



## **Student Accessibility Handbook**

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## **Mission Statement**

The Accessibility Services Program at Maria College assists in creating an accessible campus environment where students with disabilities have equal access to educational programs and the opportunity to participate fully in all aspects of campus life. Through partnerships with students, faculty and staff members, the program works to promote students' independence, self-advocacy and development, and ensures that students are recognized for their abilities (and not their disabilities).

## **Overview of Laws**

**Rehabilitation Act of 1973** Prohibits federal agencies and their grantees and contractors from discriminating against people based on disability in employment, programs and activities.

**Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (ADA/504)** A federal statute that guarantees the rights of disabled people to equal opportunity in all programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance. It prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals solely on the basis of disability. Section 504 regulations apply to state education agencies, elementary and secondary school systems, colleges and universities, libraries, vocational schools and state vocational rehabilitation agencies.

**Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990** Signed into law to protect individuals with disabilities against discrimination in employment; in programs operated by city, county, and state entities; public and private transportation, public accommodations and telecommunication services.

In enacting the ADAAA, Congress made it easier for an individual seeking protection under the ADA to establish that he or she has a disability within the meaning of the statute. Congress overturned several Supreme Court decisions that Congress believed had interpreted the definition of “disability” too narrowly, resulting in a denial of protection for many individuals with impairments such as cancer, diabetes, and epilepsy. The ADAAA states that the definition of disability should be interpreted in favor of broad coverage of individuals.

### **Section 508**

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, requires that when colleges develop, procure, maintain, or use electronic and information technology, individuals with disabilities have access to and use of information and data that is comparable to the access and use by individuals without disabilities.

**Title II:** Title II requires that colleges receiving government funding give people with disabilities an equal opportunity to benefit from all of their programs, services, and activities

## **Disability Law and Academic Accommodations for Accessibility**

Higher education institutions adhere to different disability laws than high schools. At the college level, accommodations are only provided when the student has self-identified as having a functional impairment that substantially limits major life functioning. Students attending high

school are protected by IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), which allows schools to make curricular changes for students with disabilities. At the college level, all students with disabilities must be “otherwise qualified”; therefore, they are required to meet the academic and technical skills for their respective program. It is important that all students understand that Maria College will not modify exams or curriculum, and standards for grading are determined by the instructor. The Americans with Disabilities Act and Amendments governs the decisions pertaining to accommodations for disabilities at Maria College.

For more information on the transition process from high school to college, please refer to the document, Transition from High School Information.

### **Reasonable Academic Accommodations**

Disabilities vary on how they impact a person’s major life functions. Due to the varying differences in disabilities, the program can only provide academic accommodations based on the history of the disability, reported limitations, and/or respective documentation from a qualified professional. There must always be a correlation between the impact of the disability and the requested accommodation. Accommodations are adjustments, changes or alterations to a program, service, activity or policy, in order to permit equal access.

Please note: personal services such as: content specific tutoring, personal aides, or assistance in bathing, grooming, food preparation, housekeeping, and assistance ambulating are not deemed reasonable accommodations. Additionally, individually prescribed devices, such as hearing aids, glasses, braces, wheelchairs, and other mobility devices are to be purchased by the student.

### **Registering with Disability Services**

Students who wish to receive accommodations at Maria College must register with the Accessibility Services Office. A student may access the registration form through the Student Support web site online at Maria College.edu/Accessibility Services. All the necessary forms and directions are found on this page. If you have questions on the Maria College Accessibility Services Program, you may request an appointment by emailing: [jcoller@mariacollege.edu](mailto:jcoller@mariacollege.edu) or (518)861-2502.

### **Arranging Accommodations**

Once students have completed the registration process, they are responsible for working collaboratively with the Assistant Dean of Students (Accessibility Services Program) and their instructors in coordinating their accommodations (the Accommodation Verification Letter) will be provided to instructors. Student can access the ability to register for each test on line at the Maria College web site.

### **Returning Students**

Students must obtain updated an accommodation letter each semester by submitting a request to the Accessibility Services office which can be done on-line at Mariacollege.edu at the accessibility web site. A request should be made at least one week prior to the start of the

academic semester. Photo copies of a previous accommodation letter is not sufficient. Maria College faculty are not required to provide a student with accommodations unless the student has provided an appropriately dated accommodation letter.

