Texas A&M University -- Corpus Christi
Disability Services
6300 Ocean Drive, Driftwood-101, Unit 5717, Corpus Christi, TX  78412-5717
Phone (361) 825-5816 ♦ Fax (361) 825-2536

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

I. Eligibility for Services
II. Documentation Requirements
III. Provisional and Temporary Services
IV. After the Intake Process
V. Confidentiality Protections and Guidelines
VI. Student Responsibilities
VII. Emergency Procedures
VIII. Grievance Procedures

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (TAMU-CC) is committed to serving our students with documented disabilities. Students with documented physical, cognitive or psychological disabilities are entitled to appropriate services through our Disability Services (DS) office. Federal law requires that instructors make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of students with documented disabilities as a way to provide those students equal educational access and opportunity. It is the responsibility of the student with a disability to initiate this process by identifying him/herself as well as sharing his/her disability-related needs with the staff of DS office. This document is designed to explain the policies and procedures of the DS office in an effort to help students understand how to obtain accommodations for their documented disabilities. The policies and procedures adopted by the DS office are in accordance with the professional best standards recommended by Association for Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD). Note that these policies and procedures are not contractual in nature and are subject to change with reasonable notice given to students.
Eligibility for Services

To be eligible for disability-related services through the DS office, students with permanent disabilities 1) must be qualified under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act; 2) must self-identify with the DS office; and 3) must present appropriate, comprehensive and current documentation regarding their stated disabilities. Once a student has met these requirements, reasonable accommodations are determined on a case-by-case basis by the staff of the DS office in consultation with the student.

A. The student must be a qualified individual with a disability under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Federal Register, Vol. 45, No. 92, pp. 30937-30944).

(1) The student must be “otherwise qualified”; in other words, the student must
   (a) meet the essential, academic and technical standards required for admission or participation within the Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (TAMU-CC) education program or other activity;
   (b) meet the essential eligibility requirements for regular university services; and
   (c) meet the requirements of the student code of conduct.

(2) The student must currently have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.
   (a) Physical impairments include any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genito-urinary, hemic, lymphatic, skin, endocrine or respiratory (including speech organs).
   (b) Mental impairments include psychiatric/psychological, cognitive, and learning disorders meeting DSM-IV diagnostic criteria.
   (c) Major life activities include functions such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning and working.
   (d) Substantially limits means that the impairment prohibits or significantly restricts an individual’s ability to perform a major life activity as compared to the ability of the average person.

B. To be eligible for services, the student must self-identify and complete the intake process with the Disability Services (DS) office. To receive accommodations, the student must present comprehensive and current documentation regarding his/her stated disability.

(1) Self-Identification: To self-identify, the student must complete an intake interview with the DS Director and sign all appropriate accommodation agreements, releases of information and other required forms.
   (a) Students must self-identify in a timely manner: Students should make an appointment for an intake interview as soon as they are accepted at TAMU-CC and have made the decision to attend. For out-of-state students, this meeting should take place as soon as the student arrives on campus.
   (b) If interpreter services or special equipment are needed, out-of-state students should notify the DS Director by telephone immediately upon acceptance. To provide the most efficient services, a one-month notice is beneficial. The cost of interpreting services is shared between the university and the regional vocational rehabilitation (VR) commission.

The student must contact their VR counselor to determine if a special contract will need to be developed.

(2) Documentation of a student’s disability must be obtained from a qualified professional. For more information, see section “Documentation Requirements”.
Documentation Requirements

A. General Documentation Requirements: The purpose of the documentation requirement is to assure consistency and compliance with federal statutes, to legitimize a students’ request for accommodations, to assist in the determination of appropriate accommodations for the student, and to personalize the students’ right to equal access to the institution.

(1) In general, the documentation of a disability must:
   (a) identify the nature and extent of the disability;
   (b) include information on functional limitations as related to the academic environment;
   (c) provide a description of the current course of treatment including medical side effects and prognosis for the disability; and
   (d) include a recommendation for reasonable accommodations.

(2) Documentation must reflect the current status of the disability. For most disabling conditions, documentation is considered current within a period of 3-5 years. This time period varies dependent upon the nature and course of a student’s particular disability. The Disability Services (DS) office will request periodic updates regarding a student’s functional limitations due to his/her disability.

