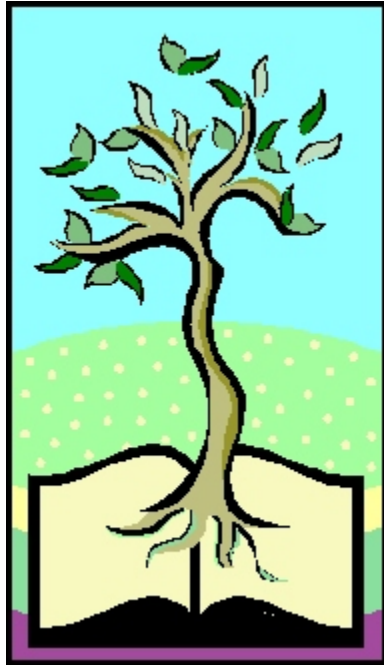


DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES



A MANUAL FOR STUDENTS



Gwynedd-Mercy College

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**Gwynedd-Mercy College
Mission Statement**

Gwynedd-Mercy College is a Catholic college founded and sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy.

Its mission is to create a learning community rooted in Gospel values and rich in the liberal arts.

In an atmosphere of inquiry and dialogue, the College seeks to combine education for professional competency with the Mercy tradition of service to society.

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 reasonable accommodations to allow all student's accepted into a program of study, equal opportunity to effectively reach their academic and personal goals. As a Gwynedd-Mercy College student, it is important for you to be aware of the process so that you can appropriately proceed with the process for obtaining accommodations.

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

- 1) Contact the Coordinator of Disability Support Services:
2nd Floor, The Griffin Complex
215-646-7300 ext. 427

Information can also be obtained at:

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)
- 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 accommodation.

The College will collaborate with students to find reasonable accommodations to meet the specific needs of the student, which may, at times, include referrals to outside sources.

*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.”

The Role and Responsibilities of Students with Disabilities

Qualified students with disabilities have the right to an equal opportunity to participate in programs offered at Gwynedd-Mercy College. Students who exercise these rights also undertake the responsibility to initiate and participate in the accommodation process. Recognizing this, students:

1. Are entitled to an equal opportunity to learn. Students have a right to reasonable alterations in those aspects of the program to accommodate their disability, except those that fundamentally alter the program.
2. Are entitled to an equal opportunity to participate in all aspects of the academic community at a comparable level that is provided to any student.
3. Have a right to be evaluated based on their ability, not their disability.
4. Have a responsibility to identify themselves as needing accommodations in a timely fashion. Please be aware that the amount of time for administrative processing may vary depending on the type of accommodation. Once established, to assure the use of the accommodation, students must give faculty reasonable notification of such eligibility, defined as a minimum of one week prior to the intended use of the accommodation. The student must provide documentation from an appropriate professional.
5. Have a responsibility to document how their disability affects a particular delivery system, instructional method or evaluation criteria when requesting accommodations.
6. Have a responsibility to actively participate in the search for accommodations and auxiliary aids.

7. Have the same obligation as any student to meet and maintain the institution's academic standards.

The Role and Responsibility of the College

Gwynedd-Mercy College has a responsibility to identify and maintain the academic and technical standards that are fundamental in providing quality academic programs while ensuring access to students with disabilities. In meeting these obligations, the College:

1. Has the responsibility to inform its applicants and students about the availability and range of accommodations.
2. Has the responsibility to ensure that all of its programs (not necessarily all physical facilities) are accessible.
3. Has the responsibility to make reasonable adjustments in the delivery, instructional method and evaluation system for a course to accommodate the specific manifestation of the disability.
4. Has the right to identify and establish the abilities, skills, and knowledge necessary for successful entrance into its programs and to evaluate applicants on that basis.
5. Has the right to identify and establish the abilities, skills, and knowledge that are fundamental to academic programs/courses and to evaluate each student's performance on that basis.
6. Has the right to request and review documentation in support of accommodation requests. Based on this review by appropriately designated individuals, the College has the right to refuse an unsupported or unreasonable request.
7. Has the right to refuse an accommodation based on undue hardship as determined by designated College officials (e.g. a major structural renovation), or based on unreasonable notice, defined as less than one week prior to the intended use.

The College has also initiated a **Disabilities Awareness Committee** that meets two to three times each year. The Committee works to identify ways to improve accessibility for students with disabilities.

The Role of Disability Support Services

Disability Support Services is devoted to providing academic support, accommodations, advocacy, and referrals for students with disabilities. Disability Support Services is housed within Counseling Services and the Coordinator of Disability Support Services is also a Counselor. Disability Support Services intends 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.
- Assist instructors with information regarding the implementation of specific accommodations.
- Make referrals to on and off campus services or agencies.
- 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.
- Serve as a member on the college's Disability Awareness Committee.

Eligibility and Accommodation Practices and Policies

For students determined to be eligible for special services, Gwynedd-Mercy provides accommodations to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to participate in all Gwynedd-Mercy programs, services and activities. The purpose of an accommodation is not to ensure success, but to provide access and equal opportunity.

