



Disability Support Services

Faculty Handbook



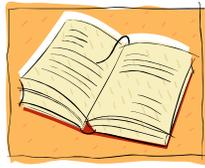


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Disability Support Services (DSS) is the office at Spoon River College whose mission it is to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to the college's programs, activities, and services as defined in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

DSS has the responsibility to arrange academic accommodations for students, as well as to enhance campus accessibility, serve as a resource to Spoon River College faculty and staff, and to ensure that academic standards are maintained throughout the accommodation process.

The purpose of this handbook is to explain how students receive disability support services at Spoon River College and to assist faculty in implementing recommended accommodations. If you have any questions about disability services that are not addressed in this handbook, please contact the Disability Support Services Advisor in Student Services for your respective campus.

Who is eligible for disability support services?

- Any student with a documented disability may be eligible for support services. A disability, as defined by disability law, is any “physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity...” Major life activities are those activities that individuals without disabilities can perform with little or no difficulty. Major life activities include such activities as walking, seeing, hearing, breathing, learning, working, caring for oneself, and performing manual tasks.
- Disabilities include, but are not limited to, hearing impairments, visual impairments, mobility impairments, chronic medical conditions, psychological disabilities, and learning disabilities.
- Students with temporary disabling conditions may also be eligible for services.

What are the disability laws that necessitate the provision of disability support services?

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)

- civil rights guarantee for individuals with disabilities
- provides protection from discrimination for individuals on the basis of disability
- provides for access to employment, transportation, public accommodations, public services, and telecommunications for people with disabilities

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Section 504 states that “no otherwise qualified individual with a disability...shall, solely by reason of...disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

Who is an “otherwise qualified individual with a disability?”

An otherwise qualified individual with a disability is one who, with or without reasonable accommodations, meets the essential eligibility requirements for the receipt of services or the participation in programs of activity provided by a public entity.





How do students begin the accommodation process?

- Students with disabilities meet with the DSS Advisor as a first step in arranging accommodations. When students identify themselves as having a disability, they are asked to provide documentation of the disability and the need for services requested. Collecting this information is important to an institution attempting to understand the nature and extent of a disability and to verify the need for accommodations.
- The DSS Advisor verifies the disability and determines how the disability affects academic work.
- Many students with disabilities do not wish to be identified as disabled. Unless a student is requesting accommodations, he/she is not required to identify themselves as having a disability. If, however, the student desires accommodations, it is best if their needs are identified prior to or early in the semester.

How does DSS verify a disability and its impact in the classroom?

This is accomplished through discussion with the student and review of documentation. The following are documentation requirements by type of disability:

- ***Students with learning disabilities (LD) and/or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)***
DSS requires current documentation (within the last 3-5 years) from a qualified professional (certified school or clinical psychologist, LD specialist/diagnostician, or physician). Consideration will be given for older diagnostic evaluations in particular cases. Names of tests administered and all test scores, how the disability impacts learning, recommendations for specific learning strategies, academic support services, prescribed medications, and any other treatments should all be included in the report. This includes a formal psychological evaluation and/or multidisciplinary staffing report.

This group of students comprises the largest population of students served by DSS. Learning disabilities affect the manner in which individuals acquire, integrate, and/or express knowledge. Learning disabilities may affect a student's performance in reading, writing, spoken language, mathematics, or orientation to space and time.

- ***Students with visual impairments***

DSS requires a visual evaluation completed by a licensed eye care specialist.

Visual disabilities can vary from total blindness to low vision. Students with visual disabilities may experience eye strain, sensitivity to light, and an inability to read printed material or to distinguish certain colors. Students who have been blind from birth have no visual memories. Their concepts of objects, space, and distance may be different from those persons who develop visual disabilities later in life. Mobility and orientation skills also vary due to numerous factors. Students with low vision may not have an apparent “visible” disability. Difficulty in performing in class readings, open book tests, completing scantron forms, or viewing information presented in lectures may occur.

- ***Students with hearing impairments***

DSS requires an audiological report from a licensed audiologist verifying the degree of hearing loss.

The age of onset of a hearing disability will have a great impact upon the student’s English ability, both spoken and written. Generally, English is considered a second language for students with hearing disabilities when sign language is the dominant mode of communication. Providing all directions in writing, speaking to the student rather than the interpreter, using telecommunication relay services, and closed captioned videos are appropriate requests.

- ***Students with physical disabilities***

DSS requires a physician report on the evaluation and progress of the disability.

