

**Duke University**  
**Student Disability Access Office (SDAO)**

**Documentation Guidelines for Asperger's and  
Other Pervasive Developmental Disorders**

Duke University is committed to providing educational opportunities to qualified students with disabilities for purposes of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. In order to establish that an individual is covered under the ADA and/or Rehabilitation Act, he/she must submit full and current documentation confirming that the disability substantially limits one or more major life activities, such as, but not limited to, hearing, seeing, breathing, performing manual tasks, walking, caring for oneself, and/or learning (reading and writing). Substantially limits refers to an individual being unable to perform a major life activity that the average person in the general population can perform or being significantly restricted as to the condition, manner or duration under which an individual can perform a particular major life activity as compared to an average person in the general population.

These guidelines describe the type of information necessary to validate Asperger's and other Pervasive Developmental Disorders, its impact on the individual and the need for accommodations. Students are responsible for obtaining documentation from an appropriate professional, and presenting a copy to the *Student Disability Access Office*. Any correspondence regarding adequacy of the documentation will be sent to the student who is responsible for obtaining any additional information or testing that is requested.

The final determination of disability status and appropriate accommodations rests with the *Student Disability Access Office* and is based on a review of the documentation and information submitted by the student as outlined below. Accommodations are not granted on the basis of a diagnostic label; they must be tied to current functional impairment(s). A prior history of accommodations, without demonstration of current need, does not in and of itself warrant the provision of like accommodations. If no prior accommodations have been provided, the evaluator must include an explanation as to why no accommodations were used in the past, and why accommodations are necessary now.

**Documentation submitted by students to verify disability eligibility should be comprehensive in order to avoid unnecessary delays, and:**

- I. Contain the Evaluator's Qualifications**
- II. Be Current and Age Appropriate**
- III. Include:**
  - A. History of Impaired Functioning**
  - B. Results of Diagnostic Interview**
  - C. Records of Past and Present History**
  - D. Comprehensive Description of Evaluation and Findings**
  - E. Specific Diagnosis**
  - F. Description of How Alternative Diagnoses were Ruled Out**
  - H. Recommended Accommodations and Rationale for Each**

## Documentation Guidelines for Asperger's and Other Pervasive Developmental Disorders

### I. Qualified Professionals Must Conduct the Evaluation

Qualified professionals must conduct the evaluation. The diagnostician must have comprehensive training in the field of Asperger's and Other Developmental Disorders and direct experience in working with an adult population.

Diagnoses of Asperger's Disorders documented by family members will not be accepted even when the family members are otherwise qualified by virtue of training and licensure/certification. All reports should be on letterhead, typed, dated, signed, and otherwise legible.

### II. Evaluation must be Current and Age Appropriate

The determination of whether an individual is significantly limited in functioning according to ADA criteria is based on assessment of the current impact of the impairment. However, since developmental disorders such as Asperger's and Other Developmental Disorders often originate in childhood, information demonstrating a history of impaired functioning beginning in childhood should also be provided.

The SDAO reserves the right to request additional assessment information when questions regarding the assessment or accommodations arise.

### III. Comprehensive Documentation Requirements

#### A. History of Impaired Communication, Social and Academic Functioning

Because Asperger's disorders are often manifested during childhood (though not always diagnosed), historical information regarding the individual's communication, social and academic history in elementary, secondary, and post secondary education should be documented and provided. Self/parent-report alone, without any accompanying historical documents that validate communication/social/academic problems, are generally not sufficient to establish substantial limitations in a major life activity.

#### B. Diagnostic Interview

The information collected during the diagnostic interview should include, but is not limited to:

- Relevant social, behavioral, sensory and communication data.
- Severity of the disorder.
- Relevant academic data including past evaluations, academic history, review of any special academic programs/tutoring, review of approved academic accommodations, etc.

#### C. Records of Past and Present History

**It is important to demonstrate the history of functional impairment via objective historical records; not just tell us about it.** Examples of historical records include, but are not limited to, previous psycho-educational, communication/behavioral/social/psychological evaluation reports, Individualized Education Plans (IEP's), 504 Plans, written teacher comments, academic records from elementary, junior high, and high school, documentation from tutors, learning specialists, camp counselors, coaches and the like. These sorts of records are essential to help validate self/parent reported impairments and to help determine if the history of functional impairment is of sufficient magnitude to rise to the level of clinical diagnosis and disability under the ADA.

