



ATHENS STATE UNIVERSITY

DISABILITY SERVICES OFFICE

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Disability Services Office
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I. Mission Statement:

Athens State University is committed through individual attention, quality teaching, and a varied course delivery system to providing educational opportunities for all academically qualified students and assisting them in the timely achievement of their professional and career goals. Athens State University provides affordable education in an environment that recognizes diversity and nurtures the discovery and application of knowledge.

Disability Services at Athens State University provides program accessibility and reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities as defined under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008.

II. Policy Statement:

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, Disability Services at Athens State University coordinates the provision of reasonable accommodations, on a case-by-case basis, for students with disabilities.

The Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in all programs or activities that receive Federal financial assistance, including state universities.

Section 504 states:

“No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States, as defined in section 7(20), shall solely by reason of his or her disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by public entities. These laws are designed to remove barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from accessing the same educational and employment opportunities as persons without disabilities.

An “individual with a disability” is someone with 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*. Disabilities covered by legislation include hearing impairments, learning disabilities, psychiatric disorders, speech impairments, mobility impairments, and visual impairments.

Disability Services, located in Room 230 of the Sandridge Student Center on the Athens State University main campus, serves as the point of contact for students that self-disclose their disability. The goal of Disability Services is to provide, in a confidential manner, individualized reasonable accommodations in partnership with students, faculty, and staff, is to attain a physically and educationally accessible college environment that ensures an individual is viewed on the basis of ability, not disability.

III. Goal:

The Disability Services Office's goal is to ensure equality of access and opportunity for students with disabilities by providing reasonable and appropriate accommodations and services that will assist the student in meeting the requirements of their academic programs.

IV. Procedures:

The process of obtaining reasonable accommodations is an interactive process. It is the responsibility of the student to initiate the process by self-disclosing as an individual with a disability to the Disability Services Office and requesting reasonable academic accommodations. By law, a student or prospective student is not required to identify themselves as having a disability, unless requesting academic accommodations from the University. Academic accommodations will be provided only to students registered with the Athens State University Disability Services Office.

A. Requesting and Receiving Academic Accommodations:

1. To register with the Disability Services Office, the student schedules a face-to-face intake interview appointment, (256)233-8285, prior to the start of the first semester at Athens State University to determine the nature of the disability, needed accommodations, and to complete needed paperwork.
2. Students with disabilities are required to provide appropriate current written documentation from a certified or licensed health professional such as a physician, psychologist, or vocational rehabilitation counselor to the Disability Services Office to substantiate each disability and to assist in determining the most beneficial academic accommodations. Recommendations for accommodations must be specific and the rationale for each accommodation must be specified. All documentation must be signed and dated. Athens State University adheres to The Alabama College System Criteria For Disabilities Documentation guidelines as follows:

Health Condition, Mobility, Hearing, Speech, or Visual Impairment

A letter or report from treating physician, orthopedic specialist, audiologist, speech pathologist, or ophthalmologist (as appropriate), including:

- Clearly stated diagnosis
- Defined levels of functioning and any limitations
- Current treatment and medication
- Current letter/report (within 1 year), dated and signed
- Specific recommendations for accommodations and the rationale for each accommodation within the context of the university environment.

Psychological Disorder

A letter or report from a mental health professional (psychologist, neuropsychologist, licensed professional counselor), including:

- Clearly stated diagnosis (DSM-IV criteria)
- Defined levels of functioning and any limitations
- Supporting documentation (i.e. test data, history, observation, etc.)
- Current treatment and medication
- Current letter/report (within 1 year), dated and signed
- Specific recommendations for accommodations and the rationale for each accommodation within the context of the university environment

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

A comprehensive evaluation report by a rehabilitation counselor, speech-language pathologist, orthopedic specialist, and/or neuropsychologist (or other specialist as appropriate), including:

- Assessment of cognitive abilities, including processing speed and memory
- Analysis of educational achievement skills and limitations (reading comprehension, written language, spelling, and mathematical abilities)
- Defined levels of functioning and limitations in all affected areas (communication, vision, hearing, mobility, psychological, seizures, etc.)
- Current treatment and medication
- Current letter/report (post-rehabilitation and within 1 year), dated and signed
- Specific recommendations for accommodations and the rationale for each accommodation within the context of the university environment.

