

Faculty Handbook

For Working with Students with Disabilities

Howard Community College

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Introduction

Howard Community College is committed to serving the needs of all students. An important, and continually growing, segment of the college's population is students with disabilities. According to the Census 2000, almost 50 million people (about 19 percent of all Americans over age five) reported having a disability. About 9 percent of all undergraduates in higher education report having a disability. This percentage has tripled in the last two decades, and amounts to about 1.3 million students.

At Howard Community College, this figure translates into over 350 credit students who have self-identified to one of our offices on campus. These students include individuals with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorders, blindness/low vision, brain injuries, deafness/hard of hearing, learning disabilities, medical disabilities, physical disabilities and psychological disabilities. As our student population becomes more diverse there is a need to respond to a growing range of learning styles in the classroom to support student success. Good teaching practices – such as using a multi-sensory approach in presentations, having a clear, detailed syllabus, supplementing class lectures with handouts, clearly organizing and presenting course and class objectives, and being readily available for student conferences – optimize learning for all students. For students with disabilities, they are essential.

The ways students with disabilities learn and respond may require reasonable accommodations in how materials are presented and the testing and evaluation methods used. **Providing accommodations ensures equal opportunities for success in mastery of course material; it does not mean compromising the content, quality or level of instruction. All students are required to meet a standard of competency in course work; students with disabilities are no exception.**

If you are a faculty member, you most likely have already taught students with disabilities or will be doing so shortly. This handbook is designed to give you some information about the services available on campus to assist you as well as give you some information about disabilities in general, the laws involved, and teaching strategies that might be helpful to you in the classroom. We hope that the information in this guide will facilitate communication between you and your students. We look forward to working with you and your students with disabilities.

Structure of Disability Support Services/Student Support Services at HCC

At Howard Community College, we have been fortunate to have had the support of a federal grant for almost 30 years which funds the **Student Support Services Program (SSSP)**. This office provides academic support and counseling for three different populations of at-risk students. These are students who are low income, first generation college, and/or have a disability. This program is located in N-200 and may be reached by phone at 410-772-4629. If you have a student with a disability in your class, you may find that you receive accommodation memos from one of the counselors in the SSSP program. This program serves a total of 225 students in all three categories of at-risk students.

By the fall of 1998, it had become apparent that Howard Community College was enrolling far more students with disabilities than could be served by the SSSP program, so a **Disability Support Services (DSS)** office was established. This office is located, along with Student Support Services, in N-200 and may be reached at 410-772-4606. This office sees all students with disabilities initially, and then some may become a part of the Student Support Services Program, while the majority will remain with Disability Support Services. DSS currently serves well over 250 students with disabilities each semester, and has been continually increasing since its inception.

Therefore, on this campus, students with disabilities may be receiving support from either SSSP or DSS. Services provided by the DSS office are required by law in order to ensure equal **access** to all programs and services run by the college. Services provided by SSSP include services to ensure equal access but also include supplemental services above and beyond those required by law designed to promote **success** for the students served by the grant.

These offices work together closely and both are a resource for disability information on campus. Each office houses confidential documentation of disability information for their students, provides accommodation memos for faculty, arranges appropriate accommodations and acts as a liaison for their students to other offices and community agencies. Please feel free to contact either office for assistance.

The Law

There are two primary pieces of legislation that affect colleges and universities in the United States in relationship to services for students with disabilities – Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act which was passed in 1990. The first, and most influential one, is **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**. This law affects any institution that receives federal funds and is basically an anti-discrimination law. Section 504 states that ... “No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States...shall, solely by reason of...disability, be denied the benefits of, be excluded from the participation in, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”

A person with a disability includes... “any person who (1) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities [including walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working, caring for oneself, and performing manual tasks, (2) has a record of such an impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment.”

A “qualified person with a disability” is defined as one... “who meets the academic and technical standards requisite to admission or participation in the education program or activity.”

Disabilities covered by legislation include (but are not limited to) AIDS, blindness, cancer, cerebral palsy, diabetes, head injuries, hearing disabilities, specific learning disabilities, loss of limb(s), multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, emotional disabilities, speech disabilities, spinal cord injuries and vision disabilities.

Under the provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973... the college may not discriminate in the recruitment, admission, educational process, or treatment of students. Students who have self-identified, provided documentation of disability, and requested reasonable accommodations are entitled to receive approved modifications of programs, appropriate academic adjustments, or auxiliary aids that enable them to participate in and benefit from all educational programs and activities.

