

## Learning Disorders

1. All reports should be current (no more than five years old), on letterhead, typed, dated, signed and otherwise legible. A current report is necessary because a student's needs may vary over time and from setting to setting. Even reports two or three years old should have **recommendations appropriate for post-secondary settings**. If at all possible, the evaluator should review the report and update the recommendations. Therefore, IEPs (Individual Educational Plans) or 504 Plans, although providing information about a student's educational experience, are not sufficient documentation to establish the student's eligibility for accommodations.
2. The documentation should be substantive and comprehensive to be acceptable. Such psychoeducational documentation will include:
  - a. a summary of a comprehensive interview that should include such information as presenting problem(s); developmental, psychosocial, medical and family history; academic history, including the results of previous testing; past performance in areas of difficulty; and history and effectiveness of accommodations used in past educational settings
  - b. a comprehensive assessment of aptitude (including a complete intellectual assessment) with all subtests, standard scores and percentiles reported
  - c. a comprehensive academic achievement battery that covers the relevant domains such as reading comprehension, decoding, written expression and the like with all subtests, standard scores and percentiles reported
  - d. an assessment of specific areas of information processing with all subtests, standard scores and percentiles reported
  - e. evidence that the evaluator has ruled out alternative explanations for academic problems such as a poor or inadequate educational background or foundation, poor motivation, poor study skills, emotional problems, medical problems, or other possible alternatives that might mimic a learning disability when one is not actually present
  - f. a detailed description of how this impairment significantly limits a major life activity in an academic setting.
3. The current psychoeducational evaluation should be provided by a licensed psychologist or appropriately credentialed mental health professional with appropriate training and supervised experience in psychoeducational assessment.
4. In order to make an informed decision about the student's learning disorder and need for accommodation, the report should provide the following:
  - a. the nature of the learning disorder and the specific diagnosis as delineated in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-IV (DSM-IV) or current edition. There must be a clear statement of whether or not a learning disorder exists, including a rule-out of alternative explanations for the stated learning problems.
  - b. recommendations should be appropriate for a post secondary setting and the report should state a clear rationale for each accommodation requested based on the test findings. Reports written for the secondary setting apply standards and guidelines that vary widely among states, counties and even school districts. Such reports often contain recommendations that are unworkable, unsuitable or otherwise inappropriate for a post-secondary setting.

**NOTE:** High school IEP, 504 plan, and/or letter from a physician or other professional will not be sufficient to document a learning disability. While such documentation can be helpful in establishing the student's learning history, a recent psychological evaluation is still necessary to confirm current needs.

## **List of Testing Instruments**

The following is considered a basic list of tests that should/could be employed to diagnose a learning disorder. Special situations might require other tests to be employed. When previous testing is reviewed, comparable tests will be accepted.

- a. Intelligence
  - i. Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-III
  - ii. Woodcock Johnson Psychoeducational Battery-III: tests of Cognitive Abilities
- b. Reading: Decoding and Comprehension
  - i. Appropriate subtests Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery-III
  - ii. Nelson-Denny Reading Test
- c. Math: Calculation and Applied Problems
  - i. Appropriate subtests Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery-III
  - ii. Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude
- d. Written Expression
  - i. Spontaneous writing sample (expository essay)
  - ii. Appropriate subtests Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery-III
  - iii. Wide Range Achievement Test (spelling only)
- e. Oral Expression
  - i. Peabody Picture Vocabulary Tests
  - ii. Event description (scored holistically)
- f. Information Processing: Memory
  - i. California Verbal Learning Test
  - ii. Memory subtests of WJ-III
  - iii. Wechsler Memory Scales
- g. Information Processing: Visual
  - i. Appropriate WJ-III subtests
  - ii. Bender Gestalt
  - iii. Test of Visual Perception Skills
- h. Information Processing: Auditory
  - i. Appropriate WJ-III subtests
  - ii. Goldman-Fristoe-Woodcock Test of Auditory Discrimination