Physical access is one of the major concerns for students with orthopedic disabilities. In order to fully participate in classroom activities requiring full use of hands and/or legs, educational assistants may be a required accommodation. When a course requires travel to alternative locations, those locations must be accessible.

- ***Students with chronic health conditions***

DSS requires a physician report on the evaluation and progress of the disability. DSS has a “certification of medical/psychological disability” form that the student can have completed by their health provider.

There are a number of chronic health conditions that may interfere with a student’s academic work, concentration, and attention. Some students may be in pain or be taking medication with varying side effects, such as drowsiness. Students with a seizure disorder may be affected at any time without warning. Some medication can lessen or control seizures, but

produce side effects such as slowed response and impaired coordination. Other chronic health conditions may include, but are not limited to, arthritis, AIDS, cancer, carpal tunnel syndrome, and irritable bowel syndrome.

- ***Students with psychological disabilities***

DSS requires a letter from a clinical psychologist or psychiatrist. Documentation may include diagnostic treatment information and potential medication side effects. DSS has a “certification of medical/psychological disability” form that the student can have completed by their mental health professional.

Psychological disabilities include, but are not limited to, depression, bipolar disorder (or manic depressive disorder), anxiety disorders, and schizophrenia. Students may receive treatment such as taking prescription medication to help control symptoms. This medication may have side effects such as drowsiness or disorientation.

How are accommodations determined?

- Accommodations are individualized to address specific functional limitations resulting from a disability. There must be a logical link between the functional limitation(s) and the accommodation.
- The DSS Advisor relies heavily on documentation of the disability when determining accommodations. The student is also drawn into a discussion of limitations and possible strategies.

What is a “reasonable accommodation?”

Reasonable accommodations are:

- Changes in the learning environment or changes in the way that the student with a disability has access to the coursework to give them the same access to the material as the other students.
- Modifications to non-essential elements of coursework/requirements that do not alter the curriculum.



Are these accommodations “fair” to other students?

- This question is often asked regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. The underlying assumption of the question is that fairness and equal treatment are synonymous with “the same” treatment.
- The laws protect students with disabilities from being measured in an area that they cannot show their true level of ability. Reasonable modifications allow students with disabilities an equal opportunity to perform at a standard equivalent to students without a disability. While an accommodation may present an advantage to students without a disability, it isn’t an advantage for a student with a disability, **but an equalizer**.

Example: A student whose limitation is the physical task of writing or other fine motor manipulations may be an excellent writer, even though he/she cannot print or type the letters and words. Thus, the physical act of writing is a non-essential task. The student’s mastery of language and course material must not, under the law, be judged by their ability to manipulate a pencil or pen, or by use of a keyboard. Accommodating the student by providing a scribe to record the student’s essay responses, for example, permits the student to show whether he/she can write effectively and whether he/she has acquired the information and critical skills the instructor wished to convey in the course.

How are instructors notified of approved accommodations?

- The student will be asked to sign a Release of Information Form giving Disability Services permission to release necessary information about the accommodations to appropriate faculty and staff.
- Once reasonable accommodations have been determined, the DSS Advisor sends a Letter of Accommodation to each of the student’s instructors to inform them of the approved accommodations.
- It is the **student’s** responsibility to initiate a meeting with the instructor to discuss the accommodations. Accommodations should **not** be initiated until discussed between the student and instructor.



When are accommodations not provided?

Spoon River College provides accommodations unless they fall under one of the following three categories:

- Fundamental alteration: If an accommodation reduces the academic standards of the college or its courses, the college denies the accommodation and deems it unreasonable. Academic standards are essential for any student. Determination of a fundamental alteration is made by DSS after discussion with faculty on the essential components of the course or major. Students with disabilities must acquire the same knowledge and skills as other students.
- Undue hardship: If an accommodation costs too much or is impossible to administer, the accommodation is deemed unreasonable. An undue administrative burden occurs when the college doesn't have enough time to respond to the request, or when it would be impossible or not feasible to administer. In every instance, the college reserves the right to offer other, equally effective accommodations. In twenty years of case law and findings under Section 504, the federal government has never allowed a post-secondary institution to claim undue financial hardship as a legitimate refusal to provide auxiliary aids or services.
- Personal service: If a request for an accommodation falls under the definition of a personal service, the college is not responsible for providing the request. Personal services are those that a person with a disability must use regardless of attendance at the college. In addition, personal services are those for which no correlation between the disability's functional limitation and program access can be established. The college, for instance, does not purchase wheelchairs or other assistive technologies used in every setting to compensate for a mobility disability. Other examples of personal services may include tutoring and transportation, although if these services are provided to students without disabilities, they must also be made available and accessible to students with disabilities.