A college or university may not:

- Limit the number of students with disabilities admitted.
- Make pre-admission inquiries as to whether or not an applicant has a disability.
- Exclude a student with a disability from any course of study solely on the basis of disability.
- Counsel students with disabilities towards a more restrictive career than students without disabilities, unless such counsel is based on strict licensing or certification requirements in the profession.
- Measure student achievement using modes that adversely discriminate against students with disabilities.
- Institute prohibitive rules that may adversely affect the performance of students with disabilities.

Modifications and accommodations for students with disabilities include:

- Architectural barrier removal
- Services such as readers for students with blindness, low vision or learning disabilities, qualified interpreters and notetakers for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, and notetakers for students with learning disabilities or orthopedic disabilities
- Modifications or substitutions of courses in major fields of study or degree requirements on a case-by-case basis (such accommodation need not be made if the institution can demonstrate that the changes requested would substantially alter essential elements of the course or program)
- Extra time to complete exams
- Exams individually proctored, read orally, dictated or typed
- Alternative formats and methods for students to demonstrate course mastery
- Computer software programs or other assistive technological devices to assist in test taking
- Availability of such learning aids as tape players and word processors

Tutoring Services

Howard Community College has a wonderful tutoring program through the Learning Assistance Center (LAC) that is available to all students on campus. Disability Support Services, Student Support Services, and the Learning Assistance Center all work closely together to provide tutoring services to students with disabilities. It is important to note, however, that individual tutoring is NOT an accommodation required by law for students with disabilities. The LAC provides tutoring to all students on campus, including students with disabilities, but is not required to provide individual tutoring services to students with disabilities.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 contains more specific information about compliance issues in post-secondary education than does the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Most post-secondary institutions were routinely providing accommodations for students with disabilities by 1990. The ADA did extend the law to cover private institutions of higher education. The impact of this law, however, was felt at colleges and universities because of the increased awareness of people with disabilities about their rights to equal access to programs and services, and along with that came more rigid enforcement of the laws.

Recent Legal Decisions:

A college or university must provide the accommodation. Students are not required to assume the responsibility for securing a necessary accommodation. A college is required to provide reasonable accommodations for a student's known disability so that student has an equal opportunity to participate in the courses, activities, or programs. The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) ruled that a college or university may not charge students for necessary accommodations.

Expense of accommodation is not an undue hardship. Providing an auxiliary aid or incurring an expense to ensure access would not constitute undue hardship to a university or college. In determining what constitutes an undue hardship, OCR views the entire financial resources of the institution rather than any single department.

Classroom must be accessible. A classroom's location must be changed to provide accessibility for a student with a mobility disability. A college or university does not need to make every classroom accessible, but must provide for the participation of students with disabilities when "viewed in its entirety."

Extended time. Extended time is a reasonable accommodation for a student whose documentation specifically requires it. A college or university is required to ensure that the student is provided additional time to complete tests and/or course work in order to provide an equal opportunity for that student.

Altered form of exam. The form of an exam must be altered if the testing procedure

puts a student with a disability at a disadvantage based on the student's documented disability. There may be an exception when the purpose of the test is to measure a particular skill.

Accommodation must be documented. A college or university may refuse to grant a student's request for an accommodation that is not specifically recommended in the student's documentation.

Handouts in alternate format. If a student with a visual disability is enrolled in a class, all handouts must be provided in an appropriate alternate format and made available to students on the same day they are distributed to students without disabilities.

Diagnostic information confidential. Faculty/staff do not have the right to access diagnostic information regarding a student's disability. Faculty/staff need only know the accommodations that are necessary to provide an equal opportunity for the student.

Personal liability. An individual faculty member who fails to provide an accommodation to a student with a documented disability may be held personally liable.

Academic freedom. Academic freedom does not permit instructors to decide if they will provide special aids and services for students with disabilities in the classroom.

Personal services and aids. A college or university is not required to provide personal services such as attendant care or personal aids such as wheelchairs or eyeglasses.

General Strategies for Teaching and Accommodating Students with Disabilities

Before classes start:

- Make your class syllabus and list of required texts available by request to students. This allows for students to obtain materials in alternative formats and to begin reading assignments.
- Place a statement on your syllabus similar to the following "Any student who may need an accommodation due to a disability, please make arrangements to see me as soon as possible, preferably in my office hours. A memo from Disability Support Services or Student Support Services authorizing your accommodations will be needed."

Early in the semester:

- Make an announcement in class similar to the above statement you have placed on your syllabus.