If you would like to make changes to your letter or wish to speak with the Accessibility Service staff, please contact Jon Coller-Takahashi, Assistant Dean of Students during business hours Monday to Friday 9:00 am to 4:30pm by email at [Accessibilityservices@mariacollege.edu](mailto:Accessibilityservices@mariacollege.edu)

## **General Guidelines**

All students who register with Accessibility Services at Maria College are required to meet individually with the Assistant Dean of Students, Jon Coller-Takahashi to review the student's documentation and to create an individualized plan for accommodations to based on the type of disability the student has. Students have a responsibility to provide appropriate and timely disability-related documentation to the Assistant Dean of Students in order for accommodation plans to be developed. This documentation can be provided by fax at (518)730-9628 or in person.

Students with learning disabilities and/or ADD should refer to the guidelines in Documentation of a Learning Disability /ADD.

Students with all other disability diagnoses (mobility, visual and hearing disabilities; chronic medical conditions; psychiatric disabilities; cognitive disabilities, and substance abuse/recovery) must provide documentation, which responds to the 7 template items listed below. These guidelines have been adapted from those developed by the Association on Higher Education and Disability ([www.ahead.org](http://www.ahead.org)).

All students are required to provide the Accessibility Service office with the appropriate documentation of their disability. This would include:

- A diagnostic statement from a qualified professional (psychologist, neuropsychologist, educational psychologist, learning disability specialist, psychiatrist, or medically based physician) identifying the disability. Please print a copy of our Medical Documentation Form from our web page and bring this to your healthcare provider. (Please note: prescriptions from a physician are **NOT** acceptable forms of documentation.
- If appropriate the medical documentation would provide a description of the diagnostic tests used along with the specific results and date administered.
- Documentation that contain the evaluator's recommendations detailing accommodations that would be implemented for the specific disability.

After proper documentation has been turned in, please allow (3) three working days before accommodations are granted. In determining the acceptability of documentation, Maria College follows "Best Practices: Disability Documentation in Higher Education," including the "Seven Essential Elements of Quality Disability Documentation" published by the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD). See the AHEAD website at <http://www.ahead.org>

Please note: **NO** accommodation will be provided if it changes the nature, service, or activity of the institution. Like all students, students receiving disability services will have to be able to meet the essential requirements of the program/ course(s) that they are enrolled in.

### **Steps for Receiving Accommodations**

To receive services you must take the following steps:

1. Student must first register on the Maria College web site at Accessibility Services page. When you complete the necessary registration form the Counseling and Accessibility Service department will contact you for an appointment. Documentation needed for registration can be Faxed to (518)730-9628. If you have any questions you can contact the Accessibility Services office at [AccessibilityServices@mariacollege.edu](mailto:AccessibilityServices@mariacollege.edu) or by phone (518)861-2502.

2. Once the student registers and provides appropriate documentation to the Assistant Dean of students the student will be contacted for an interview. During the initial intake interview an Individualized plan of accommodations would be created with the students input.

3. If the student has:

A) No documentation or outdated paperwork, they will be asked to review their concerns with their medical provider. They may also be given the information for a Psycho-Educational Evaluation depending on the reported disability.

i) Provisional accommodations may be granted for 30 calendar days until up-to-date documentation is provided. If the student does not provide proper documentation in the stated time frame, then accommodations will be suspended until the documentation is delivered.

ii) After proper documentation has been turned in, please allow (3) three working days before accommodations are granted.

\*In determining the acceptability of documentation, Maria College follows “Best Practices: Disability Documentation in Higher Education,” including the “Seven Essential Elements of Quality Disability Documentation” published by the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD). See the AHEAD website at <http://www.ahead.org>.

5. The student will schedule an appointment to meet with each instructor during office hours to discuss how their accommodations will work for that class (This may not apply for testing accommodations for specific programs).

6. The Assistant Dean of Students will issue the Faculty Accommodation letter once the student has registered and provided all necessary disability documentation.

7. Students can now register for testing accommodations on-line at MyMaria or on the Maria College web site on the Accessibility page.

For further information or to schedule an appointment, please contact the Assistant Dean of Students at (518)861-2502, or e-mail [Accessibilityservices@mariacollege.edu](mailto:Accessibilityservices@mariacollege.edu) or in person in the Frank E. O'Brien, Jr., Student Support Center, Mercy Hall.

