges and needs so that all students accepted into a program have equal opportunity to effectively reach their academic and personal goals. As faculty, staff and administration, it is important for you to be aware of the process so that you can appropriately refer students who identify to you as a student with a disability.

Students who are interested in requesting accommodations for a disability must follow the procedure listed below:

- 1) Contact the Coordinator of Disability Support Services:  
Rachelle Guido, M.S.  
Counselor/Disability Support Services Coordinator  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, The Griffin Complex  
215-646-7300 ext. 427  
[guido.r@gmc.edu](mailto:guido.r@gmc.edu)

Information can also be obtained at:

[http://www.gmc.edu/i\\_services/counseling/disabilitysupportservices/index.html](http://www.gmc.edu/i_services/counseling/disabilitysupportservices/index.html)

- 2) Complete and submit the following:
  - Disability Accommodation Request Form
  - Documentation Requirements Form
  - Release of Information Authorization
  - Copy of course schedule
  - Housing Accommodation Request Form (if applicable)

These forms can be downloaded at:

[http://www.gmc.edu/i\\_services/counseling/disabilitysupportservices/index.html](http://www.gmc.edu/i_services/counseling/disabilitysupportservices/index.html)

- 3) Meet with the Disability Support Services Coordinator to:
  - a. Discuss documentation submitted and accommodation requests
  - b. Review college policy and responsibilities regarding accommodations
  - c. Review and sign letters for faculty notification of recommended accommodations
  - d. Discuss campus resources and available support
  - e. Discuss off-campus referral sources if needed

***Please note:***

*Students must complete this process before the college can make any accommodations.*

*Accommodations that are not reasonable will be discussed with the student and referrals to outside sources will be made whenever possible.*

*Students must meet with the Disability Support Services Coordinator **each semester** and provide a list of instructors who require notification of recommended accommodation, with documentation.*

## The Law

Gwynedd-Mercy College is committed to providing equal educational opportunity for persons with disabilities in accordance with the Nondiscrimination Policy of the College in addition to compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

***Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act states:***

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

*A person with a disability includes.... “any person (1) who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities [including walking seeing hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working caring for oneself, and performing manual tasks], (2) has a record of such an impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment.”*

*A “qualified person with a disability” is defined as one.... “who meets the academic and technical standards requisite to admission or participation in the education program or activity.”*

*Under the provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.... the college may not discriminate in the recruitment, admission, educational process, or treatment of students. Students who have self identified, provided documentation of disability, and requested reasonable accommodations are entitled to receive approved modifications of programs, appropriate academic adjustments, or auxiliary aids that enable them to participate in and benefit from all educational programs or activities.*

***Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990:***

*“No qualified disabled student on the basis of (disability) be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination in any academic research, occupational training, housing, health insurance, counseling, financial aid, physical education, athletics, recreation, transportation, other extra curricular, or other post secondary program or activity.”*

*“Comparable, convenient, and accessible housing shall be available for disabled students at the same cost as the other students.”*

*“A qualified (disabled) person may not be denied admission or recruitment on the basis of a disability.”*

**Disabilities Awareness Committee**

The Disabilities Awareness Committee at Gwynedd-Mercy College was formulated to address the educational, social and physical needs of students, faculty and staff with disabilities. This Committee of both students and staff convenes 2-3 times each year to identify barriers to accessibility that prohibit persons with disabilities from experiencing equal access to opportunities here at Gwynedd-Mercy College. In addition, the committee makes recommendations regarding improvements that can be made to the campus environment.

## General Considerations for Students with Disabilities

- Each student is unique. Attending to the student and the student's needs, rather than to the disability itself, will facilitate communication and learning.
- Do not assume a person with a disability needs your help; ask before doing.
- If you offer assistance and the person declines, do not insist. If the person accepts, ask how you can best help and follow directions.
- If a person with a disability is accompanied by another individual, make eye contact with and address the person with the disability directly, not the companion.
- Avoid actions and words that suggest the person should be treated differently. It is appropriate to ask a person in a wheelchair to go for a walk.
- When referring to an individual who has a disability, mention the person before the disability. Say, "person with a disability," not "disabled person" or "handicapped person."
- Avoid referring to people by the disabilities they have.
- People are not "bound" or "confined" to a wheelchair. It is more accurate to say "wheelchair user" or "person who uses a wheelchair."
- The student is usually the best source of information about the accommodations needed to assist him or her to succeed in your program or class.
- Respect each person's need for privacy. Take your lead from them. Students with disabilities are more or less comfortable with their disability along a continuum from denial of the disability to open acceptance and advocacy.

## Working With Students with Learning Disabilities

Students with learning disabilities are usually of normal to high intelligence but have information processing difficulties that sometimes require alternative modes of information delivery. They often acquire, integrate and/or express information in ways that differ from the norm. Learning disabilities are typically conceptualized as: a Disorder of Written Expression, a Disorder of Reading, or a Disorder of Mathematics.