- Meet with students with disabilities to review their accommodation memo and discuss their accommodations. If there are any problems or issues the two of you cannot resolve, contact the appropriate DSS or SSSP counselor as soon as possible.
- Since many students with disabilities need additional time to process and complete assignments, convey expectations at the beginning of the course (i.e grading, material to be covered, due dates) in written and oral form.
- Announce reading assignments well in advance for students using alternative formats. Materials can be produced in installments when informed of the sequence in which materials will be used.
- If students need assistance with taking notes in class, this will be documented in the memo. The student may ask you for assistance in finding a classmate who will volunteer to provide a copy of their lecture notes. Your help is important in identifying a conscientious volunteer who is a good student and capable note-taker. The student will provide the notetaker with a notebook that has carbonless paper so two copies of the notes are available immediately after class.

Throughout the semester:

- Allow alternative testing arrangements if this is an accommodation.
- Be supportive and encouraging. Let students know you are willing to talk to them about their progress.
- Contact DSS or SSSP at any time with any problems, questions or concerns that may arise throughout the semester.

Points to remember:

- When in doubt about how to assist, ask the student directly and check the memo provided. If you still have questions, call DSS or SSSP.
- Flexibility may be necessary when applying attendance and promptness rules to students with medical, psychiatric and mobility impairments. Please discuss any concerns that arise with the student, and if necessary, with DSS or SSSP.
- **Confidentiality of all student information is essential.** At no time should the class be informed that the student has a disability, unless the student makes a specific request to do so.

- The Student Code of Conduct regarding disruptive behavior applies to **all** students. Clearly state behavioral expectations for all students; discuss them openly in your classroom, on your syllabus, and with individual students as needed. If you require assistance or guidance concerning a student with a disability, please contact DSS or SSSP.

General Strategies for Teaching That Assist Students with Disabilities

Many teaching strategies that assist students with disabilities are also known to benefit students without disabilities. Instruction using an array of approaches will reach more students effectively than instruction using one method. The following are some strategies that may be helpful in meeting the growing diversity of student needs in the classroom, particularly those with disabilities.

- Begin class with a review of the previous lecture and an overview of the topics to be covered that day. Give questions the students should be able to answer by the end of the lecture. At the conclusion of the lecture, summarize key points.
- Highlight major concepts and terminology both orally and visually. Be alert for opportunities to provide information in more than one sensory mode.
- Emphasize main ideas and key concepts during the lecture and highlight them on the blackboard or overhead.
- Speak directly to the students; use gestures and natural expressions to convey further meaning.
- Diminish or eliminate auditory and visual distractions.
- Present new or technical vocabulary on the blackboard or overhead, or use a handout.
- Use visual aids such as diagrams, charts, and graphs; use color to enhance the message.
- Give assignments both orally and in written form; be available for clarification.
- Provide adequate opportunities for participation, questions and/or discussion.
- Provide time-lines for long-range assignments.
- Use sequential steps for long-range assignments. For example, on a lengthy paper steps may include 1) select a topic, 2) develop an outline, 3) submit a rough draft, 4) make necessary corrections with approval, 5) turn in the final copy.
- Give feedback on early drafts of papers so there is adequate time for clarification, rewrites, and refinements.
- When possible, use a textbook with an accompanying study guide.
- Provide study questions and review sessions to aid in mastering material and preparing for exams.
- Give sample test questions. Explain what constitutes a good answer and why.
- To test knowledge of material rather than test-taking savvy, phrase test items clearly and succinctly. Avoid using double negative.
- Facilitate the formation of study groups for students who wish to participate.
- Encourage your students to seek assistance during your office hours and use campus support services.

Process of Receiving Accommodations at HCC

Unlike in the secondary setting, students with disabilities must be very pro-active in receiving academic accommodations in the college setting. Students must identify themselves to the Disability Support Services office and meet with a counselor. They must also supply the college with a copy of current documentation of their disability. The college has very specific guidelines as to what is appropriate documentation for each type of disability. These guidelines may be accessed through the HCC website, under Student Services, then Services for Students with Disabilities, then Disability Support Services and Documentation Guidelines.

