



ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES OFFICE  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY DIVISION OF CONTINUING EDUCATION  
Harvard Extension School \* Harvard Summer School  
51 Brattle Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138 – 3722  
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## ***Guidelines for Documentation of Disabling Conditions Due to Chronic Physical/Mental Health Conditions***

Students with disabilities may qualify for reasonable accommodation pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act. To qualify for such consideration, students need to establish that they have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities in comparison to most people in the general population.

Reasonable accommodations and modifications are designed to help reduce the barriers created by the interaction of your condition with the educational environment to enable you to enjoy equal access to the programs, activities and services Harvard University makes available. Documentation is used to establish disability status and to assist the Accessibility Services Office (ASO) in determining necessary and appropriate reasonable accommodations and modifications in your course(s) or program. We obtain documentation from three sources, (1) a qualified licensed clinician, (2) your experiences with the condition, (3) and our professional judgement and knowledge of our educational environment. We encourage you to provide us your documentation prior to your Welcome meeting so that we can be efficient in our response to your requests.

For learners diagnosed with chronic physical and/or mental health conditions, clinical documentation can be obtained in two ways, either through a letter from a current, licensed, treating clinician that contains the information listed below, or, through the completion of a Provider Verification form for Chronic Physical/Mental Health Conditions ([add link.](#)) The Provider Verification form must be completed by the treating licensed provider and be complete in order for this to serve as documentation.

The guidelines below are designed to assist you and your clinician in preparing a clinical letter necessary to substantiate your needs for accommodations. Please forward documentation that meets these guidelines to ASO in the Division of Continuing Education at Harvard University.

➤ **Documentation is provided by a clinician qualified to diagnose in the appropriate area of specialization.**

(Use of diagnostic terminology indicating a specific disorder by someone whose training and experience are not within relevant fields is not appropriate. It is not appropriate for professionals to evaluate members of their own families. All reports must be on letterhead, typed, signed, dated, and otherwise legible. We do not accept documentation from email addresses that are not related to an institution.)



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➤ **Documentation is based on a current evaluation.**

Typically, the disabling condition has been present for six months or more. If the condition is considered permanent and unchanging (e.g., hearing loss, visual impairments) please provide the most recent evaluation with physician statement. Some conditions are chronic but have functional changes (e.g., pain) or are prone to periods of activity and inactivity. Current medical documentation (or updated documentation) is required for conditions such as these with an emphasis on the functional impact during the active phase, in order for ASO to determine appropriate accommodations.

➤ **Documentation is comprehensive and includes:<sup>1</sup>**

1. A statement of the presenting problem and appropriate diagnosis.  
(Diagnosis must conform to current version DSM, or ICD.)
2. Developmental history of the condition including the level of severity.
3. A description of the functional limitations resulting from the condition.  
(Please include any available test results or diagnostic interview findings, including measures of hearing and vision, if applicable.)
4. Prognosis of the condition over time
5. A description of current treatments, assistive devices, medications, and therapies and their effectiveness, including any adverse effects.
6. Recommendations for accommodations that the clinician believes are *necessary* and would positively improve each functional impact of the condition.

Please contact the Accessibility Services Office at Harvard University Division of Continuing Education at (617) 998-9640 if you would like further information. An enlarged print version of these guidelines is available upon request.

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<sup>1</sup> As indicated above, ASO will consider evaluative information conducted in the past. However, we may need updated information for conditions that may have changed since the prior assessment. Call if you have any questions.