

Accommodations for Post-Secondary Students with ADHD/ADD -- Mayda LaRosse, MA, 1999 *

Preface

The American with Disabilities Act (ADA), along with Section 504 of the reauthorized Rehabilitation Act of 1973, mandate that states and private agencies are responsible for accommodating qualified individuals with disabilities in the school/training environment. The following information is taken from "Accommodation Ideas for Persons with ADD/ADHD in Postsecondary Training and College," by Mayda LaRosse, MA, Human Factors Consultant, Revised 8/99.*

Overview

As with any other disability, the need for accommodations needs to be considered on a case-by-case basis. According to both the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act, an individual with a disability is a person who:

- has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; and/or
- has a record of such an impairment; and/or
- is regarded as having such an impairment.

The American with Disabilities Act mandates that state colleges and universities must not deny participation or benefits of their services, programs, or activities to qualified persons with disabilities. Title II, Section 202 of the ADA states that "no qualified individual with a disability shall by reason of such disability be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by any such entity."

Likewise, private colleges are mandated to modify their courses to ensure that such courses are accessible. Title III, Section 2.6200 states that "Any course covered by this section must be modified to ensure that the place and manner in which the course covered by this section is given are accessible. Examples of possible modifications that might be required include extending the time permitted for completion of the course, providing auxiliary aids or services (except where to do so would fundamentally alter the course or result in an undue burden), or offering the course in an accessible location or making alternative accessible arrangements."

State colleges/universities generally have a greater obligation to accommodate students with disabilities than do private colleges. Since these institutions receive federal and state funding, they are covered in both Title II of the ADA and the Rehab. Act. This is reflected in the fact that state schools have an obligation to remove barriers that are readily achievable (Title III, Section 4.4200).

In addition, any private college/entity offering an examination or course "related to applications, licensing, certification, or credentialing for secondary or post secondary education, professional, or trade purposes must offer such examinations or courses in a place and manner accessible to persons with disabilities, or offer alternative accessible arrangements for such individuals" (Title III, Section 4.6000). These examinations might include college entrance tests, such as the Academic College Test (ACT) and the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT). It would also include licensing/credentialing examinations, such as the National Teachers Examination (NTE), Fundamentals of Engineering examination, Principles and Practice Examination for engineering, state nursing and medical boards, and the state bar examinations, among others.

The ADA goes on to say that these entities should "ensure that the examination accurately reflects an individual's aptitude or achievement level or other factor the examination purports to measure, rather than reflecting the individual's impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills (except where those skills are the factors that the examination purports to measure)" (Title III, Section 4.6100).

In order for the examination to measure accurately the factors that it is suppose to measure, the college/entity administrating the examination must ensure that the auxiliary aid or service provided is effective. It's important to mention again that the college/entity are not required to provide an accommodation if such an accommodation would fundamentally alter the course or result in an undue burden.

Accommodations for Classroom

For lecture setting:

- tape recorders or micro tape players
- note takers
- hard copies of notes provided by the instructor or other student
- lap top computer for note taking
- calculators (some have voice synthesizers)
- classroom without a lot of distractions (such as noise, decorations, interruptions, etc.)
- request that the directions be clear and concise (possibly in written form- on the blackboard or on paper)
- detailed syllabus to give ample time to complete reading and writing assignments

For test-taking:

- quiet environment
- extended time
- administer test on the computer
- use a tape recorder to record the answers
- oral examinations
- index cards, blank paper, and/or ruler (help keep place on line)

Organization Skills:

- break projects to weekly and then daily goals
- use daily checklist of what needs to be done that day (might help if you prepare it the night before)
- use alarm watch or timer as a reminder for meetings and classes
- electronic organizers or daily planners
- mini talking memo
- color coding for reading/scanning (highlighters and colored mylar templates)
- Premack Principle - perform the task that is unpleasant first, and followed by the one that is liked or a reward.

Concentration:

- use white noise machine or environmental soothers to cover noise
- study in an environment that doesn't have a lot of visual or auditory distractions
- use a watch alarm or timer set for 10min intervals to be reminded to get back on task
- find outlets for restlessness such as exercise and/or sports

Sample of Accommodations for Postsecondary Students

Note: These were taken from actual cases reported to the Job Accommodation Network:

- A student with ADD is having trouble remembering his homework and assignment. He was successful with an electronic organizer. Cost was \$300.
- A student with ADD was having difficulties keeping track of his assignments and remembering verbal instructions. He decided to color code his schoolwork and request instructions in writing.
- A college student with ADD had difficulties with organization skills. He used an organizer to keep track of what he needed to get done and when it was due.
- A student with dyslexia and ADD was accommodated by the use of a speak and spell dictionary, as well as an organizer. We weren't given the total cost.

Note:

* The material in this article was prepared by the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), and is reproduced at <http://www.tourettesyndrome.net> with their permission, with slight editing by the web site owner. Suggestions in this article are made with the disclaimer that neither JAN nor this web site owner are providing legal or psychological services. To obtain more information on JAN, contact:

Job Accommodation Network
West Virginia University
PO Box 6080
Morgantown, WV 26506-6080
800-526-7234 in the US (Voice or TT)
800-526-2262 in Canada (Voice or TT)
Internet: <http://www.jan.wvu.edu>