Once a student has provided this documentation, the counselor reviews it and the two complete an “Accommodations Contract” which the student must sign. This contract allows the DSS office to produce “Accommodation Memos” for the instructor. Keep in mind that all students with disabilities do not identify themselves to DSS by choice. This is their option. Students may also identify themselves to the DSS office but choose to not have us prepare accommodation memos as they do not wish to receive accommodations even though they may be entitled to them. This, of course, is also their choice. Students may change their mind at any time and choose to receive accommodations for the remainder of the semester. However, the institution is under no obligation to provide accommodations retroactively. That is, we must provide them from that point forward but do not need to change anything that has occurred before the student requested the accommodations. Also, please refer students to the DSS office if they are requesting accommodations from you and they do not have an Accommodation Memo from DSS or SSSP. You are under no obligation to provide accommodations unless the student has gone through the proper channels and has appropriate documentation on file.

Both DSS and SSSP are here to assist you and the student through this process. Please do not hesitate to call us at any point. We look forward to working with you to ensure a smooth and equitable process for all.

General Information about Specific Disabilities

The following pages contain characteristics of disabilities, instructional strategies and accommodations that may be appropriate. Please keep in mind that all students with disabilities are individuals and no two people with the same disability will share all the characteristics listed or respond to all the instructional strategies.

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

ADD and ADHD are neurological conditions affecting both learning and behavior. They result from chronic disturbances in the areas of the brain that regulate attention, impulse control and the executive functions that control cognitive tasks, motor activity, and social interactions. Hyperactivity may or may not be present. Treatable, but not curable, ADD and/or ADHD affects three to six percent of the population.

Characteristics may include:

- Easily distracted
- Inability to stay on task
- Poor time management skills
- Difficulty being prepared for class, keeping appointments, getting to class on time
- Reading comprehension difficulties
- Difficulty with math problems requiring changes in action, operation and order
- Inability to selectively listen during lectures, resulting in problems with note-taking
- Lack of organization in work, especially written work and essay questions
- Difficulty following directions, listening and concentrating
- Blurting out answers
- Difficulty making transitions

Instructional Strategies:

- Since these students often also have learning disabilities, effective accommodations may include those also used with students with learning disabilities.
- Effective instructional strategies include providing opportunities for students to learn using visual, auditory and hands-on approaches.
- Briefly reviewing the previous lecture
- Giving assignments in writing as well as orally
- Creating study guides
- Writing key terms, main ideas, important points on the board

Accommodations may include:

- Extended time for tests
- Exams in the Test Center, or proctored in a separate, quiet, distraction free environment
- Calculator, spellchecker, reader and/or writer during exams
- Tape recorder for taping lectures
- Note-taker and/or copies of your lecture notes

Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities are neurologically based and may interfere with the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or mathematical skills. They affect the manner in which individuals with average or above average intellectual abilities process and/or express information. A learning disability is characterized by a significant discrepancy between intellectual potential and academic achievement resulting from difficulties with processing information. The effects may change depending upon the learning demands and environments and may manifest in a single academic area or impact performance across a variety of subject areas and disciplines. The impact of learning disabilities can be decreased by remediation, instructional interventions, and the use of compensatory strategies.

Characteristics may include:

Difficulties in one or more of the following areas:

- Oral and/or written communication (including spelling, grammar, organization, vocabulary)
- Reading comprehension and basic reading skills (including reading rate, tracking skills such as skipping words, losing place, missing lines)
- Problem solving skills
- Ability to listen selectively in lectures, resulting in problems with note-taking
- Mathematical skills – (dyscalculia) includes difficulty understanding concepts of place value, quantity, number lines, positive and negative value, carrying, borrowing and other mathematical concepts. Notetaking/transcribing skills needed in math such as number reversals, confusion of math symbols, problems copying math problems may also be an issue.
- Time management
- Interpreting social cues
- Organizing tasks
- Following directions and concentrating

Instructional Strategies:

Using a variety of instructional modes will enhance learning for students with learning disabilities. A multi-sensory approach using auditory, visual and/or kinesthetic channels increases the ability of students with learning disabilities to benefit from instruction.

Accommodations may include:

- Extended time for exams
- Exams in the Test Center, or proctored in a separate, quiet, distraction-free environment
- Calculator, spellchecker, reader and/or writer during exams
- Tape recorder for taping lectures
- Note-taker and/or copies of your lecture notes
- Use of computer with or without assistive technology for exams
- Taped/scanned textbooks
- E-text books

Brain Injuries

Brain injury may occur in many ways. Traumatic brain injury typically results from accidents; however brain injury may also be caused by insufficient oxygen, stroke, poisoning, or infection. Traumatic brain injury can cause physical, cognitive, social and vocational changes that affect an individual for a short time or permanently. Recovery may be inconsistent. An individual may take one step forward and two backward. Depending on the extent and location of the injury, symptoms caused by a brain injury vary widely. Some common results are seizures, loss of balance or coordination, difficulty with speech, limited concentration, memory loss and loss of organizational and reasoning skills. Brain injury is one of the fastest growing disabilities, especially in the age range of 15 to 28 years.