Some additional notes regarding accommodations:

- **Accommodations cannot be applied retroactively** to coursework completed before a student identifies him/herself as a student with a disability, provides appropriate documentation, and registers with DSS.
- Accommodations are intended to provide each student with equal access to course information and content. Accommodations do not guarantee a student's success.
- All students are expected to meet the standards of conduct, attendance, and course requirements of the college.

Confidentiality

- Documentation obtained by DSS regarding an individual's disability is considered private, is maintained in separate, secure files, and is only to be shared on a need-to-know basis. In many cases, a faculty member does not need to know the specific disability, only the necessary accommodations needed to fulfill the institution's mandate for equal access under ADA/504.
- Please be careful not to discuss information about a student's disability or accommodations with other faculty, staff, or students. All information is considered confidential, and cannot be shared with others without written permission from the student.





What is the responsibility of DSS, the student, and faculty?

DSS is responsible for...

- verifying disabilities and the need for accommodation
- recommending reasonable accommodations
- teaching students about their rights and responsibilities
- advocating for program access

DSS does not have either the right or the responsibility to monitor the performance of students with disabilities. Students are ultimately responsible for their own academic success. DSS works with students and, when appropriate, with their instructors, to determine which accommodations are reasonable and to identify other campus and community services that may be appropriate and refer students to them.

Students are responsible for...

- identifying themselves
- providing appropriate documentation of their disability
- requesting reasonable accommodations given their disability in reasonable time
- initiating contact with instructors to discuss accommodations
- meeting the academic standards expected of all students

Ultimately, responsibility lies with the student. The student must contact DSS and faculty with questions and concerns. Through the cooperation of all parties, timely, reasonable accommodations are provided.

Faculty is responsible for...

- being open to accommodating
- providing program access
- meeting with the student to discuss needs
- implementing reasonable accommodations
- maintaining confidentiality

Faculty has a responsibility to assist in the provision of accommodations as described in the Letter of Accommodation. **Universal design of courses affords equal access to all students with or without disabilities. Universal design is holistic in nature, emphasizing the provision of a multi-sensory approach to teaching so that more students benefit.**

Suggestions for creating an accessible classroom

- ***Announce the intent to accommodate on the first day of class and include a statement on each course syllabus.*** An example of such a statement might be...*students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Disability Support Services Office as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.* Please have students contact the Disability Advisor in Student Services.
- ***Grant reasonable accommodations.*** Accommodations are changes in the way things are done. Accommodations are reasonable so long as course standards aren't fundamentally altered and there is a logical link between the student's disability and the accommodation.
- ***Consult with the student.*** The DSS Advisor will provide the instructor with a Letter of Accommodation that details appropriate accommodations. Students must initiate a discussion with each instructor regarding their needs. **Accommodations should not be granted until this occurs.** Students who are requesting accommodations whom you have not received notification regarding may be referred to DSS so the appropriateness of the request can be determined.
- ***Permit students to use auxiliary aides and technologies which ensure access once you are aware of accommodations being approved by DSS.*** Depending on the disability, students may use note-takers, sign language interpreters, readers, scribes, and lab assistants. Others may use a digital recorder, computer, adaptive software, assistive listening devices, and other technologies for the same purpose. Faculty should be aware that penalties for misspelled, but correct responses might put some students at a disadvantage due to their disability.
- ***Grant testing accommodations (once approved).*** Depending on the particular needs of the student, it may be necessary to extend testing times to one and one-half or double time, provide a quiet environment, or alternative testing formats (e.g. audio taping, reader, scribe, enlarged copy, or computer disk for screen reader software). DSS and the ASC offer testing accommodation services when they cannot be provided by an instructor.
- ***Regard disability related discussions and information with confidentiality.*** It is important not to violate student confidentiality in any way. Divulge only what a student gives written permission for, i.e., sometimes a student will allow identification to a classroom note-taker. Take your cue from the student.
- ***Select textbooks early.*** Students with print disabilities require that DSS begin early to obtain or produce necessary text format.

