

# SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY

## Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies

### Guidelines for Documenting Hearing Impairment

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1.) **A Qualified Evaluator.** Professionals conducting assessments rendering the diagnosis of a hearing disability and making recommendations for appropriate accommodations must be qualified to do so. Such professionals can include licensed medical doctors with special training in assessing hearing loss or audiologists. The evaluator may not be a member of the student's family. The report must:

- include the evaluator's name, title, professional credentials, license and/or certification number,
- be presented in English on the professional's letterhead, typed, dated, signed, and legible.

2.) **Current Documentation.** Reasonable accommodations are based on the current impact of a disability. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that medical documentation addresses an individual's current level of functioning and present need for accommodations. A full report from a treating healthcare professional completed within the past twelve months is considered current. Older documentation may be accepted if the condition is unchanging in its impact.

3.) **Comprehensive Documentation of a Hearing Disability** must include:

- the results of a current audiogram with a narrative interpretation of it. The narrative should provide:
  - a history of presenting symptoms and relevant medical history
  - description of current impairment
  - a summary of assessment procedures and evaluation instruments/reports used to make the diagnosis
  - duration and severity of the disorder
  - if applicable, documentation of assistive devices and technology used, with estimated effectiveness; this would include a history of any disability-related accommodation(s)
  - status of the individual's condition - static, improving, or degrading. Expected progression of the condition over time is useful.
- A clear diagnosis of medical disability must be rendered, preferably in *ICD-10* format. A specific diagnosis does not use wording such as "seems to indicate" or "suggests." The diagnosis must clearly state the disorder and the subtype if applicable.
- The current functional limitations of the individual in an academic environment must be addressed. Functional limitations are the ways that the diagnosed disability would currently substantially limit the student in a major life activity. This should include a thorough description of the degree of impact to the individual and reference to allowable activities.
- Recommendations for accommodations in a post-secondary academic environment can be helpful if they include a clear rationale. Each recommendation should be based on interview, observation, and/or testing and correlated with both the diagnosis and the student's functional limitations.

4.) **Supporting Documentation.** The qualified evaluator's report, while necessary, is by no means the only documentation we can use to better understand and accommodate the student. Other helpful documents are: records of accommodation on standardized tests such as SAT, ACT, GRE, or LSAT, high school 504 plans or IEP's, previous psycho-educational evaluations, report cards, transcripts, and teacher, tutor, therapist, or employer reports. If needed for evaluation purposes, DASS may access students' SMU transcripts and records and contact current or former SMU instructors.