## Documentation Guidelines for Asperger's and Other Pervasive Developmental Disorders

### **D. Documentation Must be Comprehensive and Include:**

1. Evaluators should cite the specific objective measures used to help substantiate the diagnosis.
2. A detailed description of the student's current; a) communication/language skills, b) ability to interact socially; c) restricted, repetitive and/or stereotyped patterns of behavior, activities and sensory functioning; d) sensitivity to environmental conditions, e) motor planning, etc. Evidence to support these statements should include results of aptitude and achievement testing, standardized tests of language skills and standardized scales of symptoms related to autism; as well as clinical observations including level of severity.
3. The student's current substantial limitations resulting from Asperger's Disorder including communication skills, social/emotional functioning and functioning in the living and academic environment in the post-secondary setting.
4. For students who wish to receive consideration for academic accommodations, the evaluator must provide relevant academic performance data including results of aptitude and achievement standardized tests.
5. Relevant information regarding current treatment and prognosis.
6. Relevant medical information relating to the student's Asperger's Disorder including a description of the impact any prescribed medications or medication side effects have on the student's ability to meet the demands of the postsecondary environment.

### **E. Documentation Must Include a Specific Diagnosis**

The report must include a specific diagnosis based on the *DSM-IV* diagnostic criteria and include the specific numerical classification code from the *DSM-IV*. The evaluator should use definitive language in the diagnosis of an Asperger's Disorder and Other Pervasive Developmental Disorders, avoiding such wording as "suggests or has problems with".

### **F. Alternative Diagnoses of Explanations Should Be Ruled Out**

The evaluator must investigate and rule out the possibility of other potential diagnoses involving developmental and neurological conditions, as well as educational factors that may result in symptoms mimicking the purported Asperger's Disorder and Other Pervasive Developmental Disorders. The student and his/her evaluators may wish to consult SDAO documentation guidelines for other impairments which are available on line at [www.access.duke.edu](http://www.access.duke.edu) and from the SDAO.

### **G. Rationale for Requested Accommodations Must Be Provided**

Accommodation requests are not granted on the basis of a diagnostic label; they must be tied to current functional impairment(s). The evaluator must describe the degree of impact the diagnosed Asperger's Disorder or Other Pervasive Development Disorder has on a specific major life activity, as well as the degree of impact on the individual. A link must be established between the requested accommodations and the functional limitations of the individual that are pertinent to the anticipated post-secondary academic environment.

A prior history of accommodations without demonstration of current need does not automatically warrant approval of requested accommodations. If there is no prior history of accommodations, the evaluator and/or the student must include a detailed explanation of why accommodations were not needed in the past, and why they are now currently being requested.

## **Documentation Guidelines for Asperger's and Other Pervasive Developmental Disorders**

### **G. Cont'd--Rationale for Requested Accommodations Must Be Provided**

Accommodations will be provided only when a clear and convincing rationale is made for the necessity of the accommodation. For example, test anxiety alone is not a sufficient diagnosis to support requests for testing accommodations and given that many individuals may perceive that they might benefit from extended time in testing situations, evaluators must provide specific rationales and justifications for recommended testing accommodations.

### **Other Information**

- **Accommodation Determinations**

The final determination of appropriate accommodations, auxiliary aids and services rests with the *Duke University Student Disability Access Office*, in consultation with individual academic and non-academic programs.

- **Confidentiality**

All information obtained in diagnostic and medical records will be maintained and used in accordance with applicable confidentially requirements.

- **Questions**

Questions should be directed to *Dr. Emma Swain, Director, Student Disability Access Office* at (919) 668-1267, [eswain@duke.edu](mailto:eswain@duke.edu) or mailed to her attention at 402 Oregon Street, Suite 102, Box 90142, **Duke University**, Durham, NC 27708, or faxed to (919) 668-3977.

- **Submission of Documentation**

Documentation should be submitted to the attention of *Dr. Emma Swain, Director, Student Disability Access Office*, 402 Oregon Street, Suite 102, Box 90142, **Duke University**, Durham, NC 27708, or faxed to (919) 668-3977

- **Beginning the Process of Requesting to be Considered for Reasonable Accommodations**

Students who wish to be considered for reasonable accommodations can begin the process by submitting a completed and signed Request for Consideration for Reasonable Accommodations form. Request forms are available from the Student Disability Access Office and on our web-site at [www.access.duke.edu](http://www.access.duke.edu).

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