There are many ways that instructors and staff can enhance a student with a learning disability's learning experience:

- Provide advance information about course requirements, including advance copies of syllabi, copies of lecture notes, and early selection of text so that students can have additional time to read or tape texts.
- Be sure handouts are clear and easy to read.
- Consider alternative formats for competence including extended time for completion of assignments, shortened assignments, taped responses or use of word processor for assignments.
- Allow alternative testing formats such as extended time on tests, oral proctors, a distraction free environment, oral responses, taped answers, or the use of word processors or calculators.
- Consciously integrate multiple modes of information delivery such as outlines, transparencies, films, charts and diagrams.
- Allow the use of spellcheckers, dictionaries and other academic aids.
- Give the student frequent feedback on their performance so they can modify their activities in enough time to help their grades.

- Be aware that some students with visual processing issues may need to sit in a particular location to avoid glare from lighting.
- Use Blackboard as often as possible.

## **Working with Students with Physical Disabilities and Health Disorders**

Many health issues can affect the way a student functions in the academic setting. Health disorders such as asthma, multiple sclerosis, allergies, diabetes, Lupus, arthritis, immuno-deficiency disorders and seizures are just a few health related issues that may arise in the students who you teach and work with. Because these health concerns may impact attendance in class, it is important to discuss the attendance policy set forth in your course at the onset of each semester. Students with physical disabilities may require a number of physical aids in the classroom that would assist them with seeing, hearing, or accessing information from your course.

Some modifications to consider:

- Allow tape-recorded lectures when students cannot attend class.
- Consider extended time for completion of assignments.
- Allow alternative testing formats such as frequent breaks, oral answers or extended time.
- Locate wheelchair accessible locations for conferences or meetings, and make appropriate accommodations for field trips.
- Be alert to the student's possible need for an aide or willing work partner.
- Identify yourself to visually impaired students when you approach them.
- Choose class texts that are printed clearly and also be aware that taped texts take weeks and sometimes months to be transferred.
- Provide early copies of syllabi so that students can arrange for taped texts.
- Use multi-modal approach to delivering your information-use textual, verbal and visual aides as much as possible.

## Working with Students with Emotional Disorders

In recent years, more and more students on the college level have identified as a student with an emotional or psychological disorder. Psychological problems can have a definite impact on the educational performance of a college student. Common disorders that can be conceptualized into this category are: anxiety disorders, depression, personality disorders, posttraumatic stress disorder, and eating disorders. Also included in this category is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Students with emotional disorders may exhibit irregular attendance, disruptive behavior, excessive tension, or irrational thoughts or behaviors. In addition, some disorders may impact processing speed, concentration, attention to detail and this may manifest itself as restlessness, frustration, problems with authority and poor academic self-esteem.

As an instructor or staff member, you can assist a student with an emotional disorder in the following ways:

- Treat emotional disorders like you would any other health issue, including allowing the student to tape record a lecture, have extended time to complete an assignment, provide alternative testing or assignments.
- Let the student know that you think they are capable and competent to complete the work given him/her.
- Be honest with the student so that he/she can modify his/her behavior in enough time to help his/her grades
- Avoid relationships that become therapeutic. Many students are working with a therapist and such relationships may interfere with that special relationship with a trained professional in that area.

## A Checklist for Faculty

- ✓ Have I familiarized myself with the Disability Support Services process at GMC so that I can best direct students who come to me with questions?
- ✓ Have I familiarized myself with the supportive technology on campus available to assist students with special needs
- ✓ Have I familiarized myself with the characteristics of the disabilities of my students and the types of accommodations they may need?
- ✓ Have I taken possible student disabilities into account when planning new courses and activities?
- ✓ Have I told students in my courses that I would speak privately with them regarding their needs as a student with a disability?
- ✓ Do I make a special effort to see that my directions, and assignments are clearly organized and easy to read?
- ✓ Have I planned a variety of presentation modes and assignments (textual, verbal, visual) as to accommodate the visual, audio, kinesthetic and tactile learners?
- ✓ Do students with disabilities have equal opportunity to practice the skills taught in my course?
- ✓ Have I built into my assignments a variety of learning modes that students may use to fulfill requirements?
- ✓ Have I provided students with disabilities equal opportunities to demonstrate what they have learned in my course?
- ✓ Do I provide my students with disabilities individual feedback about their progress in my course so that can modify their behaviors and seek help early on?
- ✓ Have I contacted Disability Support Services for assistance when students present with unique challenges?
- ✓ Have I included a statement on my syllabi each semester reminding students with disabilities to identify their needs as early as possible?

