

## **Guidelines for Documentation of Psychiatric Disabilities**

Providers may write a letter based on the below guidelines or in lieu of a letter may complete the Disability Verification Form for Mental Health Treatment Providers available in the DS office or online at <http://health.columbia.edu/disability-services>.

Please refer to General Guidelines for Disability Documentation in addition to these specific guidelines for psychiatric disabilities. The general guidelines are available at the Disability Services office (Wien Hall, Suite 108A) or online at <http://health.columbia.edu/disability-services>.

Documentation of psychiatric disabilities must include all of the following elements:

1. **The evaluation must be performed by a qualified individual:** The assessment must be provided by a licensed psychologist, psychiatrist, psychiatric nurse practitioner, or clinical social worker unrelated to the student by birth or marriage. An assessment from a general physician typically will not suffice. The University reserves the right to require that a certified copy of the report be transmitted directly from the evaluator to the University.
2. **Current documentation:** Evaluations should be dated within 6 months of the date of DS registration. Older evaluations will be considered if submitted with more recent supplemental documentation. In addition, documentation will need to be updated at the beginning of each academic year in order to assess up-to-date accommodation needs. DS reserves the right to adjust these timelines based on the nature of the student's diagnosis.
3. **Current treatment and medications:** Documentation should include any counseling, specific therapies, current prescribed medications and any side-effects that would compromise academic functioning as well as the ameliorative effects of such treatments/ medication.
4. **Specific diagnosis:** This should not merely refer to symptoms and should correspond to a specific diagnosis as per the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual – V (DSM-V)*. Please note that a diagnosis in and of itself does not automatically warrant approval of requested accommodations.
5. **Clinical Summary:** A narrative clinical summary must include the following:
  - A history of presenting symptoms, the current severity and expected duration of symptoms, a description of functional limitations and the impact of the disability on the student's current participation in courses, programs, services, or any other activities of the University and a basis for the opinion.
  - A statement as to what major life activity(ies) is/are substantially limited by the student's condition(s) and a rating of the limitation, such as mild, moderate, substantial, or severe of each affected major life activity, both with and without the use of mitigating measures, such as treatment and medication.
  - Recommendations for academic or other accommodations, including a rationale for each.