

## Students with Disabilities

Case Western Reserve University is committed to providing all students (see below) with opportunities to take full advantage of the university's educational programs. We recognize that students with documented disabilities may need assistance or accommodations in order to achieve this objective.

This document outlines the policies and procedures used in determining a student's eligibility for disability services. These procedures are applicable to all undergraduate students and all graduate students registered through the School of Graduate Studies, MSASS, the FPB School of Nursing, and the School of Medicine. Students in graduate programs at the Weatherhead School of Management, the School of Dental Medicine and the School of Law should consult with their student services' personnel for policy information.

### Definitions

Students are defined as those who are matriculating into or enrolled in courses of study on the Case Western Reserve University campus. This includes students who are not seeking a Case Western Reserve University degree, such as those taking courses for continuing education or enrolled in an adult education program sponsored by a campus office.

A *disability* is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, or having a record of such an impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment. A physical or mental impairment is defined as any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological; musculoskeletal; respiratory; special sense organs; cardiovascular; reproductive; digestive; genitourinary, hemic and lymphatic; skin; and endocrine, or any mental or psychological disorder such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities.

*Major life activities* include functions such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working.

A *specific learning disability* is a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written. A specific learning disorder may manifest itself in imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. Such disorders include conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. Learning disabled does not include persons who have learning problems, which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; of mental retardation; of emotional disturbance; or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

A *temporary disability* is an acute illness or injury that impacts the student's ability to access the physical campus and/or the academic curriculum.

### Initiating the Process

Students are never obligated to self-disclose their disability to Disability Resources, other staff members or faculty. However, students with disabilities who wish to obtain accommodations, auxiliary aids and/or services, must self-disclose their disability and direct their request(s) for accommodation(s) to the office of Disability Resources in [Educational Services for Students](#) (ESS). ESS is located in 470 Sears Building. The office phone number is (216) 368-5230.

In order to proceed with a determination of eligibility for services and the provision of applicable and reasonable accommodations, students must disclose their disability using the disclosure form available through the [Disability Resources webpage](#). Newly admitted undergraduate students may also access the disclosure form through the orientation checklist. Under separate cover, students must submit documentation of their disability to the office of Disability Resources. (See below for information regarding necessary documentation.)

### Temporary Disabilities

Students should be aware that the university is not obligated to provide accommodations for students with temporary disabilities, but will attempt to do so when feasible.

AAs a courtesy, Disability Resources will attempt to provide services to students who experience acute illness or injury that will allow them to access the physical campus as well as the academic curriculum. For instance, if a student breaks the wrist of his/her dominant hand, Disability Resources may be able to provide a scribe for a test for the student. However, as is the case for permanently disabled students, the student would be responsible for all out-of-class work. Disability Resources may be able to provide access to assistive technology during regularly scheduled computer lab hours.

If the injury or illness necessitates handicapped parking accessibility, and/or campus transportation services, the student should contact Disability Resources in ESS for assistance. Undergraduate Studies and Disability Resources will coordinate efforts to assist student needing any other services as a result of their temporary injury or illness. Graduate students should work with their respective departments and Disability Resources in ESS to obtain assistance in the event of a temporary illness or injury.

### Documentation

In order to seek appropriate accommodations for a disability, students are required to provide written documentation of their disability. Documentation must be from a qualified professional who has knowledge of the disability and of the specific student. The professional must be trained and qualified to render a diagnosis and to recommend accommodations for that particular disability. Since students with disabilities are a heterogeneous group, no single professional group is qualified to offer documentation for all disabilities. In fact, documentation concerning a student's needs may come from multiple sources. One individual may make the diagnosis, but a different professional may determine the practical limitations of that diagnosis. For example, a physician may diagnose a student with rheumatoid arthritis, but an occupational therapist may determine the physical limitations the student encounters in daily living.

Complete documentation should include a diagnosis of the disability and a prognosis indicating the current status of the disorder as well as the expectation for the stability of the condition. Information should also include an explanation of the nature of the physical or mental impairment and its impact on any major life function. Any psychological or physical test data relevant to the diagnosis should be included. Finally, any history and/or recommendations for accommodations should be part of the documentation. Students are responsible for obtaining and providing Disability Resources with the documentation from a qualified professional. In addition, students may be asked to sign a release of information form, authorizing the qualified professional to disclose information to a professional staff member from Disability Resources.

