

## **Documentation Guidelines for Students with Psychiatric Disabilities**

### **I. Must Be a Covered Disability**

- A. To establish that an individual is covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act, documentation must indicate that a specific impairment exists and that the identified impairment *substantially limits* one or more major life activities.
- B. “Psychiatric disabilities” is a generic term used to refer to a variety of conditions involving psychological, emotional, and behavioral disorders and syndromes. The two official sources designed to outline the criteria used in making these diagnoses is the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Fourth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR)*, and the *International Classification of Diseases Manual, Tenth Revision (ICD-10)*.
- C. Documentation must be comprehensive in order to avoid unnecessary delays in decision making related to the provision of accommodations, to establish the nature of the disorder and to determine how the impairment affects a student’s ability to access the programs, activities, and services offered by Berklee.
- D. A diagnosis in and of itself does not automatically warrant approval of requested accommodations.

### **II. Documentation Requirements**

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

- 1. Professionals conducting evaluations, rendering diagnoses, and making recommendations for accommodations must be qualified to do so. Generally, psychologists, psychiatrists, relevantly trained physicians, and relevantly trained and licensed professional counselors are considered qualified. The name, title, and credentials of the qualified professional writing the report should be included. Information about license or certification should also be clearly stated in the documentation. All reports should be in English, typed or printed on professional letterhead, dated, and signed.
- 2. Diagnoses of psychiatric disabilities documented by family members will not be accepted.

#### **B. Documentation Must Be Current.**

- 1. Due to the changing nature of psychiatric disabilities, it is essential that the documentation is recent. Since reasonable accommodations are based upon the

current impact of the disability, the documentation must address the individual's current level of functioning and the need for accommodations.

2. If the diagnostic report is more than six months old, the student should also submit a letter from a qualified professional that provides an update of the diagnosis, a description of the student's current level of functioning during the preceding six months and a rationale for the requested accommodations.

**C. Documentation Necessary to Support the Diagnosis Must be Comprehensive.**

The diagnostic report should include the following components:

1. A specific diagnosis
2. History of presenting symptoms
3. Duration and severity of the disorder
4. Relevant developmental and historical data
5. Relevant medical and medication history
6. A description of current functional limitations in different settings with the understanding that a psychological disorder usually presents itself across a variety of settings
7. A description of the expected progression or stability of the condition over time
8. Information regarding kind of treatment and duration/consistency of the therapeutic relationship
9. Medications, their effectiveness, and the student's compliance with same

**D. Alternative Diagnoses or Explanations Should Be Ruled Out.**

The evaluator must also investigate and rule out the possibility of other potential disorders that may result in symptoms mimicking the purported psychiatric disability, including substance abuse.

**E. A Specific Request for Accommodations with Accompanying Rationale Must Be Provided.**

The evaluator must describe the degree of impact of the diagnosed psychiatric disorder on a specific major life activity, as well as the degree of impact on the individual. A link must be established between the requested accommodations and the functional limitations of the individual that are pertinent to the academic situation. A diagnosis in and of itself does not automatically warrant approval of requested accommodations.

The evaluator should also explain why a particular recommended accommodation is necessary for the student in order to access the programs, activities and services at Berklee.