

## **ABIH Policy for Accommodation for Certification Candidates with Disabilities**

These materials were adapted from policies published by Educational Testing Service® and their source documents which were developed by an ad hoc committee established by the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD). The primary intent of the ad hoc committee was to develop standard criteria for documenting learning disabilities (LD) that could be used by postsecondary personnel and consumers requiring documentation to determine appropriate accommodations for individuals with learning disabilities.

The American Board of Industrial Hygiene is committed to serving certification candidates with disabilities by providing reasonable accommodations that are appropriate given the purpose of the test. Nonstandard testing accommodations are available for certification candidates who meet ABIH eligibility criteria. Requests for accommodations must be approved in accordance with ABIH policies and procedures in advance of the scheduled examination date.

The accommodation that can be provided is generally extended testing time, typically 150% of the standard allotted time. Large print examination booklets can also be provided. Requests for other accommodations will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

You must submit documentation in support of your request directly to ABIH.

### **Summary of Documentation Criteria**

The documentation must, at a minimum, meet the following criteria:

- clearly state the diagnosed disability;
- describe the functional limitations resulting from the disability;
- be current, within the last 5 years for learning disabilities, last 6 months for psychiatric disabilities, or last 3 years for all other disabilities (does not apply to physical or sensory disabilities of a permanent nature);
- include a comprehensive summary of educational, developmental, and medical history relevant to the disability for which testing accommodations are being requested;
- include a list of all test instruments used in the evaluation report (Does not apply to physical or sensory disabilities of a permanent nature.);
- describe the specific accommodations requested;
- state why the disability qualifies the applicant for the testing accommodations requested;
- be typed or printed on official letterhead and signed by an evaluator qualified to make the diagnosis. (Include information about license or certification and area of specialization.)

## **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Requirements**

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), individuals with disabilities are guaranteed certain protections and rights to equal access to programs and services. In order to access these rights, an individual must present documentation indicating that the disability substantially limits some major life activity, including learning. The following requirements are provided in the interest of assuring that documentation is appropriate to verify eligibility and to support requests for accommodations and/or auxiliary aids. Requirements for documentation are presented in four important areas: (1) qualifications of the evaluator; (2) recency of documentation; (3) appropriate clinical documentation to substantiate the disability; and (4) evidence to establish a rationale supporting the need for accommodations.

### **A Qualified Professional Must Conduct the Evaluation**

Professionals conducting assessments and rendering diagnoses of specific disabilities and making recommendations for appropriate accommodations must be qualified to do so. Comprehensive training and relevant experience are essential. The name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about license or certification (e.g., licensed psychologist) as well as the area of specialization, employment, and state in which the individual practices must be clearly stated in the documentation. Use of diagnostic terminology indicating a specific learning disability by someone whose training and experience are not in the appropriate field is not acceptable. It is not appropriate for professionals to evaluate members of their own families. All reports should be on letterhead, typed, dated, signed, and otherwise legible.

### **Documentation Must Be Current**

ABIH acknowledges that once a person is diagnosed as having a qualified disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act the disability is normally viewed as life-long. Although the disability will continue, the severity of the condition may change over time. Because the provision of reasonable accommodations is based upon an assessment of the current impact of the individual's disabilities on his or her performance, it is necessary to provide recent and appropriate documentation. Candidates who submit documentation that is not current, and/or inadequate in scope and content or that does not address the candidate's current level of functioning or the need for accommodation(s) will be required to update the evaluation report.

### **Documentation Must be Comprehensive**

The comprehensive assessment should include a clinical summary of objective, relevant historical information establishing symptomology indicative of the past and ongoing disability. Relevant information from transcripts, report cards, teacher comments, tutoring evaluations, and past psycho-educational testing and third party interviews, when available, should be included. A comprehensive assessment battery and the resulting diagnostic report must include a diagnostic interview, assessment of aptitude, measure of academic achievement and information processing.

### **Diagnostic Interview**

An evaluation report should include the summary of a comprehensive diagnostic interview by a qualified evaluator. A combination of candidate self-report, interviews with others, and historical documentation, such as transcripts and standardized test scores, is recommended. The diagnostician, using professional judgment as to which areas are relevant to the question of determining a candidate's current eligibility for accommodation(s), must provide a summary that includes a description of the presenting problem(s); developmental history; relevant medical history; academic history including results of prior standardized testing; relevant family history; relevant psychosocial history; relevant employment history; alternative or co-existing disorders along with any history of

relevant medication use that may affect the individual's disability; and exploration of possible alternatives that may mimic a learning disability, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHA), or other disability when, in fact, one is not present.

#### Documentation Must Include a Specific Diagnosis

Nonspecific diagnoses, such as individual "learning styles," "learning differences," "academic problems," "computer phobias," "slow reader," and "test difficulty or anxiety," in and of themselves do not constitute a learning disability. Individuals who report only problems with organization, test anxiety, memory or concentration in selective situations do not fit the prescribed diagnostic criteria for ADHD. Given that many individuals benefit from prescribed medications and therapies, a positive response to medication by itself does not confirm a diagnosis, nor does the use of medication in and of itself either support or negate the need for accommodation(s).

It is important to rule out alternative explanations for problems in learning or testing, such as emotional, attentional, or motivational problems, that may be interfering with learning or testing but do not constitute a learning disability or ADHD. The diagnostician is encouraged to use direct language in the diagnosis and documentation of a learning disability, avoiding the use of such terms as "suggests" or "is indicative of." If the data indicate that the suspected learning disability, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, or other disability is not present, the evaluator must state that conclusion in the report.

The assessment of the individual must not only establish a diagnosis of the disability, but must also demonstrate the current impact on an individual's ability to take standardized tests. In addition, neuropsychological or psychoeducational assessment is important in determining the current impact of the disorder on an individual's ability to function in work settings. The evaluator must objectively review and include with the evaluation report relevant background information to support the diagnosis and its anticipated impact. The data must logically reflect a substantial limitation for which the individual is requesting the accommodation.

#### **Recommendations Must Include a Rationale**

It is important to recognize that accommodation needs can change over time and are not always identified through the initial diagnostic process. Conversely, a prior history of accommodation, without demonstration of a current need, does not in and of itself warrant the provision of a like accommodation.

The diagnostic report must include specific recommendations for accommodation(s) as well as a detailed explanation of why each accommodation is recommended. The evaluator(s) must describe the impact the diagnosed disability has as well as the degree of significance of this impact on the individual. The evaluator should support recommendations with specific test results or clinical observations.

#### **Confidentiality**

ABIH will adhere to its confidentiality policies regarding its responsibility to maintain confidentiality of the evaluation and will not release any part of the documentation without the candidate's informed consent or under compulsion of legal process.