

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder



Why documentation?

Thorough knowledge of your disability is a key to college success and is the foundation of effective advocacy. By providing current, comprehensive, clinical documentation of your disability we can insure the integrity of the process and enlist the needed support and cooperation throughout the academic community.

Your documentation gives us our best understanding of the impact of your disability in an academic environment so that we can provide the most appropriate and comprehensive accommodations and interventions. A full understanding of the impact of your disability is essential to fostering greater self-awareness and self-advocacy and helps to insure the continuity of services for your future accommodation needs.

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

When seeking evaluation for Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), it is to the benefit of the student to get as comprehensive an evaluation as possible as this will allow for a more detailed understanding of the impact of the disability and provide for more effective methods of accommodation. Below are the required guidelines for documenting ADHD.

A. Qualified Professional Must Conduct the Evaluation

Typically this would include psychologists, psychiatrists and certain specially trained mental health professionals and doctors. The name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator -- including information about license or certification as well as the area of specialization, employment, and state or province in which the individual practices should be clearly stated in the documentation. All reports should be on letterhead, typed, dated, signed, and otherwise legible.

B. Documentation Should Be Current

Ideally the evaluation should be no more than three years old, unless there is a history of granted accommodations for this prior rendered diagnosis. A recent evaluation provides the best understanding of the current impact of the disability upon the student.

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C. Documentation Necessary to Substantiate the Diagnosis Should be Comprehensive

A comprehensive evaluation should include evidence of early impairment because ADHD is, by definition in the DSM-IV-TR, first exhibited in childhood, although it may not have been formally diagnosed until later in life. It should include a statement of the presenting problems and a diagnostic interview including relevant developmental and educational history.

D. Alternative Diagnoses or Explanations Should Be Ruled Out

The evaluator should investigate and discuss the possibility of dual diagnoses and alternative or coexisting mood, behavioral, neurological, and/or personality disorders that may confound the diagnosis of ADHD. This process should include exploration of possible alternative diagnoses and medical and psychiatric disorders as well as educational and cultural factors affecting the individual that may result in behaviors mimicking an Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder.

E. Relevant Testing Information Should Be Provided

Neuropsychological or psychoeducational assessment is important in determining the current impact of the disorder on the individual's ability to function in academically related settings. The evaluator should objectively review and include with the evaluation report relevant background information to support the diagnosis, evidencing early impairment and current impairment on the individual's ability for academic performance. Diagnostic assessment must consist of more than a self-report of symptoms. A thorough evaluation includes a clinical interview, identification of symptoms impacting the individual (which may include rating scales or symptom checklists), and collateral information by reviewing old report cards/ transcripts and gathering input from a spouse, teachers, or employer. As warranted, a medical evaluation and/or testing of cognition, achievement, and information processing may be included. If grade equivalents are reported, they should be accompanied by standard scores and/or percentiles.

F. Identification of DSM-IV-TR Criteria

According to the DSM-IV-TR, "the essential feature of ADHD is a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that is more frequently displayed and more severe than is typically observed in individuals at a comparable level of development". A

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diagnostic report should include a review and discussion of the DSM-IV-TR criteria for ADHD both currently and retrospectively and specify which symptoms are present.

G. Documentation Must Include a Specific Diagnosis

The report should include a specific diagnosis of ADHD based on the DSM-IV-TR diagnostic criteria. The diagnostician should use direct language in the diagnosis of ADHD, avoiding the use of such terms as "suggests," "is indicative of," or "attention problems." Individuals who report only problems with organization, test anxiety, memory or concentration in selective situations may 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).

H. An Interpretative Summary Should Be Provided

A well-written interpretative summary based on a comprehensive evaluative process is a necessary component of the documentation. The summary should include demonstration of having ruled out alternate diagnoses, and the impact that the ADHD has upon the student.

I. Each Accommodation Recommended by the Evaluator Should Include a Rationale

The diagnostic report can include specific recommendations for accommodations that are realistic and that postsecondary institutions, and examining, certifying, and licensing agencies can reasonably provide. A detailed explanation as to why each accommodation is recommended should be provided and should be correlated with specific functional limitations determined through the interview, observation, and/or testing.

If the requested accommodations are not clearly identified in the diagnostic report, UMKC may seek clarification, and if necessary, more information. UMKC will make final determination of whether appropriate and reasonable accommodations are warranted and should be provided to the individual.

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Checklist for Reviewing Documentation for ADHD

- Are the qualifications of the evaluator clear and evident? Is the evaluation on letterhead, typed, signed, dated and otherwise legible?
- Is the documentation no more than three years old or is there evidence of prior accommodation for this disorder?
- Is the evaluation comprehensive including a diagnostic interview and multiple means to substantiate the diagnosis, including any relevant assessment of aptitude, of academic achievement and of information processing?
- Are all relevant test scores included in the evaluation?
- Is there a clear diagnosis?
- Is there a well-written clinical summary? Have alternate diagnoses been ruled out? Is there evidence of early impairment or a record of prior accommodation?
- Is there a clear description of the impact of the disorder?
- Are all accommodation recommendations carefully supported by information within the evaluation?