### **Academic Accommodations**

Academic accommodations include, but are not limited to:

- a. Extension of time on tests and course assignments
- b. Note takers
- c. Preferential seating in the classroom or lab setting
- d. Quiet and/or separate testing area
- e. Recorders
- f. Test readers
- g. Test scribes
- h. Use of technology

**Peer Tutoring:** An appointment can be made with Jon Coller-Takahashi, at [Jcoller@mariacollege.edu](mailto:Jcoller@mariacollege.edu).

**Note Takers:** Students may ask classmates or others to copy their notes.

**Readers:** A test can read to a student or student can be evaluated for an assistive technology with a reading software (Read and Write Gold application).

**Assistive Technology:** Students can be evaluated to use an assistive technology. Questions about this should be directed to the Assistant Dean of Students.

Assistive technology is a tool that helps students with disabilities do things more quickly, easily, or independently. Some of the technologies that are available Read and Write Gold software and Windows Speech Recognition application.

### **Documentation Guidelines: Learning Disabilities/ ADD/ADHD**

All students with disabilities who are requesting accommodations or services through Accessibility Services Office need to meet individually with the Assistant Dean of Students, Jon Coller-Takahashi, to create an accommodation plan based on the type of disability the student has and to review the student's documentation. Students have a responsibility to provide appropriate and timely disability-related documentation to the accessibility services coordinator in order for accommodation plans to be developed. Documentation requirements vary by type of disability and situation, so please contact Jon Coller-Takahashi at [jcoller@mariacollege.edu](mailto:jcoller@mariacollege.edu), if you have questions about your situation

**1.** Students may submit any and all of the following if they have them from their high school in lieu of formal testing: Individualized Education Program (IEP), 504 Plan, or Summary of Performance (SOP). Students who have also had formal testing completed are encouraged to submit this testing to Accessibility Services office as well to help staff develop the most comprehensive accommodation plans for each student.

AND/OR

2. Testing conducted may involve a comprehensive psychoeducational evaluation of the following areas:

**Aptitude:** The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Third Edition (WAIS-III), The Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery III (W-J-III): Tests of Cognitive Ability or the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale: Fifth Edition.

**Achievement:** Assessment of academic ability in the areas of reading, writing and math. Suggested instruments include: Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery III: Tests of Achievement (W-J-III); Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT-II); Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK); or a combination of tests in specific skill areas such as the Test of Written Language-IV (TOWL-IV); the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised; the Nelson Denny Reading Test; the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test; or the Stanford Diagnostic Mathematics Test.

**Information Processing:** Specific areas of information processing such as short-and long-term memory, sequential memory, visual and auditory perception/processing or processing speed may be assessed. These areas may warrant evaluation as indicated by results from assessment of ability and achievement.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list or to restrict assessment in other pertinent and helpful areas such as vocational interests and aptitudes. Should students be requesting foreign language modifications there are additional measures may be requested to support the request, such as the Modern Languages Aptitude Test (MLAT).

**3. Timeliness of Testing.** Generally, this means testing has been conducted within the past 3-5 years, however some documentation that is older may also be relevant. Because the provision of reasonable accommodation and services is based upon assessment of the current limitations of the student's disability, it is important to provide current and appropriate documentation. Depending on the accommodations requested there may need to be updated documentation requested to draw a connection between the student's current limitations and the requested accommodation.

**4. Testing should state what the condition is and specify the criteria for making that determination.**

**5. Testing must be performed by a qualified evaluator.** Clinical or educational psychologists, learning disability specialists or clinicians known to specialize in learning disabilities/ADD/ADHD are most often used.

**6. Testing must include information about how the condition impacts the student.** Please indicate how the student's disability will affect her current participation in courses, programs, services or any other activity.

#### **Documentation Guidelines: Other Disabilities Diagnoses**

All students who register with Accessibility Services at Maria College are required to meet individually with the Assistant Dean of Students, Jon Coller-Takahashi, to create an accommodation plan based on the type of disability the student has and to review the student's documentation. Students



have a responsibility to provide appropriate and timely disability-related documentation in order for accommodation plans to be developed.

Students with all other disability diagnoses (mobility, visual and hearing disabilities; chronic medical conditions; psychiatric disabilities; cognitive disabilities, and substance abuse/recovery) must provide documentation which responds to the 7 template items listed below. These guidelines have been adapted from those developed by the Association on Higher Education and Disability ([www.ahead.org](http://www.ahead.org)).

### **Notice to Clinicians:**

This student is looking to receive services and accommodations while at Maria College. We have provided some basic instructions below for you to use when filling out the Medical Provider Documentation Form available on our web site at Maria College.