Learning Disabilities (LD)

A comprehensive evaluation report from a clinical psychologist, psychiatrist, neuropsychologist, school psychologist, learning disability specialist, or diagnostician, including:

- Clear statement of presenting problem; diagnostic interview
- Educational history documenting the impact of the learning disability
- Alternative explanations and diagnoses are rule out
- Relevant test data with standard scores are provided to support conclusions, including at least: (a) WAIS-R; (b) Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery-Revised, including Written Language; (c) Woodcock-Johnson Cognitive Processing Battery to substantiate any processing problems
- Clearly stated diagnosis of a learning disability based upon DSM-IV criteria
- Defined levels of functioning and any limitations, supported by evaluation data
- Current report (within 3 years of enrollment date), dated and signed
- Specific recommendations for accommodations and the rationale for each accommodation within the context of the university environment.

Note: High School IEP, 504 Plan, and/or a letter from a physician or other professional will not be sufficient to document a learning disability.

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

A comprehensive evaluation report from a physician, psychiatrist, clinical psychologist, neurologist, or neuropsychologist, including:

- Clear statement of presenting problem; diagnostic interview
- Evidence of early and current impairment in at least two different environments (comprehensive history)
- Alternative explanations and diagnoses are ruled out
- Relevant test data with standard scores are provided to support conclusions, including at least: (a) WAIS-R; (b) Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery-Revised, including Written Language; (c) Behavioral Assessment Instruments for ADD/ADHD normed on adults
- Clearly stated diagnosis of ADD or ADHD based upon DSM-IV criteria
- Defined levels of functioning and any limitations, supported by evaluation data
- Current report (within 3 years of enrollment date), dated and signed
- Specific recommendations for accommodations and the rationale for each accommodation within the context of the university environment.

Note: High School IEP, 504 Plan, and/or a letter from a physician or other professional will not be sufficient to document ADD or ADHD. Medication cannot be used to imply a diagnosis.

An Impairment and Disability Assessment form is available for the student to take to his/her documentation provider to assist with the clarification of the student's disability.

****Athens State University does not perform disability assessments that determine or diagnose disabilities, nor does Athens State University pay for such assessments. Disability assessment is the responsibility of the student.**

3. Upon receipt of the student's documentation, the Disabilities Service Office will complete a careful review to determine: a.) that the source of the documentation is appropriate; b.) that the documentation is complete; c.) that the information in the documentation is current; d.) that the student is a qualified person with a disability; and; e.) that the documentation supports the requested accommodations. The Athens State University Disability Services Office does not interpret diagnostic information submitted for documentation purposes.
4. Disability Services determines eligibility of reasonable academic accommodation for students, taking in consideration recommendations from submitted documentation, accommodations used at previous education institutions, and the initial in-take interview.

B. Letters of Accommodation:

Students registered with the Disability Services Office are eligible to request Letters of Accommodation at any point during the semester, but accommodations are only granted from the date of the official Letter of Accommodation from the Disability Services Office. The Letter of Accommodation is a source of communication between the student, disability services, and faculty. Appropriate accommodations are listed on each Letter of Accommodation.