(3) Documentation of the disability must be provided by a professional qualified to make the diagnosis. The documentation must include the evaluator’s name, address, telephone number and professional credentials relevant to the diagnosis; and must be on official letterhead stationery, dated and signed.
   (a) Documentation of Medical Conditions: Students whose disabilities are medical conditions must present documentation from a medical professional that is qualified to diagnose the specific medical condition. If a student has multiple conditions, each condition for which the student is seeking academic accommodations must be so documented. The documentation must sufficiently indicate the functional limitations of the disability to determine and support appropriate accommodations.
   (b) Documentation of Psychiatric/Psychological Conditions: Students with psychiatric, psychological, cognitive and learning impairments must present a comprehensive psychological evaluation presenting DSM-IV diagnostic criteria. This report must provide sufficient indication of the functional limitations posed by the disability to determine appropriate academic accommodation(s). The DS Director will review the documentation to determine if it is sufficient to support the accommodations requested by the student.

(4) Texas A&M University-CC (TAMU-CC) reserves the right to determine the appropriateness of submitted documentation and requests for accommodation(s) on a case-by-case basis. Additional information may be requested to determine eligibility for services. Documentation acceptable for other agencies and institutions (e.g., vocational rehabilitation agencies, public schools) may not be sufficient for determining post-secondary services. Generally, an Individualized Education Plan, 504 Plan, or General Education Initiative from a secondary school does not provide thorough information for the documentation of disability and needed accommodations in the post-secondary setting.

B. Assistance and Referral to Obtain Documentation: To be eligible for services, the student must present appropriate documentation from a professional qualified to diagnose his or her disability. The student may be referred for additional documentation if the documentation initially provided is not sufficient. In such cases, a student providing documentation showing good evidence of a disability will be served for one semester on a provisional basis to allow for referral, funding and processing time. TAMU-CC is not required to provide assessment of disabilities or related funding. (See section “Provisional and Temporary Services” for more information.)

Provisional and Temporary Services
A. In addition to services provided to students with permanently disabling conditions, the Disability Services (DS) office also provides services on a provisional or temporary basis. Documentation is needed to provide these services. It is to the student’s advantage to provide the documentation either before arriving at the campus or at the initial visit.

(1) **Provisional Services:** If the student does not have current documentation at the initial interview, provisional services may be provided if the student can provide documentation that he/she has been in special education at the K-12 level or has received accommodation services at another post-secondary institution. If the DS Director determines through an initial intake screening that there is strong evidence of a disability, provisional services will be provided for a period of one semester (May-mester and Summer sessions will be counted one semester) while the assessment and documentation is in process. Records are reviewed at the beginning of each semester and services are discontinued if documentation is still incomplete or does not meet eligibility requirements for the university.

(2) **Temporary Medical Condition:** Some medical conditions are temporarily disabling and a student may desire accommodations for a limited amount of time. These conditions may include surgery, accidents, severe illness or any other medical condition that temporarily impairs regular attendance or academic performance. The university is not required by state or federal disabilities laws to provide accommodations for temporary disabilities, but does so out of humane concern. Documentation will be required and, if possible the DS office will provide appropriate accommodations under the condition that by doing so the university does not undertake excessive financial responsibility. Students who need temporary **accessible parking** (less than 6 weeks) can present a note from their physician to the University Police Department to obtain a temporary (6 weeks) accessible parking placard, but students are encouraged to obtain an accessible parking placard/plate from their county of residence which can be used at school and in the community.
After the Intake Process

A. **Determination of accommodations:** Using the documentation provided, the student and the Disability Services (DS) Director will collaboratively determine the most appropriate and reasonable academic adjustments.

(1) Reasonable accommodations appropriate for the disability will be determined based on recommendations in the documentation, standard best professional practices and discussion with the student of past experiences with accommodations. Accommodations requested must not pose an undue hardship on the financial or administrative resources of the university and should promote the student’s professional self-determination and independence. In general, the professional best practice standards of the Association for Higher Education and Disabilities (AHEAD) will be followed to determine appropriate accommodations.

(2) The student should be aware that there is often a difference in the types of accommodations provided by elementary/secondary schools and post-secondary programs. In general, there are fewer substitutions and modifications at the post-secondary level and more emphasis on student development of learning strategies and skills.

B. **Agreements for Frequent Accommodations:** To ensure that the student is aware of policies and procedures related to major accommodation services, he/she will be asked to read and sign agreements related to frequently used accommodations. Agreements are developed for assistive hearing and interpreter services, examinations, note-taking, audio-recording classes, reading services, scribe services and for service dogs on campus. Individualized agreements may need to be developed for any other accommodations with complex procedures and responsibilities.