Please remember that the student will not be formally registered with accessibility services office, nor will they be able to receive any disability-related services and accommodations, until the student has met with an Accessibility Services staff member for an intake meeting appointment to discuss individual needs and documentation is reviewed. An accommodation plan is developed with the student at that meeting. Please contact the Assistant Dean of Students, Jon Coller-Takahashi, at (518) 861-2502 or email [jcoller@mariacollege.edu](mailto:jcoller@mariacollege.edu), if you have any questions. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

### **1. The credentials of the evaluator/s**

The best quality documentation is provided by a licensed or otherwise properly credentialed professional who has undergone appropriate and comprehensive training, has relevant experience, and has no personal relationship with the individual being evaluated. An appropriate match between the credentials of the individual making the diagnosis and the condition being reported is expected (e.g., an orthopedic limitation might be documented by a physician, but not a licensed psychologist).

### **2. A statement identifying the disability**

Acceptable documentation includes a clear diagnostic statement that describes what the condition is and how it was diagnosed. While diagnostic codes from the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM) or the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) of the World Health Organization are helpful in providing this information, a clinical description will also convey the necessary information.

### **3. A description of the diagnostic methodology used**

Quality documentation includes a description of the diagnostic criteria, evaluation methods, procedures, tests and dates of administration, as well as a clinical narrative, observation, and specific results. Where appropriate to the nature of the disability, having both summary data and specific test scores (with the norming population identified) within the report is recommended. Diagnostic methods that are congruent with the particular disability and current professional practices in the field are recommended. Methods may include formal instruments, medical examinations, structured interview protocols, performance observations and unstructured interviews. If results from informal, non-standardized or less common methods of evaluation are reported, an explanation of their role and significance in the diagnostic process will strengthen their value in providing useful information.

### **4. A description of the current functional limitations**

Information on how the condition(s) currently impacts the individual provides useful information for both establishing a disability and identifying possible accommodations. A combination of the results of formal evaluation procedures, clinical narrative, and the individual's self-report is the most comprehensive approach to fully documenting impact. The best quality documentation is thorough enough to

demonstrate whether and how a major life activity is substantially limited by providing a clear sense of the severity, frequency and pervasiveness of the condition(s). While relatively recent documentation is recommended in most circumstances, common sense and discretion in accepting older documentation of conditions that are permanent or non-varying is recommended. Likewise, changing conditions and/or changes in how the condition impacts the individual brought on by growth and development may warrant more frequent updates in order to provide an accurate picture. It is important to remember that documentation is not time-bound; the need for recent documentation depends on the facts and circumstances of the individual's condition. In most cases, documentation should be current within the past 3-5 years; however some documentation that is older may also be relevant. In some cases, previous or more recent documentation may be requested to draw connections between the student's condition and the accommodation being requested.

#### **5. A description of the expected progression or stability of the disability**

It is helpful when documentation provides information on expected changes in the functional impact of the disability over time and context. Information on the cyclical or episodic nature of the disability and known or suspected environmental triggers to episodes provides opportunities to anticipate and plan for varying functional impacts. If the condition is not stable, information on interventions for exacerbations (including the individual's own strategies) and recommended timelines for re-evaluation are most helpful.

#### **6. A description of current and past accommodations, services and/or medications**

The most comprehensive documentation will include a description of both current and past medications, auxiliary aids, assistive devices, support services, and accommodations, including their effectiveness in ameliorating functional impacts of the disability. A discussion of any significant side effects from current medications or services that may impact physical, perceptual, behavioral or cognitive performance is helpful when included in the report. While accommodations provided in another setting are not binding on the current institution, they may provide insight in making current decisions.

#### **7. Recommendations for accommodations, adaptive devices, assistive services, compensatory strategies, and/or collateral support services**

Recommendations from professionals with a history of working with the student provide valuable information for review and the planning process. It is most helpful when recommended accommodations and strategies are logically related to functional limitations; if connections are not obvious, a clear explanation of their relationship can be useful in decision making. While the College has no obligation to provide or adopt recommendations that would fundamentally modify the course or degree requirements. Those accommodation recommendations that are congruent with the programs, services, and benefits offered by the College may be appropriate.

**Transition from High School to College**

Maria College follows the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Once enrolled in college, students move from the protection of Public Law 94-142 (I.D.E.A.) to protection under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The following chart highlights the differences.

