



All About Accommodations

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Agenda

- Overview
- Disability Types
- Testing Accommodations
- Student Assistance
- Incomplete Requests
- Questions



Debbie Bergtholdt
Accommodations Manager

What is an “Accommodation”?

- The duty to accommodate: Ensures that people with disabilities can participate as fully as non-disabled people.
- Accommodation means making changes to the environment to ensure that there is a reduced negative effect because of the person's disability.
- The goal of an accommodation is to enable equitable participation.
- Accommodations are a way to balance the diverse needs of individuals with the needs of organizations and businesses in our society.



Accommodations Overview

- The purpose of accommodations is to provide candidates with full access to their test
- Accommodations are not a guarantee of improved performance or test completion
- Test accommodations are individualized and considered on a case-by-case basis
- All candidates requesting accommodations must provide appropriate documentation





“Non-Traditional” Test-Takers

- Recent high school dropouts
- Middle-aged people who never finished high school
- Non-native-English speakers who struggled in U.S. schools
- Prisoners
- Individuals with severe physical or mental disorders
- Others?

» Are non-traditional test-takers *disabled*?

➤ Answer: It depends.



YES
NO
MAYBE



What is a “Disability”?

- A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

(ADA As Amended in 2008)

- “*Major Life Activities*”:

➤ Include activities that are central to daily life, such as seeing, hearing, walking, reading, learning, working, and concentrating.



ADAAA: “Learning” as a Major Life Activity

- Learning in general is a major life activity, but not all learning tasks are MLAs.
- What are NOT major life activities:
 - Spelling
 - Test-taking
 - Getting along with one’s spouse
 - Handwriting or typing skills
 - Familiarity with the computer
 - Recall of math facts

What is NOT a Disability?

- ESL
- “Slow Learner”
- Active substance abuser
- Test anxiety
- Homemade diagnoses
 - “Spelling Disorder”
 - “Math Fluency Disorder”
 - “Cognitive Impairment NOS”



Disability Types

- Intellectual Disabilities
- Learning and Other Cognitive Disabilities
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- Psychological and Psychiatric Disorders
- Physical Disorders and Chronic Health Conditions



Commonly Requested Accommodations

- Extra time (25%, 50%, 100%)
- Extra “stop-the-clock” breaks
 - 30 minutes testing/5 minute break
 - 45 minutes testing/10 minute break
- Separate room
- Reader/recorder



Assistive Technology

- **Universal Access features** (e.g., adjustable font, highlighting, and color contrast)
- **Adaptive equipment** (e.g., special keyboards, trackball mouse)
- **JAWS** – speech reading
- **Magnification:** ZoomText



How We Review at GED/Pearson VUE

- Team of expert reviewers and external consultants
- Post our documentation guidelines online
- Review and consider all documentation provided
- Provide written explanations to the test taker about incomplete and denied accommodation requests
- Provide training for internal and external reviewers



How can you help your students?

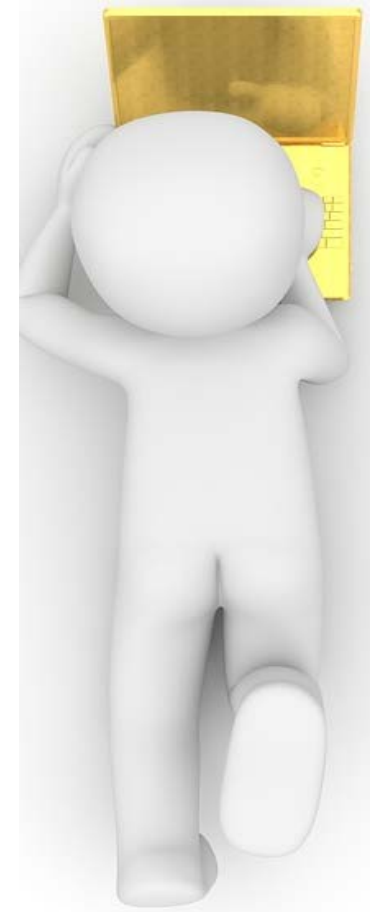
- Comfort aid list
- Lower cost testing clinics
- Assist with paperwork
- Encourage students to start the process early
- Act as an advocate



gedtestingservice.com/accommodations

Online Request System

- Benefits
 - Paper forms are replaced with 6 easy steps
 - Immediate feedback
 - Secure environment
 - No need to pay for faxing services
- *Paper request forms available at*
<http://www.gedtestingservice.com/educators/howtoguidesindex>



Incomplete Documentation





Reviewing for Completeness

❖ Top 10 reasons why a request is incomplete:

1. The request form has not been filled out completely
2. There are missing pages from the request form or documentation
3. There is no (or minimal) supporting documentation with the request
4. The documentation is outdated
5. The report from the evaluator is too brief (e.g., no history)
6. The test battery administered by the evaluator is incomplete
7. The test battery administered by the evaluator is not appropriate (e.g., using child-based norms tests with adults)
8. The evaluator's report includes no rationale for the requested accommodations
9. The requested accommodation doesn't "match" the disability, with no explanation (e.g., double time for a person who has trouble sustaining attention over time)
10. The evaluator's credentials are unclear or may be unqualified

» Documentation from evaluator is too brief and does not meet guidelines

To Whom It May Concern:

[REDACTED] a pleasant 32 year old female with medical problems including bipolar disorder and a learning disability primarily affecting her reading comprehension. Please consider offering testing accommodations including increased test time, frequent breaks and a private room. This will assist her in doing her best on her upcoming tests. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

» Documentation from evaluator is too brief and does not meet guidelines

[REDACTED]



August 11, 2011

To: Whom It May Concern

Re: Connie [REDACTED]

This letter is documenting Connie [REDACTED] permanent disability diagnosis of Attention Deficit Disorder. I am Connie [REDACTED] family physician. Please provide her all assistance your facility can provide to individuals with this diagnosis. Thank you.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]



Inappropriate or Unclear Requests

- Candidate asks for “unlimited time”
- Candidate asks for “extra time”
- Candidate wants to take the test in her living room
- Candidate wants his mother to proctor the exam
- Candidate wants to use brother as the reader
- Candidate wants to take the exam on her laptop

Inappropriate or Unclear Requests

SECTION 2: REQUESTED ACCOMMODATIONS

Please indicate what accommodations you are requesting, and provide a rationale for each:

Accommodation: Extra time for exams.

Rationale: Impaired processing speed.

J. [REDACTED], Ph.D

Accommodation: Use of a note taker

Rationale: Impaired processing speed and cognitive

flexibility J. [REDACTED], Ph.D

Accommodation: ability to record class

Rationale: Impaired processing speed and cognitive

flexibility J. [REDACTED], Ph.D

Evaluator is Unqualified

- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist diagnosed ADHD
- Pastoral Counselor diagnosed Bipolar Disorder
- School Counselor diagnosed a learning disability
- Family physician diagnosed a learning disability
- Teacher
- Parent
- Neighbor

Unqualified Evaluator

Cardiology

MEDICAL

Elizabeth

988

2011

I have been following Elizabeth [REDACTED] for her Attention-Deficit-Hyperactivity disorder. In my professional opinion, my patient Miss [REDACTED] has impaired concentration and should be allowed unlimited testing time which will give her more time to organize her thoughts.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Outer Limits of Accommodations

- The accommodation cannot be so extreme that test validity is compromised
 - 6X standard time
- The accommodation cannot fundamentally alter the test's purpose
 - Waiving a portion of the test
- The accommodation cannot jeopardize test security or the safety of staff/others
 - Testing at home
 - Administer medical care

Questions?



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