



SMC Disability Services Policy & Procedure Guide

RELATED POLICIES: SMC STUDENT HANDBOOK
SMC SERVICE & ASSISTANCE ANIMAL POLICY

Southwestern Michigan College (SMC) commits to complying with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) to provide accommodations to students with disabilities.

SMC strives to provide equitable access to the educational resources on our campuses and reasonable accommodations to achieve the goal of education for all. When self-identifying, students with disabilities can be referred to Disability Services by admissions counselors, advisors, faculty, or staff. The following policies and procedures outline how a student can apply for, receive, and maintain accommodations.

Eligibility

The ADA defines a person with a disability as any person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment.

Students are not required to disclose their disabilities to faculty, staff, or other college entities; however, they must disclose and register with Disability Services to receive accommodations. Accommodations are determined individually through the interactive process consisting of documentation request and review, intake interview, and assessment of all provided information.

High school students enrolled in SMC's dual-enrollment program, including Early Middle College and Academy students, are eligible to apply for accommodations.

IEP's and 504's do not follow students into their college programs or courses. Disability Services determines accommodations for these students in the same way they determine them for traditional college students.

Rights & Responsibilities

Student Rights

Students with disabilities have the right to enjoy equal opportunities and access to SMC courses, programs, and services. They have the right to request and receive appropriate accommodations.

Students can expect SMC to handle disability information confidentially. Students who disagree with a decision or denial of an accommodation request have the right to appeal the decision through the Grievance Process.

Student Responsibilities

Students are responsible for participating in the interactive process by self-identifying to Disability Services, requesting accommodations, and providing appropriate documentation. Students are also responsible for making requests in a timely manner, notifying Disability Services when an issue arises, and meeting all the technical standards for their classes with or without accommodations.

SMC's Rights

SMC has the right to request and receive appropriate documentation to support accommodation requests. SMC also has the right to deny requests that are deemed unreasonable, unfounded, would fundamentally alter an academic program's nature, cause the institution undue burden.

SMC's Responsibilities

SMC is responsible for providing equitable access to all programs, activities, and courses. Disability Services will advocate for students and help coordinate with faculty, staff, and support services to provide clear expectations and appropriate implementation of approved accommodations.

All SMC faculty and staff are responsible for referring students to Disability Services who self-disclose a disability to pursue appropriate and reasonable accommodations.

Registering for Disability Services

Students with disabilities can speak with someone regarding strategies and accommodations to remove disability-related barriers by following the steps below. After a registration gap of more than one academic year, students returning to SMC must contact Disability Services to discuss accommodation updates and reinstatement.

New Student Registration

New students must complete a **disability services application** and provide documentation of disability. An application is considered complete if it is filled out entirely and contains documentation. Students should refer to the *Documentation Guidelines* for appropriate sources of documentation. If a student does not have documentation of a disability, they should contact Disability Services to discuss the next steps.

Disability Services can provide a list of possible referral agencies for students without documentation; however, students are encouraged to contact their insurance company for an appropriate diagnostic agency.

When a completed application is received, the Disability Services Coordinator will reach out to the student with an invitation to set up a confidential discussion to identify educational barriers and discuss accommodations.

Returning Students

Students must request to renew their accommodations each semester by submitting the **Accommodation Renewal Request Form**.

Students can indicate on this form whether they would like to maintain or update their accommodations. Updating accommodations may require new documentation, but only if the student has a new diagnosis or the nexus between disability impact and the accommodation request is unclear.

The Interactive Process

After a student submits their completed application, the Disability Services Coordinator will contact them regarding an appointment. During the meeting, the student will have a confidential discussion to identify educational barriers and discuss what accommodations would best support them.

Disability Services will consider all provided information when making a determination, including documentation and the student's self-report. Then, the student is contacted with the decision. Should a reasonable request be considered unfounded, the Disability Services Coordinator may ask for additional documentation. Students may appeal denied accommodation decisions by following the Appeals Process outlined below.

Housing Accommodations

Students requesting housing accommodations should fill out the Disability Services Application unless requesting a Service or Assistance Animal in housing. Students use the [Approved Animal Application](#) for animal-related requests.

Service Animal requests do not need documentation. Students requesting Assistance Animals need to turn in the **Required Treating Professional Form**, completed by their healthcare provider, with their application.

Housing Accommodations should be submitted no later than May 15 for the fall and August 15 for the spring semester. Students requesting accommodations after these dates should apply at least 30 days before the animal is needed on campus as the application and determination process can take two or more weeks.

