



Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Documentation Guidelines

Please complete the South Texas College of Law Houston online *Application for Accommodations and/or Services for Students with Disabilities* and submit the required documentation:

- A. **A PERSONAL STATEMENT** as directed, below.
- B. A copy of **PREVIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS**: An official notice of accommodations granted by high school, college, the SAT, ACT, LSAT, MPRE, etc.
- C. All required **DOCUMENTATION, including previous evaluations**, as directed below.

Directions for a PERSONAL STATEMENT to be completed by you. This statement should be about two to three pages in length, although it may be longer. This personal statement will form an integral part of our inquiry process and **will factor strongly into the decision-making process.**

Respond fully to the topics below to show how your disability substantially limits one or more major life activities. Major life activities include learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working. Describe your current symptoms in detail. Recall that you should be describing functional limitations compared to **most people in the general population and not compared to your peers in law school.** Many students have trouble reading law books and must re-read material more than once. Provide as much concrete evidence as possible. Some topics may require several paragraphs.

Topic 1: When did you first experience symptoms related to your disability? How old were you? What kind of help did you seek? Did you have any special services, attend special classes, tutoring? Were you formally evaluated? Did you have an IEP or 504 plan in elementary school, middle school, high school, or college? Did you receive accommodations in any educational settings? Did you receive accommodations on any standardized tests, including the SAT, ACT, LSAT?

If you were not formally diagnosed prior to age 18, this section should be very detailed to show that you exhibited symptoms throughout your educational career. ADHD is developmental in nature and onset occurs in childhood. Parental information may be helpful to document teacher reports. Any interventions that were provided are important. Include any tutoring or extra help you received that most students did not need, particularly if it was ongoing or intensive. If you received standardized test scores that were markedly below school achievement, explain in this section.

Revised, January 2023



Topic 2: What current symptoms related to your disability substantially limit a major life activity in academic settings? Include limitations related to studying, reading, memorizing, writing, organizing time and materials, taking notes in class, participating in class discussions, etc.

Topic 3: What current symptoms related to your disability substantially limit a major life activity on exams?

Topic 4: What current symptoms related to your disability substantially limit a major life activity outside of school? Remember, most people in the general population would experience difficulties in law school, so you should be able to describe a need for accommodations across settings. What current symptoms related to your disability substantially limit a major life activity in work or in internships in the recent past? Have you ever requested or received formal or informal accommodations in the workplace? If so, please explain.

Topic 5: What kind of treatment are you currently receiving? What kinds of strategies or skills have you learned that have helped you deal with your symptoms? Do you take medication to alleviate symptoms? If so, in what way is it helpful? Are there any limitations? Are there side effects that create unintended consequences, such as fatigue, anxiety, sleep difficulties, or problems with concentration?

Topic 6: What accommodations do you require? Write a very specific rationale for each accommodation. Tie the rationale to the symptoms and functional limitations you have described. Have you experienced a difference in your performance when you have had accommodations? What was the difference?

Topic 7: If applicable; this question should be given a great deal of consideration: Have you decided not to apply for accommodations in other settings? Were you successful without accommodations? Explain. Stating that the “reading in law school is harder,” would not likely rise to the level of a disability as that would be true for most people in the population, including most students with a four-year college degree. Stating that you were able to avoid in-class, timed exams is a legitimate explanation.

If you have applied for accommodations in other settings and were denied in whole or part, provide the month and year the request was made, the condition or diagnosis for which accommodations were requested, the accommodations requested, the educational institution or testing agency and the reason given for the denial or partial denial.

Topic 8: (Optional) Add anything else you believe is relevant to formulate a solid argument to show why your disorder rises to the level of a protected disability meriting accommodations.



EVALUATION(S): You should share this document with your evaluator as standards for institutions have changed significantly in the past four years.

An evaluation that is more than five years old will be considered, particularly in the case of adults with a long-standing and well-documented history of ADHD. If testing was conducted prior to age 16, an abbreviated re-evaluation may be required.

For students with a long-standing and well-documented history of ADHD, it is advisable to submit a brief updated statement from a qualified evaluator to be certain all of the information from the *Personal Statement* becomes part of the record. A treating physician can write a brief statement of current functioning and copy the personal statement verbatim.

Please submit all the documentation you possess. Together with an interactive inquiry meeting, we will be able to determine whether it is advisable to pursue a re-evaluation, a brief updated statement, or a new comprehensive evaluation.

If you have never been fully evaluated and have no formal testing, a complete evaluation is **mandatory**.

A **comprehensive evaluation** is typically about 8-10 pages in length. This evaluation typically includes interviews, clinical observations, a review of past records, and a 4-6 hour battery of standardized tests. It is typically conducted by a professional trained in evaluating adult ADHD, such as a psychologist. Medical practitioners and psychiatrists can confirm the diagnosis of ADHD, but do not provide a comprehensive Psycho-educational Evaluation to support the need for reasonable accommodations based on measured functional limitations.

Evaluations should include the following:

Background information:

Developmental history, medical history, primary language dominance, past and current academic functioning, previous evaluations, a history of functional limitations dating back to childhood and related to the disability, and a history of services for disabilities, including accommodations and results of accommodations. services for disabilities. This information can be gathered from previous evaluations, self-reports, report cards, and transcripts.