- **Select videos that contain closed captioning whenever possible.** Students who are hard-of-hearing will not have access to information contained in a video if the video is not captioned. If you know you will be using a video without captioning, please work with the student and/or DSS to determine the best way to ensure that the student has access to the information.
- **When requested, provide alternatives to printed information.** Alternatives to print include Braille, computer electronic text, large print, and tape cassettes. If Internet resources and other technologies are used, they must be accessible to students with disabilities as they are for other students. DSS may assist in coordinating provision of these alternative formats; early access to all notes and class presentations is requested in order to allow adequate preparation time for alternative formats.
- **Make adjustments in instruction.** Some students need lecturers to face the audience while speaking. A student may ask you to wear a small transmitting microphone while they wear the FM receiver. Others may need written or graphic information spoken aloud or described. Adjustments in instruction, such as these, may be made after the student requests them.
- **Provide access to information using auditory, kinesthetic, and visual channels of learning.** This can be achieved by writing key terms or outline on the board; creating study guides; providing questions prior to lecture that can be answered at the conclusion of the lecture; assigning readings prior to discussion; begin a lecture with a quick review of the previous one; using key phrases such as “the most important point is..., remember this..., and first we will discuss...” to emphasis key concepts and main ideas; provide assignments orally and in writing; explain technical language; and provide opportunities for short quizzes so feedback can be obtained.

Anticipate that students with disabilities may potentially be in every course. It is not required, however, to anticipate every accommodation that a student with a disability might need prior to the request. Simply be prepared for the fact that some requests for accommodations will be made. And by all means, expect students with disabilities to successfully meet the requirements of your course!



What types of accommodations are provided?

As stated previously in this handbook, you will receive a Letter of Accommodation from DSS if you have a student with a disability in your class who is eligible for classroom accommodations. This will be sent via email. The Letter of Accommodation will specify what accommodations are approved, as well as a brief explanation of the accommodation. Together, you and the student can determine the most appropriate way to implement the accommodation(s) based on the nature of the course. The DSS office can assist with this process if needed.

The following are some of the most common accommodations along with an explanation of each...

Note-takers

- A note-taker is usually a student taking the same class as the student with a disability and is paid a stipend (SRC book store gift certificate) at the end of the semester.
- The instructor is responsible for announcing to the class that a note-taker is needed and should refer volunteers to the DSS office where he/she will be given a note-taking binder containing carbonless note-taking paper.
- The instructor will connect the student with the note-taker in a confidential manner if the student wishes to obtain the notes immediately after class.
- The note-taker will use carbonless paper to take notes and will give one copy to the student at the end of class or bring the extra copy to the instructor or to Student Services if the student receiving notes wishes to remain anonymous.
- *Expectations:*
 - The student must attend class in order to receive the notes.** It is not acceptable to use the note-taker as an excuse to miss class.
 - If the note-taker is absent, the instructor should ensure the student receiving the accommodation receives a copy of the notes; this may be from another student in the class (anonymously) or from the instructor's notes.
 - Excessive absences and/or tardiness by the note-taker may result in termination of employment and loss of stipend (gift certificate).

Record lectures

Some students will need to use recorders to supplement notes taken during class. This accommodation, like all others, is considered on an individual basis. Students can borrow digital recorders from DSS for one semester at a time.

Enlargements

Some students will need to have class materials enlarged in order to have access to the printed material. DSS can assist with this, and instructors should send all documents that need enlarging to the DSS Advisor at least 7 days prior to the date that the document is needed. E-mailing the document is the preferred format for sending documents that need to be enlarged by DSS.

Spelling aid

Some students may be provided with a Franklin Speller/Med-Spell by DSS. These spelling aids assist with spelling only, and do not contain definitions.

Testing accommodations

- *Extended time*
 - This is usually time + 1/2 or double-time, but never unlimited time. For example if a class is given 2 hours for a test, a student given time and a half will be given 3 hours.
 - It is up to the individual instructor as to how and where the extended time will take place. Exams may be taken in the Student Services testing room or in the ASC with prior approval/arrangement.

- *Alternative testing location*
 - Allows the student a testing environment with reduced distractions.
 - It is up to the individual instructor as to where the alternative location will be; these exams may be taken in the Student Services testing room, the ASC/TRIO, or another location.

- *Use of a reader*
 - It is up to the individual instructor as to how and where an oral exam will take place. Exams may be taken in Student Services or the ASC with prior approval /arrangement.
 - If the student will be taking exams in Student Services or the ASC, the instructor should ensure that the exam is received in advance of exam day.
 - When taken in Student Services or the ASC, exams may be administered using a live reader or via an electronic version of the exam and a computer screen reader.
 - If using a live reader, the instructor should provide Student Services or the ASC with two copies of the exam.
 - If using a computer screen reader (such as Natural Reader), the instructor should email or provide the test on a jump drive for the individual administering the test.

- *Use of a calculator*

When calculators are approved, they can be used in appropriate math classes with the instructor's permission. Calculators are not permitted when they supplant the skill the test is being used to measure.