See SMC's [Service and Assistance Animal Policy](#) for additional information.

Placement Testing Accommodations

New students needing accommodations for placement tests should [schedule an appointment](#) with the Disability Services Coordinator to review documentation.

Placement testing can take place in a quiet location or remotely without a time limit, so extended time and alternate site accommodations are unnecessary. Students approved for other accommodations should plan on making an appointment to test.

Provisional Accommodations

Provisional accommodations are approved on a limited basis and reserved for situations when a student is in the process of receiving a diagnosis or acquiring documentation. Circumstances may vary. Granted provisional accommodations last for, at most, a single semester. At the end of the allotted time, the student will lose access to the accommodations without supporting documentation.

File Maintenance

Disability Services holds unsolicited documentation for one academic year after receipt if a student does not complete an application.

After one academic year, unsolicited documentation (sent via fax or email from an entity without the student's express request) will be shredded or deleted. Should students wish to register at a later time, they need to provide new documentation.

Disability Services stores records in a locked cabinet and secure electronic database. Transcripts show no indication of accommodations.

Documentation Guidelines

Acceptable documentation includes assessments, reports, or letters from qualified evaluators. Documentation should consist of clear diagnostic statements of disability, diagnostic methodology, functional limitations, and recommended accommodations. As conditions may change over time, we ask that documentation be current.

Initial documentation may include IEP or 504 paperwork, but these often do not provide enough information to make a determination. If a request is considered unfounded or the documentation provided does not give enough information, a student may need to provide additional documentation.

The Disability Services Coordinator reviews all relevant information provided when assessing accommodation requests and considers exceptions to documentation guidelines on a case-by-case basis.

Implementing Accommodations

Disability Services communicates accommodations to professors through the creation of a Memo. The student is sent the Memo and is responsible for sharing it with faculty. Accommodations are not retroactive, so students cannot request accommodations for events that have occurred before the update or approval of accommodations. While students must share their Memo with professors to receive accommodations, they are not expected or required to disclose their disability to them.

Adjustments to coursework are the discretion of the professor. Students should discuss the implementation of the accommodations should a question arise. Should students believe a barrier still

exists after a conversation to clarify expectations, they must contact Disability Services to discuss potential solutions or adjustments to accommodations.

If students are not receiving accommodations after disclosing to their professor, they must contact Disability Services as soon as possible.

Memos

Memos communicate accommodations to professors. Students receive them at least one week before the start of the semester. Memos are good for one semester at a time, and old Memos are not accepted. It may take up to two business days following an intake appointment to send new Memos to students requesting after the semester begins. Students must contact the Disability Services Coordinator when Memos do not arrive by the start of the semester.

Updating Accommodations

Communication between Disability Services and students throughout the semester ensures that accommodation procedures are followed and barriers removed. Students may apply for accommodations at any time during the year. The same is true for requesting updates to approved accommodations. Request approvals can take up to two weeks, so students should plan accordingly when determining when to make a request.

Confidentiality & Release of Records

A student's registration with Disability Services is considered confidential. Students' personal information is not shared with any other entity or individual unless there is a genuine academic need. The student may provide written consent following the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Disclosure of specific information about a student's condition may be necessary to ensure accommodations' proper implementation. In such events, the student and Disability Services Coordinator will discuss what information is needed, and the student will provide consent using the **Consent to Share Information Form**.

Students wishing to see their Disability Services file or requesting their information after leaving SMC may do so through the **File Request Form**.

Grievances and Appeals

Anytime a student is not receiving accommodations as outlined in his or her accommodation memo, the student must immediately contact Disability Services.

Appeals Process

If a student is denied an accommodation after completing an intake appointment, the student has the right to contact the Dean of Student Development to file an appeal. The dean will have ten days to review the facts of the appeal and make a determination.

Grievances

Should an accommodation request be denied, students have the right to file a grievance through SMC's Grievance Procedure. Students may also follow this process should they feel that they have experienced discrimination in any college activities or educational programs. A grievance must be filed within 30 days of the alleged occurrence.

Should students feel that SMC has not acted appropriately in their determination, the student has the right to contact the Regional U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights.

Office for Civil Rights, Grand Rapids Office
350 Ottawa, N.W.

Grand Rapids, MI 49503

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CREATED 8.2019 | UPDATED 2.2021