### Determining Eligibility and Accommodations

Upon receipt of the documentation, the professional staff of Disability Resources will review it to determine the following: 1) that the source of the documentation is appropriate, 2)

that the documentation is complete, 3) that the information in the documentation is current, 4) that the student is a qualified person with a disability, and 5) that the documentation supports the requested accommodations. A professional member of Disability Resources will ordinarily have an initial meeting with the student to obtain complete information on the disability and the requested accommodations. If the documentation is incomplete or insufficient to make a determination, the staff member will either contact the student's health care provider for additional information or request that the student obtain and submit additional documentation. The office of Disability Resources may consult with appropriate university and community professionals when considering eligibility and reasonable accommodations. The professional staff of Disability Resources will then determine the student's eligibility and interact with the student as outlined in the following section to determine any necessary and reasonable accommodations.

In order to determine reasonable accommodations, the staff will give consideration to the student's preferred method. However, another suitable method of accommodation may be provided. If a requested accommodation is unreasonable, is an undue burden on the university, poses a direct threat to the student or others, or would result in a fundamental alteration of any university program, Disability Resources will determine a reasonable alternative accommodation(s), if any exists, to accommodate the student.

### **Arranging Accommodations**

Students who are eligible for disability services and who need to make arrangements for accommodations must *make an appointment with the office of Disability Resources to develop a plan at the beginning of each semester*. Academic accommodations are determined via an interactive process based on the student's requested accommodations, the review by the professional staff of Disability Resources, the documentation from the qualified professional, and the course schedule of the student for the particular semester.

***Accommodations are not made retroactively.***

In most instances, a memo from the student and a professional staff member from Disability Resources will be provided to the professor or teaching assistant for courses in which accommodations are needed. The memo sets out the classroom accommodations to be made for the student for that semester. No diagnosis is mentioned in the memo to the professor or teaching assistant. The student is responsible for giving the professor or the teaching assistant the memo and using it to initiate a dialogue about implementing the reasonable accommodations. As a result of this dialogue, the student and the professor or teaching assistant will determine reasonable methods for making the accommodation(s). Students are expected to self-advocate during this process; however, the professional staff of Disability Resources is available to assist both the student and the professor or teaching assistant in determining which accommodation method will be used.

Students needing non-academic accommodations such as housing modifications, special room assignments or housing releases, handicapped parking, responsive transportation, or other programmatic or physical access should follow the same guidelines for documentation as described above. Once a determination of reasonable accommodations is made, a staff member from Disability Resources will complete the appropriate paperwork and make the necessary contacts with the other University departments. ***Students are responsible for following all required procedures for obtaining services or products from other university departments.***

### **Appeal Process**

Students who are denied eligibility or who are dissatisfied with an accommodation method may request that the associate director of Disability Resources reconsider the decision.

If students are still dissatisfied after the associate director reconsiders the issue, an appeal may be made to the Assistant Vice President of the University Office for [Equal Opportunity and Diversity](#), who is the university's designated Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance Officer. The University Office for Equal Opportunity and Diversity is located in 312 Adelbert Hall.

The appeal request should be made within five (5) business days of receipt of notification of denial of eligibility or a decision on an accommodation method. The appeal must be submitted in writing to the Assistant Vice President for review and should state the grounds for the appeal.

The review by the assistant vice president will include meeting with the student, a meeting with the associate director of Disability Resources and other members of the Disability Resources staff as appropriate, and a review of the file and supporting documentation. The assistant vice president may also meet with faculty members and other persons with information about the issue. Based on this review, the assistant vice president will make a determination in writing, to grant or deny the appeal and/or to refer the matter back to the associate director for further consideration consistent with the assistant vice president's decision. The assistant vice president's decision will be forwarded to the student and the associate director of Disability Resources. The decision of the assistant vice president is final.

During a pending appeal, the student will be provided with the initial accommodations, if any, determined by the associate director.

### **Grievance Procedures for Disability Discrimination Complaints**

Case Western Reserve University has adopted an internal grievance procedure for handling complaints of discrimination on the basis of disability. Students who feel they have been discriminated against on the basis of disability may contact the assistant vice president of Equal Opportunity and Diversity. The assistant vice president of Equal Opportunity and Diversity, or designee, will investigate student complaints of disability discrimination. In resolving such complaints, the university will use the [Informal Grievance Process](#) as outlined in the Handbook for Undergraduate Students.

### **Confidentiality and Protection of Privacy**

All documentation provided to Disability Resources in Educational Services for Students to determine eligibility for disability services and appropriate accommodations is kept confidential. This information is not part of the student's academic file. It will only be shared with other administrators, departments, staff, and faculty who have a legitimate educational interest in the information and require information on academic restrictions, necessary accommodations or safety requirements. In other instances, students will be asked to sign a release of information form when they want information to be shared with other university departments, staff, or faculty. If a student presents documentation to university departments other than ESS, that documentation may be forwarded to Disability Resources in ESS.

Disability Resources in ESS is the department at Case Western Reserve University responsible for determining eligibility for disability services. It is not necessary for the student to disclose the diagnosis of the disability to any other Case Western Reserve University department, staff, or faculty in order to be accommodated.

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