Characteristics:

Brain injuries are highly individual and can affect students very differently. Depending on the areas of the brain affected by the injury, the student may have difficulties with:

- Communication and speech
- Processing information and word retrieval
- Balance and coordination
- Memory
- Organizing thoughts
- Problem solving and cause-effect relationships
- Social interactions

Instructional Strategies:

- Using a multi-sensory approach is helpful for students with traumatic brain injuries. Visual, auditory and hands-on techniques work well.
- Providing a routine in class and step-by-step instructions for assignments and projects are helpful.

Accommodations may include:

- Extended time for exams
- Exams in the Test Center, or proctored in a separate, quiet, distraction-free environment
- Calculator, spellchecker, reader and/or writer during exams
- Tape recorder for taping lectures
- Note-taker and/or copies of your lecture notes
- Use of computer with or without assistive technology for exams
- Taped/scanned textbooks
- E-text books

Deafness/Hard of Hearing

Hard of hearing is a term used to describe any type or degree of auditory impairment while deafness is an inability to use hearing as a means of communication. Students who are deaf and hard of hearing require different accommodations depending on several factors. These factors include the degree of hearing loss, the age of onset, and the type of language or communication system they use. Students who are deaf and hard of hearing use a variety of communication methods, including lipreading, cued speech, signed English and/or American Sign Language (ASL).

Characteristics:

- Deaf and hard of hearing students may be skilled lipreaders, but many are not. Only 30 to 40 percent of spoken English is distinguishable on the mouth.
- These students may also have difficulties with speech, reading and writing skills due to the close relationship between language development and hearing.
- Students may be members of a distinct linguistic and cultural group; as a cultural group, they may have their own values, social norms and traditions.
- They may use ASL as their first language, with English as their second language. ASL is a visual language having its own syntax and grammatical structure.
- Students may use a combination of speech, sign language, finger spelling, writing, body language and facial expression to convey ideas to others.

Instructional Strategies:

- Look directly at the student during a conversation, even when an interpreter is present, and speak in natural tones.
- Make sure you have the student's attention before speaking. A light touch on the shoulder, wave or other visual signal will help.
- Recognize the processing time the interpreter takes to translate a message from its original form to another language. Additionally, the student may need more time to receive information, ask questions and/or offer comments.
- Provide unfamiliar vocabulary in written form, on the blackboard or in a handout.
- Provide handouts in advance, so the student can watch the interpreter rather than read or copy new material at the same time.

- Use visual aids as much as possible, including captioned versions of videos and films.
- Repeat questions and comments from other students.
- Do not turn off all lights when presenting a video in class as it may be difficult to see the interpreter.

Accommodations may include:

- Use of an interpreter.
- Seating that allows clear view of the instructor, interpreter, and blackboard.
- An unobstructed view of the speaker's face and mouth.
- Written supplement to oral instructions, assignments and directions.
- Test accommodations may include extended time, distraction-free environment, use of the interpreter for directions and questions.
- Note-taker and/or copies of your lecture notes.
- Use of an audio loop.

Medical Disabilities

Medical disabilities include conditions affecting one or more of the body's systems over a prolonged period of time. These include the respiratory, immunological, neurological and circulatory systems.

Such medical disabilities could include:

- Cancer,
- chemical dependency,
- chronic fatigue syndrome,
- diabetes,
- epilepsy/seizure disorder,
- Epstein Barr virus,
- fibromyalgia,
- HIV/AIDS,
- lupus,
- multiple chemical sensitivity,
- multiple sclerosis
- renal disease.

Instructional Strategies

- The condition of a student with a medical or systemic disability may fluctuate or deteriorate over time, causing the need for and type of accommodation to vary.
- Fatigue may be a significant factor in the student's ability to complete required tasks within regular time limits.
- Some of these conditions will cause the student to exceed attendance policies. A

reasonable accommodation should reflect the nature of the class requirements and the arrangements initiated by the student for completing assignments. A reasonable standard of accommodation should be determined in consultation with DSS staff.

- A student may need to leave the classroom early and unexpectedly. However, the student should be held accountable for missed instruction.