The process for use of the Letters of Accommodation is as follows:

1. The student must request accommodations and be determined qualified for Disability Services.
2. The student must request services at the beginning of each new semester by providing a copy of the semester class schedule to the Disability Services Office. The receipt of the semester class schedule from the student authorizes the Disability Services Office to issue Letters of Accommodation. It is the responsibility of the student to request accommodations **each semester**.
3. It is the responsibility of the students to make an appointment with the Disability Services Office if there is a need to discuss changes in accommodations.
4. The Letter of Accommodation and a Request For Accommodations Receipt form will be mailed during the second week of the semester to the appropriate faculty according to the provided class schedule. Students are encouraged to self-advocate and discuss their individual needs with their professors privately during the first week of the semester and make them aware of any accommodations they may require to be academically successful. The Request For Accommodations Receipt form is to be filled out, signed, and returned to the Disability Services Office within one week of receipt.
5. Faculty are obligated to provide accommodations at the time that they have been notified by an official Letter of Accommodation received from the Disability Services Office to do so. Faculty are not obligated to accommodate prior exams, assignments, or any course related activity before the date of the Letter of Accommodation.
6. One copy of each Letter of Accommodation for the current semester is kept in the student's Disability Services file with a copy of the semester class schedule and the returned Request For Accommodations Receipt form(s) received from faculty; and a copy of each letter is mailed to the student.

C. **Academic Accommodations:**

Academic accommodations and other services are provided on an individual basis and determined by documented need. In accordance with the ADA, academic accommodations will be approved, if applicable, as long as the academic integrity of the course or program is not compromised, does not impose an undue financial burden based on the university's overall institutional budget, nor poses a direct threat to the health or safety of the student or others. Appropriate accommodations may include, but are not limited to:

- Letters to faculty verifying disability and accommodation
- Test accommodations such as extended time (generally time and a half), distraction free environment, readers or scribes (One week prior notice)
- Volunteer note takers
- Sign language interpreters (prior notification needed to make arrangements)
Athens State University reserves the right to require a student's sign language skills be evaluated
- Enlarged print (prior notice needed)
- Audio record classes
- Spell checker/calculator
- Preferential seating
- Audio books from Recordings for the Blind & Dyslexic (when available)
- Portable Amplification System
- Accessible classrooms/location/furniture

Disability Services does not advise students on curriculum and course selection. The ASU Transfer/Advising Center assigns students an academic faculty advisor in the College of their declared major, who can help with academic advisement.

Services of a personal nature are not considered reasonable accommodations in postsecondary education and are not provided by Athens State University. Examples of personal services include but are not limited to tutoring, attendant care, transportation, wheelchairs or wheelchair repair, hearing aids, readers for personal use, computers and software for use at home, individually prescribed devices, prescription eyeglasses, and alternate format material unrelated to academic course work.

It is the student's responsibility to handle all personal contact directly with class instructors and departments, face-to-face, by telephone or email in a timely manner.

D. Denial of Accommodations:

Athens State University reserves the right to deny a request for academic accommodations if documentation is out of date, incomplete, or does not comply with the published guidelines for eligibility.

The student will be notified if the documentation does not support the existence of a disability or the need for an academic accommodation. Students may supplement the original documentation with further information from a physician, psychologist, or other specialist. Any cost incurred in obtaining initial or additional documentation is the responsibility of the student.

E. Temporary Disability:

Temporary conditions occur for a relatively short period of time, but can impact the student's ability to function in his or her usual manner. These conditions can include fractures, severe sprains, infections and other non-permanent conditions.

The ADA/504 does not cover temporary conditions. However, Athens State University is committed to providing assistance to these students.

Assistance for these situations is dependent on an assessment of the impact the temporary condition has on the student's required activities.

For classroom accommodations, the student must contact the Disabilities Service Office and provide a statement from his/her treating physician. The statement must:

- Be on letterhead and signed by the physician
- Contain a brief description of the condition with diagnosis and limitation of activities
- The length of the time the student will need classroom accommodations
- Include specific recommendations for accommodations and the rationale for each accommodation within the context of the university environment.