C. **Verification of Disability Letters:** The DS office will prepare faculty notification letters for each semester the student registers with the office. These letters will verify that the student qualifies for accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act as well as indicate the type of accommodations that have been approved through the DS office.

(1) The faculty notification letters are written to respect the student’s confidentiality. The nature of a student’s disability is only shared on a ‘need to know’ basis and only with the student’s written permission.

(2) Accommodations for a particular student may vary somewhat semester-to-semester depending upon the course content of the student’s classes. It is the student’s responsibility to notify the DS Director when a specific course format requires changes or additions.

(3) Students will be notified when faculty notification letters are ready. Each student is expected to pick up his/her letters from the DS office and deliver the letters to his/her professors. Each student is encouraged to deliver the faculty letters in person and to take this opportunity to self-identify with instructors and discuss issues related to the accommodations he/she needs in class. The student decides how much specific information he/she wishes to provide to the faculty in addition to the notification letter.

(4) For students for whom it would be a hardship to deliver the verification of disability letters (i.e., they have a mobility or visual impairment that presents a barrier to delivering letters), the DS office will make arrangements for the letters to be delivered to instructors.
Confidentiality Protections and Guidelines

A. **Student Rights of Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure:** To obtain disability related services, the student must present documentation to the person designated by Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (TAMU-CC). The Director for Disability Services office is assigned the responsibility for collecting and holding this documentation. All records will be kept in a secure file with limited access. Generally faculty or staff is only given the information that a student has a documented disability and a need for accommodation(s). The U.S. Department of Justice has indicated that a faculty or staff member generally does not have a need to know what the disability is, only that it has been appropriately verified by the individual (or office) assigned this responsibility on behalf of the institution and that other individuals at the university would have no legal right to demand access to the actual documentation including testing scores, dates or names of professionals providing such documentation." (Confidentiality & Disability Issues in Higher Education, AHEAD. 1996). The student is protected by law from disclosure of confidential information to other university personnel or external parties, unless proscribed by law or the situation warrants a justifiable “need to know”.

B. **‘Need to Know’ Basis for Release of Documentation Information:** The person(s) to whom information would be released is dependent upon a justifiable ‘need to know’. In general, the ‘need to know’ is very limited, unless proscribed by law. Some common needs may be: requests for a course substitution, safety for the student's health or emergency evacuation purposes, special circumstances in campus housing, grievance procedures, and special financial aid considerations.

C. **Procedures for Release of Information:** The student must sign a release for inter-departmental requests for copies of documentation. If a student requests a copy of his/her documentation, he/she must submit a signed written request; discuss his/her rights of non-disclosure and review the documentation with the Director. The Director may remove any non-pertinent information before copies are released. If the documentation was received from a vocational rehabilitation agency, the student will be referred to that entity for copies.

D. The **extreme exceptions** to confidentiality protections would be child abuse (of which reporting is mandatory in most states), suicide or homicidal intent. Confidentiality is not maintained in the case of child abuse, suicidal or homicidal intent or violations of the University Student Code of Conduct. The Disability Services (DS) Director will work with the University Counseling Center and/or the University Police Department in the event that a student expresses an action or intent to harm self or others.
E. Maintenance of Records-Hard Copy  A confidential file is maintained on each student. Each file includes information on the student’s demographics, notes on activities performed for the student, correspondence, degree-related information (e.g., class schedules, degree plan, transcripts, etc.) and agreements regarding accommodations. A separate confidential folder is established which contains the documentation of the disability and any ongoing changes in the student’s condition. These files are kept in a locked file cabinet accessible only to the DS Director and DS staff.

(1) Audit of DS Files: DS files are audited on a regular basis by the Disability Advisory Council. Files are chosen on a random basis and any personal information that could identify a student is removed before review. These audits are conducted to ensure that the DS office is providing appropriate accommodations to students as well as ensure that the office is compliant with University policy and Federal regulations.

(2) Disposal of Records: It is the policy of the DS office to dispose of files of students who have elected not to use DS services or who have withdrawn or graduated from TAMU-CC. A student’s file may be disposed when:

a. a student has not used DS services or made any contact with the DS office in over seven years (with the stipulation that records must be kept at least 7 years after a student turns 18 years old); or

b. a student applied for services, but never provided documentation and therefore never used services, and it has been over a year since date of application.
Student Responsibilities

A. Register with the DS office each semester (including summer sessions). Registering is important for updating records and for notifying the Disability Services (DS) office that a student wants to use DS services for the semester. After registering, students will be asked to meet with the DS Director to review and update records, forms, faculty notification letters, etc.