- *Use of a scribe*

It is up to the individual instructor as to how and where an exam will be scribed; these exams may be taken in the Student Services testing room, the ASC or in class with a portable word processor (available for loan from DSS Advisor).

Please note:

If exams are to be taken in Student Services or the ASC, the instructor should identify any special instructions for the exam (i.e. open book, open notes, use of calculator, etc.). The student should schedule an appointment to take the exam at least 24 hours in advance of the exam date.

Please keep in mind that the accommodations listed above are only ***the most common*** ones that instructors will be asked to provide. This list is by no means all-inclusive, and there are many more accommodations that students will be eligible for.





What-if's...

What if faculty suspects a student has a disability?

- Do not ask if he or she has a disability.
- Approach as with any student having difficulty.
- Inquire what might be impacting their performance.
- If presence of a disability is disclosed, refer the student to DSS.

What if a student with a disability is failing your course?

Equal access through the use of reasonable accommodations for a student with disabilities does not ensure success. The possibility of a student with a disability failing a course exists when academic performance falls below minimal standards. The question to ask regarding this situation is “were requested accommodations provided in a satisfactory manner?” If so, then the failing grade is an accurate measure of the student’s performance and has been earned.

It is possible to fail a student with a disability; however, one must be in compliance with the civil rights laws which prohibit discrimination. These laws mandate access to education, not guaranteed academic success. When a faculty member has done all that is required, failing the under-qualified student is proper and lawful.

What if I choose not to comply?

If an instructor does not provide an accommodation which is reasonable and legitimate, the student has several options, both formal and informal. The advisor has an ethical obligation to inform students of their rights to due process under the law.

Options include the following:

- clarifying the student’s rights in the situation at hand, and coaching them about how to best discuss the accommodations further with their instructor
- the DSS Advisor may contact the instructor to further clarify the issue and to ensure he or she understands the student’s civil rights
- the student and DSS Advisor may meet with the instructor
- the student may contact the Dean of Student Services for assistance with the situation
- students may also seek mediation/advocacy through the non-academic grievance policy

Although most concerns are resolved through one of the previous avenues, the student always has the right to file a formal complaint with either the Illinois Human Rights Commission or with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights. This process takes longer before the situation is resolved, but carries with it greater threats to the College as a whole in the event of adverse findings.

What if a student with a disability is enrolled in a program that requires specific certification?

No student can be denied access to any program based solely on his or her disability. All students must adhere to the standards of the program with necessary accommodations made according to his or her disability so long as the accommodations do not fundamentally alter the objectives of the program. When the standards are ***not*** met and the student has been given appropriate accommodations, it is reasonable that the student may be denied certification in the program.

What if a student has a seizure in the classroom?

If a student has identified him/herself to DSS and requested a particular procedure be followed in the event of a seizure, DSS will notify the instructor of those procedures. If a seizure occurs in the classroom and you have not received any notification from DSS or the student, you may use the following guidelines:

- Remain calm. Although its manifestations may be intense, seizures are generally not painful to the individual.
- Do not restrain the student.
- Clear the area of objects that may injure the student during the seizure.
- Help lower the person to the floor and place cushioning under the head.
- DO NOT force anything between the teeth.
- If the student has identified as having seizures/seizure disorder they are required to notify SRC as to their doctor's recommendations of when/if 911 should be called.
- If a student has not identified as having seizures/seizure disorder please call 911 upon a seizure occurring.
- After a seizure, faculty may want to contact DSS to assist in dealing with any concerns that arise.



Additional resources

The following resources contain useful information for faculty working with students with disabilities:

- ❖ DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology); the Faculty Room

<http://www.washington.edu/doit/Faculty/Resources/>

- ❖ ADA Resources: Fast Facts for Faculty

<http://ada.osu.edu/resources/fastfacts/index.htm>

Sources for this handbook include: Oklahoma Association on Higher Education and Disability, Heartland Community College, Volunteer State Community College, Faculty Guide: WIU Students with Disabilities, U.S. Department of Education, and Disability Access Information and Support (DAIS).

Spoon River College is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer and educator in compliance with applicable federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination, including, but not limited to, Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Except to the extent permitted by law, no qualified employee or student shall be excluded from the employment or educational opportunity, be denied benefits, or be subjected to discrimination on the basis of factors prohibited by law.

Inquiries or complaints may be addressed to:
Human Resources
Spoon River College
23235 North County 22
Canton, IL 61520
(309) 649-6209.