V. Assistive Technology:

- Portable Amplification System – available in the ASU Library with Disability Services authorization for one day checkout
- Victor/Reader/Telex Scholar CD Players – available in the ASU Library with Disability Services authorization by the term (used with audio books from RFBD)
- Franklin Language Master – available through the ASU Library with Disability Services authorization for one day checkout
- Franklin Spelling Ace – available through the ASU Library with Disability Services authorization for one day checkout
- Digital Recorders – available through the ASU Library with Disability Services authorization for one day checkout
- Cassette Recorders – available through the ASU Library with Disability Services authorization for one day checkout
- Sci-Plus Scientific Calculator – available through the ASU Library with Disability Services authorization for one day checkout
- ZoomText Magnification Reader – available in the ASU Library, Chasteen Hall and Redstone Arsenal University Center
- Dragon Naturally Speaking Software – available in Chasteen Hall Accounting Lab
- Large Screen Monitor – available in ASU Library, Chasteen Hall, Waters Hall
- NCR Paper – available through the ASU Disability Services Office
- Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TTY) - Located at the Information Desk in the Sandridge Student Center

Students are responsible for returning all equipment in the same condition as when it was checked out.

Equipment requiring batteries: Because of financial constraints, securing batteries is the responsibility of the student checking out the equipment.

Students are held financially accountable for lost or damaged equipment.

VI. Confidentiality and Disclosure of Information:

The Athens State University Disability Services Office is committed to ensuring that all information regarding a student, including information obtained in diagnostic and medical reports, is maintained as required by law and confidentiality requirements. Disability information collected for the benefit of any student does not become part of the student's academic record and is kept in secure files with access limited to authorized Disability Services Office staff. Information in files will be released verbally to ASU faculty and staff on a limited basis and for the purpose of ensuring appropriate accommodations only with the student's written permission except in circumstances mandated by federal or state law.

Information in Disability Services student files is protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Note: The Athens State University Disability Services will not release copies of student disability documentation to anyone, including the student. Students should obtain a copy of their disability documentation from the original source and retain a copy for their personal records. However, Disability Services will verify accommodations granted at Athens State University for students that request such information.

A student has the right to review his/her own file with reasonable notification to the Disability Services Office. A Disability Services Office staff member must be present when the student reviews the file. Documentation received from doctors and/or outside agencies is not available for review. Students must contact those individuals and/or agencies for information regarding those documents. Students are not allowed to photocopy the contents of the file.

Student disability documentation is normally maintained for five years after the last recorded date of enrollment and then all the contents of the file are destroyed.

Cell phone, fax, and email are not considered confidential modes of communication.

ADA/504 student information is entered in the on-campus Banner System for Statistical Information to satisfy the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) for accreditation purposes.

VII. Disability Counseling:

The Counseling and Career Services Office offers free and confidential counseling to all students. Sometimes students with disabilities, like many other students, have difficulty coping with the challenges that come with being a college student. A Licensed Professional Counselor is available on a part-time basis in the Sandridge Student Center, and appointments can be made by calling (256)233-8285.

VIII. ADA/505 Grievance Procedure:

- Questions and concerns regarding accommodations and services for students with disabilities should be directed initially to Disability Services Office staff member(s).
- If Disability Services Office Staff member(s) cannot provide information or suggestions that resolve the issue, a meeting is encouraged with the student, the faculty member (if applicable), Disability Services Office staff member(s), and the Vice President of Student Affairs to discuss the issue. (A Disability Services Office staff member will schedule this meeting at the student's request)
- If an agreement concerning disability rights is not reached at this point, the final step in the grievance process involves the dissenting party filing a formal, written grievance. The process for filing an official grievance is located in the current Athens State University Student Handbook and the Student Activities Office. During the grievance process, the student is entitled to receive accommodations recommended by Disability Services.

Should the student disagree with the outcome of the Grievance Process at the university level, a formal complaint may be filed with the Office for Civil Rights:

Atlanta Office
Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Education
61 Forsyth Street, SW
Suite 19T70
Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3104

These Policies and Procedures are subject to change at any time at the discretion of Athens State University and the Disability Services Office.

Acknowledgement: This document is a compilation of information from the Association on Higher Education and Disabilities (AHEAD) and various Higher Education Disability Services web sites