1. *Determination of Eligibility and Accommodations will be based on the following:*
 - the documentation provided by the student
 - the completion of the Disability Support Services Packet
 - consultation with the appropriate division or department
 - the academic program and requirements in question
 - the policies and procedures of a the division or department
2. *Accommodations will not be provided retroactively.* Students who apply and are approved to receive accommodations through Disability Support Services are eligible to receive those accommodations from the time that they are approved. To assure the use of accommodations, students must give faculty reasonable notification of such eligibility, defined as a minimum of one week prior to the time of intended use of the accommodation. Course work completed before a student discloses a documented disability will not be reexamined even if the student can establish that they had a disability at the time of the course in question.
3. *All accommodation requests will not be granted.* Gwynedd-Mercy will only provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations based upon the review of the factors described in #1. This means that students may not necessarily be provided with all the accommodations recommended in their documentation. Some reasons why an accommodation may be denied include:

- providing the accommodation would fundamentally alter the program, course or activity.
 - the accommodation being requested is not supported by the documentation
 - providing the accommodation would pose a direct threat to the student or others
 - providing the accommodation would constitute an undue administrative or financial burden pursuant to criteria established under the ADA and/or Section 504.
4. *Students must supply the eligibility requirements.* It is the responsibility of the student requesting the accommodations and services to document the disability. As such, the cost of the evaluations required pursuant to this Manual is to be borne by the student.
5. *Information regarding your disability will only be shared with those individuals involved in the assessment and implementation of your accommodations.* The Coordinator of Disability Support Services will only share your actual documentation with those professional staff who assist in evaluating whether it is sufficient to support your accommodation requests. Information about your disability (but not the actual documentation) will be shared only with those faculty and staff who are involved in providing the accommodations to which you are entitled, and only to the extent necessary to facilitate the accommodation.

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 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 the Counseling Center (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:

- o A clearly stated diagnosis of a learning disability that describes the student's strengths and weaknesses
- o Recommendations for accommodations appropriate for college students with learning disabilities

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD)

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 AD/HD 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 AD/HD

Physical, Neurologic, 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**

Establishing Accommodations in the Classroom and/or in the Residence Halls

Students are required to first meet with the Coordinator of Disability Support Services (DSS) to begin the application process in order to be approved to receive accommodations in the classroom and/or in the residence halls. Once this process has been completed, it is your responsibility to promptly meet with the faculty members who teach your course or the staff member who will be overseeing the implementation of the accommodation with the letter of accommodation prepared by the DSS Coordinator. Students should not approach faculty with requests prior to completing the application process with the DSS Coordinator.

When meeting with a faculty or staff member, you should:

- Be informed about your disability. When you are able to describe your disability and the ways that your disability impacts your functioning (academic, daily living), you are better prepared to make your needs known.
- Be on time for a scheduled appointment
- Provide the instructor with the Accommodation Letter from Disability Support Services
- Discuss specific details about how the accommodations will be handled. For example, if extended time on an examination or a distraction free environment is an appropriate accommodation, be sure to discuss when you take the exam, where you will take the exam and who will proctor the exam.
- Be flexible- there is often more than one right way to provide an accommodation. If you cannot immediately identify a solution, participate in problem solving with the faculty or staff member with an open mind.

- If a faculty or staff member is unwilling to provide an accommodation which is specified in the Accommodation Letter, you should not argue with the faculty or staff member, but should contact the Coordinator of Disability Support Services so that proper measures can be taken.
- Be patient- Note that the faculty and staff member you are dealing with may not have experience with working with disabilities or your particular disability.
- Be calm and courteous-Treat faculty and staff with the respect you would want them to show you. If you are unable to make arrangements for an accommodation, the next step is to contact the Coordinator of Disability Support Services.
- Request only those accommodations that are listed in the Accommodation Letter.

Campus Resources

For more information regarding services for students with disabilities, please contact Disability Support Services in the Counseling Center at Gwynedd-Mercy College or one of the resources listed below:

Academic Resource Center

2nd floor of the library

Off campus- 215-646-7300, ext. 449 On campus- ext. 449

Campus Ministry

Visitation House

Off campus- 215-641-5590 On campus- ext. 590

Counseling Services

2nd floor of the Griffin Complex

Off campus- 215-641-5571 or 215-646-7300, ext. 427

On campus- ext. 571 and ext. 427

Food Services

Waldron Center

Off campus- 215-646-7300, ext. 243 On campus- ext. 243

Health Services

Loyola Hall

Off campus- 215-646-7300, ext. 486 On campus- ext. 486

Public Safety & Security

Saint Brigid's Hall

Off campus- 215-641-5522

On campus- ext. 522 or ext. 111 for emergency

Residence Life

Loyola Hall

Off campus- 215-646-7300, ext. 298 On campus- ext. 298

On-line Resources

www.ahead.org - The national organization for students in higher education with disabilities

www.LDonline.org - A website with information for students with learning disabilities

www.ldresources.com - A website with information for students with learning disabilities

www.rfbd.org - Readings for the Blind and Dyslexic

www.dli.state.pa.us/landi/cwp/view.asp?a=128&Q=168255&dsftn s=1375 - Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

<http://www.ed.gov/ocr/transition.html> - **Transitioning to Secondary Education: The U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights** has issued a new pamphlet "Students with Disabilities: Preparing for Postsecondary Education: Know Your Rights and Responsibilities."

http://www.addresources.org/article_50_tips_adult.php - A website with information for students with ADHD

http://www.umt.edu/dss/new_students/toto/default.htm - Disability Services for Students (DSS) at the University of Montana, Missoula created this handbook, "Toto, I Have a Feeling We're Not in High School Anymore," to help students, faculty, and counselors understand some of the "legal and philosophical changes that occur" in the transition from high school to college.