



## Documentation Guidelines Psychological Disorders

Vernon College follows the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 in developing accommodations with students. Academic accommodations by the Office for students with disabilities are there to ensure equal access to educational activities and programs at Vernon College. All documentation is reviewed on a case-by-case basis and is kept confidential. Providing documentation does not automatically qualify an individual for academic accommodations.

Third party documentation will be considered as part of an interactive and individualized process that allows the Office for Students with Disabilities to determine eligibility and understand how a student's disability substantially limits one or more major life activity. Reasonable accommodations are recommended based on an understanding of the student's needs, functional limitations, and proposed academic adjustments.

The terms mental health disorders or psychiatric disabilities comprise conditions generally characterized by emotional, cognitive, or behavioral disorders. Among the common chronic conditions in this category are major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and schizophrenia.

The purpose of this documentation is to understand current functional limitations, which support the request for disability accommodations in an academic setting. In providing documentation for individuals with these types of disorders, the following guidelines should be considered:

- The document must be on official letterhead, dated, and signed by a qualified professional, who has the training, experience, and licensure relevant to the particular disability. The evaluator must be impartial and not related to the person being evaluated.
- The documentation must describe the current functional limitations caused by the disability and how they relate to the accommodations being requested; and must be dated within the last twelve (12) months. If the evaluation is more than twelve (12) months old, a letter signed by a qualified professional stating current level of functioning will be required.
- Recommendations for academic accommodations based on the impact of the disability.

At a minimum, all documentation in support of a psychological disorder should include the following information:

1. **DSM-5 or ICD Diagnosis (text and code)**, given based on a formal assessment of current psychological and health status, and a formal diagnosis of a disabling condition provided by a licensed treatment provider (psychiatrist, licensed clinical psychologist, licensed social worker, etc.). Licensed treatment provider should not be related to the individual being assessed. In order to establish a history of the condition and recency of evaluation the following should be included:
  - a. Date of diagnosis.
  - b. Date of last contact. The assessment must be current. Accommodations are based on an assessment of the current nature and impact of your disability. Because psychological conditions



may change over time, current evaluations are critical for providing reasonable accommodations. In general, this means that evaluations must have been completed within the last twelve (12) months prior to accommodation requests. In addition, depending on the nature of the disability, evaluations may need to be updated on a semester or yearly basis.

## **2. Comprehensive Evaluation:**

- a. A diagnostic interview and other tools used to determine relevant background in support of that diagnosis.
  - b. The evaluation should include treatments (medication, therapy, etc.) currently in use and provide a description of the expected progression of the disability over time (permanent/chronic vs. short-term/temporary). Information on medication side effects is useful and may be considered in accommodation decisions.
  - c. Onset, history, and prognosis of diagnosis and symptoms.
3. **Functional Limitations:** Should be determined without considerations of mitigating measures, like medication for example. If condition is episodic in nature, level of functioning should be assessed based on active phase of symptoms.
- a. Major life activities that are functionally limited by the individual's symptoms.
  - b. Behavioral manifestations of the diagnosis that functionally limits the individual in the academic setting. Information to consider includes the severity, pervasiveness, and frequency of symptoms.
  - c. Any special considerations that should be made (side effects of medication, etc.)
4. **Accommodations:** A description of accommodations and services used in the past and recommended accommodations for the future. It is important to note that the Office for Students with Disabilities makes the determination regarding what accommodations are appropriate in the college environment.

**The diagnostic report must include the name, title, and license number of the evaluator.** A provider form is available to assist in the documentation process.