<b>HIGH SCHOOL</b>	<b>COLLEGE</b>
<p><b>Applicable Laws:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA)</li> <li>• Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973</li> </ul> <p><i>These laws are sometimes referred to as “success laws” because they require high schools to provide all possible accommodations to help ensure a student’s success. Supports may include modifications to curriculum, modifications to homework, the assignment of personal classroom aides, and shorter tests.</i></p>	<p><b>Applicable Laws:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)</li> <li>• Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973</li> </ul> <p><i>Laws that apply to colleges and universities, sometimes referred to as “access laws,” require institutions to make accommodations ensuring that students with disabilities have full access to programs and activities. A student with a disability, however, must be “otherwise qualified” to undertake a given course or program, meeting the same academic and skills-based requirements that apply to students without disabilities. For example, a school may offer testing accommodations by way of extended time or in an altered format such as large print or Braille, but the contents of a test cannot be modified.</i></p>
<p><b>Required Documentation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual Education Plan (IEP)</li> <li>• 504 Plan</li> <li>• School provides evaluation at no cost to the student.</li> <li>• School conducts evaluations at prescribed intervals.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Required Documentation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Varies according to the disability.</li> <li>• I.E.P. and 504 plans alone are not sufficient.</li> <li>• Documentation must include a written report describing the impairment, a diagnosis, and all test results and/or medical information used to arrive at the diagnosis. If the documentation is incomplete or not current, the student is responsible for obtaining and submitting additional documentation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Student Role:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student is identified and supported by parents/teachers.</li> <li>• Primary responsibility for accommodations belongs to the school.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Student Role:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student must self-identify to the Office of Disability Services (ODS).</li> <li>• Students wishing to request accommodations must follow ODS policies and procedures.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Parental Role:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents have access to student records and participate in the accommodation process.</li> <li>• Parents advocate for students.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Parental Role:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is the student’s responsibility, not the parent’s responsibility, to request and arrange his or her own accommodations. Students advocate for themselves, with support of the ODS as needed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Teachers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers may modify curriculum and/or alter pace of assignments.</li> <li>• Teachers use a multi-sensory approach.</li> <li>• Weekly quizzes, midterms, finals, and frequent graded assignments provide students with an on-going indication of their academic progress. Teachers arrange regular parent/teacher/student conferences to report on and discuss student’s progress.</li> <li>• Attendance is taken and reported but a disability may potentially excuse some absences.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Instructors:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructors are not required to modify the fundamental nature of program.</li> <li>• Instructors tend to rely on lecture and may or may not use a multi-sensory approach.</li> <li>• Grades are generally based on fewer tests and assignments, and students must independently monitor their learning in the course on a frequent and regular basis. Students are responsible for requesting and arranging individual conferences with their instructors.</li> <li>• Responsibility for class attendance rests with the individual student, and since regular and punctual class attendance is expected of all students, the student must accept the consequences of failure to attend class/classes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Grades:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grades may be modified based on curriculum accommodations.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Grades:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grades reflect the quality of work submitted.</li> </ul>

## Testing Room Accommodations Guidelines

1. Every Student is responsible to sign up on-line for their testing accommodation at least 3 days in advance on the Accessibility page at the Maria College web site.
2. The student will immediately contact their instructor at the same time and ask that their test be sent to the Accessibility Services office at least 24 hours prior to the date and time requested on-line.
3. The instructor will email or drop off the test at least **24 hours** prior to the test.
4. Student will arrive promptly to take test at the designated testing time prearranged with the instructor. Students may only take the test at the prearranged time. The arranged time does not necessarily have to coincide with the scheduled class time.
5. The instructor will either pick the test up from the MARY BETH O'BRIEN TUTORING CENTER or other arrangements will be made prior to testing.

**In order to enforce the highest level of academic integrity while administering exams, Maria College requires that test-takers adhere to the following guidelines:**

1. Student must have a **photo ID** in order to sign in to take the test. (A copy of the Maria College student may be kept on file).
2. The following items are **not allowed\*** in the testing area:  
Electronic devices, bags, notebooks/books, purses, jackets, other personal belongings  
\*(unless permitted by a course instructor)
3. In order to uphold academic standards, test takers may not leave the testing site during the examination and will forfeit the ability to complete their test in so doing. (Documented medical exceptions).
4. If a student will be late or unable to show up at the scheduled test time, s/he must inform the Accessibility Services office as soon as possible. If a student misses three or more tests in one semester they risk losing their accommodations for the rest of that semester.