First-time adult evaluations of AD/HD must provide detailed clinical evidence of functional limitations dating back to childhood, an explanation of past success without accommodations, and why accommodation is needed at this time. Include a history of presenting **childhood** ADHD symptoms that interfered with functioning over time and evidence of symptom presentation prior to age 12. If there was not a formal diagnosis, this section of the report should include detailed, anecdotal evidence, including information gleaned from academic

Revised, January 2023



transcripts, teacher comments, tutoring evaluations, and report cards to describe, in detail, functional limitations dating back to childhood and related to the disability.

Current Functioning:

Describe symptoms in detail. A bulleted list from the DSM manual will not suffice. Explain how long symptoms have been present and their impact in academic pursuits, exams, social settings, and employment settings. The documentation should also specify the current severity of symptoms (mild, moderate, or severe). Symptoms that will support a need for accommodations must be substantial compared to **most people in the general population, and not only in comparison to other law students**. The student should be able to provide examples of accommodations needed in the workplace, even if they are informal such as wearing headphones, working extra hours without pay to complete work others complete more quickly, asking for permission to work in a conference room to avoid distractions, etc.

Describe relevant medical history, effects of medication (positive or negative) on the applicant's currently functional limitations. Explain any unwanted side effects of medication such as anxiety, fatigue that might offset the effectiveness of the medication.

Test Observations:

Discuss whether the applicant's motivation level, interview behavior, and/or test-taking behavior were adequate to yield reliable diagnostic information/test results. Describe how this determination was made.

If prescribed medication was not used for part or all the evaluation, explain why. If the student often does not take medication due to unwanted side effects, explain. Please note that this question is part of the Bar application for accommodations, so it will need to be addressed at some point.

Was testing performed to assess the possibility that a lack of motivation or effort affected the test result? If so, describe the findings, including the results of symptom validity tests. If such tests were not administered, please state why they were not, and how test reliability was ascertained.

Standardized Testing and Clinical Assessments

All standardized test scores and subtest scores, including percentiles must be included.

Standard age norms should be used for all testing, when available. A thorough explanation and interpretation of findings is required and are given a very high degree of consideration. Include the following:



- A measure of adult intellectual functioning. The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Test is the preferred instrument. Other acceptable measures of Aptitude include the Woodcock Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery- Tests of Cognitive Ability, and the Stanford Binet Intelligence Scale. Screening instruments or partial batteries are unacceptable. Include subtest scores and index scores with percentiles for both. Discuss findings and interpretation of test results.
- Assessment devices for information processing may include measures of working memory, short-term memory, long-term memory, processing speed, academic fluency, executive functioning, attention or tracking tests, continuous performance tests. Include percentiles for all tests when available. Discuss findings and interpretation of test results.
- Standardized, individualized, achievement tests for adults in Reading Comprehension, Reading Decoding, Written Expression for Content and Mechanics. Tests measuring receptive and expressive language will also be considered along with other relevant measures. Screening devices such as the Wide Range Achievement Test are unacceptable. Standardized test scores, subtest scores, and percentiles must be included, along with a narrative interpretation of test results.
- Other diagnostic instruments, checklists, or other diagnostic aids used in the evaluation. Documentation can include current evidence from third-party sources such as rating scales filled out by parents, teachers, or others; job performance evaluations (if available); third-party interviews.
- Documentation can also include information gleaned from interviews and the student's *Personal Statement*, written as part of the application process for South Texas College of Law Houston. Many examiners include this *Personal Statement* as an appendix of the report to be certain it becomes a part of the official record. The examiner can simply state: As part of the required application for STCLH, the patient completed a detailed personal history. I endorse the information copied here in its entirety.

Summary and Findings:

If found, provide a clear and specific diagnosis of ADHD, using the diagnostic criteria for ADHD from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders with an indication of the specific ADHD diagnostic subtype: predominantly inattentive type, hyperactive-impulsive type, combined type, or not otherwise specified.

Revised, January 2023



Given the high rate of dual or co-existing conditions, the documentation should address the possibility of relevant disorders or disabilities and that the diagnosis is not a function of some other mental disorder (such as a mood, anxiety, personality disorder, psychosis, substance abuse, low cognitive ability, etc.).

Include a statement of how the disability significantly limits learning, documented by the information in the evaluation and current functioning in more than one setting.

Recommendations:

For each recommended accommodation, include a rationale correlated with specific functional limitations established through the evaluation process.

Examples of recommended accommodations and rationales follow. They were composed by our Independent Educational Consultant, Laura Naistadt Massa, M.S., M.Ed., who has granted permission for qualified examiners to use this wording and format, verbatim, when it applies.

50% Extended time

Rationale: Extended time for reading enables Mr. Qualified to re-read everything twice. The second reading enables Mr. Qualified to avoid errors that occur when he has lapses in concentration and omits small words and details, such as “not,” or “but.”

Extended time for writing allows Mr. Qualified to re-read directions and lengthy prompts, and enables him to create more detailed outlines before writing, as he exhibits significant difficulties shifting between thinking about content and composing. He also requires extended time to closely edit his own work, as he may omit important words or even leave out sections of his own outline while composing.