B. Early enrollment is essential. DS students are encouraged to enroll early for classes before desired classes are filled. This will require meeting with advisors early. At the time of enrollment, students who use B line bus transportation should place a standing order for transportation.

C. Requests for Assistive & Adaptive Equipment. Students need to inform the DS office early if assistive equipment is needed. It will take 30-60 days for processing.

D. Deliver verification of disability letters to your professors. DS students are encouraged to speak with their professors about the types of accommodations needed in the classroom. Students will need to discuss with professors how examination accommodations will be provided (i.e., proctored by the professor or by DS Exam Services staff).

E. Follow Exam Services procedures. Students are expected to follow the procedures outlined in the pamphlet entitled ‘Exam Services: Student Testing Rules’. These procedures require students to provide DS Exam Services staff with a written schedule of the exams/quizzes to be proctored during the semester by the Exam Services office. If an exam schedule should change at any point in the semester, it is the student’s responsibility to notify the Exam Services office of those changes in writing. The Exam Services office must be notified of a student’s intent to take an exam/quiz at least two (2) business days prior to the exam/quiz date (one (1) working day during summer sessions). Final exams must be scheduled at least two weeks prior to the beginning of finals week. Without sufficient notice, Exam Services may not be able to fulfill a student’s request and the student will have to take the exam/quiz with his/her class.

F. Report needs and problems as they arise. In the event that initial accommodations do not meet a student’s needs or do not seem possible due to the specific requirements of a course, it is the student’s responsibility to contact the DS Director to determine other options.

G. Understand and follow all procedures. Students will keep a copy of the Policies and Procedures and other agreement forms from the DS office, and are encouraged to refer to them each semester. Students are responsible for following all DS policies and procedures and for reporting any need for clarifications or changes of agreements with the DS office.

H. Class Attendance. Class attendance policies are determined by each instructor. If a student has chronic health or other disability-related problems that may cause him/her to miss classes, he/she should discuss attendance requirements and options with all professors and the DS Director as early as possible (preferably before enrollment). Using a note-taker, does not excuse a student from attending class. Professors will not excuse absences just because a student has a note-taker.

I. Follow the Student Code of Conduct. Having a documented disability does not excuse a student from following any Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (TAMU-CC) rule, policy or procedure. If a student has a behavior disorder, he/she is expected to work with the University Counseling Center or other resources to develop behavior management strategies. The Student
Code of Conduct is available on the TAMU-CC web page as well as from the Office of Student Affairs, UC 318.

J. **Referrals by DS office.** Students are expected to follow-up on all referrals in a timely fashion. Students should contact the DS Director if a referral does not meet his/her needs so that other options can be determined.

K. **Tutoring, Study Skills and Time Management Support.** Time management and good study skills are critical to a student’s success. Students are expected to use all resources available, including the Tutoring & Learning Center, the Personal Skills Center, and any informal or course-related study groups and seminars. The DS office does not provide tutoring services. Students are expected to contact his/her vocational rehabilitation agency for tutorial support.

L. **Emergency Medical Assistance.** Students with a condition that may require emergency assistance during classes (e.g., seizure condition), should meet with each professor during the first week of classes to explain the condition and discuss emergency procedures. It is recommended that students obtain a letter from their physician outlining emergency procedures. These students should also update emergency contact information with the University each semester. This can be done through the Office of Admissions and Records.

M. **Scheduling Appointments with the DS office.** Students should schedule appointments or call in advance to see the DS Director or to ask for staff assistance. In the case of an emergency, students should contact the DS office as soon as possible. The DS office is open Mondays Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., Tuesdays from 8 a.m. – 7 p.m. and Fridays from 8 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Emergency Procedures

A. **Campus emergency assistance:** University Police are the first responders on campus for all emergencies. Emergency assistance may be obtained 24 hours a day by contacting University Police at 825-4444 or by pressing the help button on any of the campus emergency ‘blue lights’.

B. **Medical emergencies:** Some students with disabilities experience medical emergencies in the classroom (i.e., seizures, diabetic hypoglycemia, cardiac-related incidents). Students who are concerned that medical emergencies may occur during class are encouraged to obtain a letter from their physician to give to their professors. This letter should give information on the nature of the disability-related emergency and instructions for emergency service providers. As first responders, University Police will provide initial assessment and treatment, and contact other emergency personnel as needed.