## **A Checklist for Staff**

- ✓ Have I familiarized myself with the characteristics of the disabilities of students who use my services?
- ✓ Do students with disabilities have access to the services that I provide?
- ✓ Is my office accessible, and if not, have I identified an alternative location to meet with students?
- ✓ Do my procedures for obtaining students services take into account the various types of disabilities?
- ✓ Do my deadlines allow enough time for students with disabilities to comply?
- ✓ Do students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate as other students in activities sponsored by my office or department?
- ✓ Do I make sure students with disabilities are notified and feel welcome at events and activities of my office or department?
- ✓ Do I consider the needs of students and participants with disabilities when I am planning an activity or event?
- ✓ Do I encourage students with disabilities to take an active role in or lead activities?
- ✓ Have I informed Disability Support Services of opportunities for students with Disabilities?
- ✓ Have I contacted Disability Support Services for assistance with special needs and/or concerns?

## **Services Provided by Disability Support Services**

Disability Support Services is devoted to providing academic support, accommodations, advocacy, and referrals for students with disabilities. Please contact our office if you have any questions or need assistance with a student. Among the services this office provides are to:

- Educate college departments and divisions about disabilities and accommodations available at the college.
- Acquire documentation of a disability and assess the reasonableness of the accommodation requested.
- Request additional testing/documentation if the information provided is inadequate or outdated.
- Identify appropriate and reasonable accommodations and negotiate with students in arranging specific supports.
- Provide letters to professors to indicate the appropriate accommodations for a student who has identified as having a disability. Letters can be supplied to professors once documentation is complete and the Disability Support Services Coordinator has identified reasonable accommodations.
- Assist instructors with information regarding the implementation of specific accommodations.
- Make referrals to on and off campus services or agencies.
- Educate students as to the specifics of their disability
- Teach students with disabilities advocacy skills to assist them in becoming independent learners.
- Support students with disabilities to reach their educational goals.
- Support instructors, advisors, and staff in developing programs that are inclusive of students with disabilities.

## Documentation Requirements for Students

All testing and evaluations should be reflective of the current experience of the student and may be reviewed for such appropriateness.

### *Please note the following:*

- IEP's (Individual Educational Plans) will not be accepted as the primary source of documentation but may be submitted as an additional resource for the disability services support personnel.
- Students with mobility and sensory impairments are required to provide documentation depending on the disability and the accommodations requested.

All documentation is to be filed with the Disability Support Services Coordinator in Counseling Services (2nd floor, The Griffin Complex) prior to or at the time of the request for accommodations.

### *Learning Disabilities*

- A psycho-educational evaluation by a licensed psychologist or Comprehensive Evaluation Report by a school district including results of psycho-educational testing. This includes any scores from cognitive and achievement tests that support any needed accommodations for college students with learning disabilities.
- An original letter from the evaluating psychologist including:
  - A clearly stated diagnosis of a learning disability that describes the student's strengths and weaknesses
  - Recommendations for accommodations appropriate for **college students** with learning disabilities

## *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)*

- An evaluation by a psychiatrist, neurologist, licensed psychologist, or a Comprehensive Evaluation Report by a school district including results of psycho-educational testing.
- An original letter from the evaluating professional including:
  - A clearly stated diagnosis of ADHD and last date of contact with the student
  - A description of the symptoms which meet the criteria for the diagnosis, instruments/procedures used to make the diagnosis, and current medications, dosages, and frequencies
  - Recommendations for accommodations appropriate for **college students** with ADHD

### *Physical, Neurological, or Psychological Disabilities*

- An evaluation by a medical doctor or licensed psychologist and a Comprehensive Evaluation Report by a school district including results of any psychological or educational testing.
- An original letter from the evaluating professional including:
  - A clear diagnosis and description of the nature of the disability
  - A description of the symptoms which meet the criteria for the diagnosis, impact on the students education, instruments/procedures used to make the diagnosis, and current medications, dosages, and frequencies
  - Recommendations for accommodations appropriate for **college students**.

## On-line Resources

[http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Dean\\_of\\_the\\_College/uid/](http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Dean_of_the_College/uid/) - The Ivy Access Initiative, Brown University. An excellent website regarding “Universal Instructional Design.”, Brown University

<http://www.washington.edu/doit/> - “Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology,” provided by the University of Washington.

<http://www.chadd.org/> - Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorders

<http://codi.buffalo.edu/colleges.html> - “Cornucopia Of Disability Information College Services and Resources,” provided by the University of Buffalo’s School of Public Health and Health Professions.

<http://telr.osu.edu/fame/index.cfm> - The FAME Project is a training grant awarded to The Ohio State University from the Office of Post-Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education (P333A020033-03).

<http://www.exceptionalnurse.com/> - The most informative disability website for nursing students, nurses, and nursing educators. Exceptional Nurse, Inc. a Non-profit Florida Corporation.