

Blindness or Visual Impairment

Documentation Guidelines for Blindness or Visual Impairment

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, a "qualified individual with a disability is one who, with or without reasonable modification to rules, policies, or practices, the removal of architectural, communication, or transportation barriers, or the provisions of auxiliary aids and services, meets the essential eligibility requirements for the receipt of services or participation in programs or activities provided by a public entity". A person with a disability is anyone with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of such major life activities as walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, caring for self, performing manual tasks, working or learning. Visual impairments are considered disabilities under ADA if a major life activity is substantially limited. Ophthalmologists are the primary professionals involved in diagnosis and medical treatment of individuals who are blind or experience low vision. Optometrists provide information regarding the measurement of visual acuity as well as tracking and fusion difficulties (including but not limited to: eye movement disorders, inefficiency in using both eyes together, misalignment of the eyes, Amblyopia (lazy eye), focusing problems, visual sensory disorders and motor integration). Documentation from family members, immediate or otherwise, is not acceptable.

The following guidelines are provided to assist the service provider in collaboration with each student to determine appropriate accommodations. Recommended documentation includes:

- A clear and current statement of the vision related disability with supporting numerical description (usually within three years, the age of documentation is dependent upon the condition, the current status of the student and the student's request for accommodations);
- A summary of assessment procedures and evaluation instruments used to make the diagnosis and the summary of evaluation results including standardized scores;
- Present symptoms that meet the criteria for diagnosis;
- Medical information relating to the student's needs and the status of the individual's vision (static or changing) and its impact on the demands of the academic program;
- Narrative or descriptive text providing both quantitative and qualitative information about the student's abilities including the use of corrective lenses on ongoing visual therapy (if appropriate);
- A statement of the functional impact or limitations of the disability on a major life activity and the degree to which it impacts the individual in the learning context for which accommodations are being requested.

Further assessment by an appropriate professional may be required if coexisting learning disabilities or other disabling conditions exist. Documentation must be submitted to the Accessibility Resources Office in person, by fax (434-395-2434), by email to accessibilityresources@longwood.edu, or by mail: Accessibility Resources, Longwood University, 201 W. High Street, Farmville, VA 23909