C. **Procedures for Emergency Evacuation of Buildings:**

   a) Elevators are not operational during fire and other building evacuation alarms. Therefore in emergencies, some students with disabilities (such as those with limited mobility or visual impairments) may need assistance in evacuating the building. On campus, the Evacu-Trac system is used to assist these students. The campus library and University Center buildings have Evacu-Tracs installed. University Police carry Evacu-Tracs in the trunk of their police cars for use in other buildings.

   b) It is important that students take responsibility for their own safety. Students who may need assistance in evacuating buildings during emergencies are encouraged to:

   - Speak with professors about their emergency evacuation needs and
   - Be familiar with the Evacu-Trac system and emergency exits of all campus buildings. The Disability Services (DS) office can provide a map of emergency exits on campus and can arrange for a demonstration of the Evacu-Trac system.

   c) During an emergency, students with disabilities requiring assistance should call University Police at 4444. There are telephones in all classrooms. After notifying police, students should go to the nearest “Area of Rescue Assistance” which will be located next to a stairwell. Students should wait there for University Police. Students are encouraged to ask an instructor, classmate or passer-by to stay with them until the police arrive.

D. **Procedures for Emergency Evacuation of Campus:** Campus will be evacuated for approaching hurricanes and other emergencies threatening campus.

   a) Students are encouraged to review the emergency evacuation procedures and Hurricane Defense Plan located on the Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi website and in the student manual.

   b) Students with disabilities needing special transportation assistance during emergencies should contact University Police at 825-4444 or by pressing the help button on any of the campus emergency ‘blue lights’.

   c) Campus housing residents with disabilities: At the beginning of each semester, housing management and staff responsible for campus evacuation are informed by the DS office of the needs of residents with disabilities who will need assistance with emergency evacuation. Student residents should also discuss any special arrangements with the housing management. Students may request that a special sign be placed on their apartment to assist evacuation personnel.
Grievance Procedures

A. Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (TAMU-CC) and the Disability Services (DS) office support students in their right to file a grievance when they believe equal access has been denied in regard to appropriate accommodations, modifications, auxiliary aids, or effective communication or when they believe they have been discriminated against as described in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 or the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).

B. TAMU-CC has general grievance procedures that apply to all students, which of course include students with disabilities. These procedures can be found in the Student Handbook.

C. There are also two additional grievance procedures established specifically for students with disabilities who feel their rights have been violated under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 or Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).

(1) The first procedure is recommended for resolving disability-related conflicts with faculty, staff, campus organizations and/or other students.

(a) A student is encouraged to discuss his/her concerns with the DS Director who will contact the parties involved, as appropriate, to determine resolution. For example the DS Director may attempt to resolve the situation by assisting the student in discussing issues with a faculty member, by facilitating a meeting of the parties involved, or by calling the faculty member and/or head of the department in an effort to clarify and resolve issues. In some instances, other DS staff may be consulted. The student, and other involved parties, will be notified by the DS office of the resolution of the situation within 10 business days. Due to the urgency of many issues, it is likely that many problems will be resolved much sooner.

(b) A student may take further action if he/she does not believe a satisfactory resolution was reached after intervention by the DS Director. Students should notify the Dean of the appropriate College with disability-related academic concerns; the Office of Student Affairs for disability-related non-academic concerns; and appeal to the Provost for concerns regarding accommodations.

(2) The second procedure is recommended for resolving conflicts with the DS office and/or a particular DS staff person.

(a) When a student has a complaint against DS office and/or one of its staff members, the student should first discuss the complaint with the DS Director. Resolution of the issue may be reached at this level.

(b) If the complaint is not satisfactorily resolved or for a specific reason cannot be discussed with the DS Director, the student should contact the Dean of Students or Vice President of Student Affairs to discuss the issue further and explore resolution. After investigating the situation, the Dean of Students/Vice-President of Student Affairs will inform the student and the involved parties of progress, findings or resolution within 10 business days. A student has the right to bypass DS office and go directly to the Dean of Students/Vice-President of Student Affairs.

(3) If after utilizing these procedures a satisfactory resolution is still not obtained, the student may choose to file a complaint with the Federal Office of Civil Rights. The Office of Civil Rights will take complaints and will investigate when appropriate.