Accommodations may include:

- Extended time for exams
- Tape recorder for taping lectures
- Notetaker and/or copies of your lecture notes
- Use of readers and/or writers
- Use of computer with adaptive equipment/software
- Enlarged printed materials
- Beverages allowed in the classroom due to medications that cause extreme thirst
- Modification of required activities that allow the student to participate within his or her physical capabilities, yet still meet course requirements
- Flexibility in attendance requirements in case of health related absences
- Extensions, incompletes or late withdrawals in the event of prolonged illness
- Careful scheduling of the use of cleaning compounds or pesticides

Physical Disabilities

Students may exhibit a variety of physical disabilities resulting from congenital conditions, accidents or progressive neuromuscular diseases. These may include, but are not limited to, spinal cord injury (paraplegia or quadriplegia), cerebral palsy, spina bifida, amputation, muscular dystrophy, cardiac conditions, cystic fibrosis, paralysis, polio/post polio, and stroke.

Characteristics are highly individual, but may include:

- Lack of coordination
- Inability to walk without crutches, canes, braces or walkers
- Ability to stand or walk but may use wheelchair to conserve energy or gain speed
- Limited lower body use but full use of arms and hands
- Impairment of speech or hearing
- Limited head and/or neck movement
- Decreased physical endurance
- Decreased eye-hand coordination

Instructional Strategies:

- When talking with a person who used a wheelchair, try to converse at eye level; sit down if a chair is available.

- Make sure the classroom layout is accessible and free from obstructions.
- If the student has a communication disability, take the time to understand the person. Repeat what you understand, and let the student know when you do not understand them.
- Ask before giving assistance, and wait for a response. Listen to any instructions the student may give; the student generally knows the safest and most efficient way to accomplish the task at hand.
- Let the student set the pace when walking or talking.
- A wheelchair is part of a student's personal space; do not lean on, touch, or push the chair unless asked to do so.
- Plan in advance for field trips to ensure accessibility.
- Ask the student if he or she will need assistance during emergency evacuation, and assist in making a plan if necessary.

Accommodations may include:

- Notetaker or copies of your lecture notes.
- Tape recorder for taping lecture.
- Adaptive computer equipment/software: voice activated word processing, word prediction, keyboard and/or mouse modification
- Extended time on tests
- Tests taken in the Test Center or separate, quiet, distraction-free environment
- Adaptive equipment for testing
- Readers and/or writers for testing
- Adjustable lab or drafting tables
- Some modification of required activities that allow the student to participate within his or her physical capabilities, yet still meet course objectives.
- Taped/scanned textbooks
- Advance planning for field trips to ensure accessibility

Psychological Disabilities

Psychological disabilities refer to a wide range of behaviors and/or psychological problems characterized by anxiety, mood swings, depression and/or a compromised assessment of reality. These behaviors persist over time; they are not in response to a particular event. The majority of psychological disabilities are controlled using a combination of medications and psychotherapy. However, the behavior of student with psychological disabilities may still cycle due to side effects of medication and other personal issues. With treatment and support, most students with psychological disabilities are able to effectively manage their mental health and succeed in college.

Characteristics:

This is such a broad category and symptoms are highly individual. Even within the same

diagnosis, symptoms vary dramatically due to the type and severity of the condition. Students may or may not exhibit some of the following characteristics.

- Difficulty concentrating
- Inability to tolerate stress
- Limited motivation
- Sleep disturbances
- Difficulty attending to lectures
- Incomplete assignments or exams
- Side effects of medications such as drowsiness, fatigue, memory loss and increased response time

Instructional Strategies:

- Students with psychological disabilities may not be comfortable disclosing the specifics of their disability. Instructors can help by providing an understanding and accepting environment which will encourage them to request the accommodations they need.
- If a student does disclose, be willing to discuss how the disability may affect him or her academically and how the accommodations will be provided.
- Sometimes students may need to check their perceptions of a situation or information you have presented in class to be sure they are on the right track.
- Sequential memory tasks, such as those involving math formulas and procedures and complex instructions may be more easily understood by breaking up the information into smaller steps.
- If students seem to need counseling for disability related issue, encourage them to contact DSS or SSSP. It may also be appropriate to suggest that the student talk with a personal counselor in Academic Support, Counseling and Career Services. Maintaining a clear, distinct separation of roles between instructor and counselor is critical for this population.

Accommodations may include:

- Extended time for tests
- Taking tests in the Test Center or in a separate, quiet, distraction-free environment
- Notetaker or copy of your lecture notes
- Tape recorder for taping lectures
- Use of a computer or scribe for tests
- Extensions, incompletes, or late withdrawals in the event of prolonged illness
- Some flexibility in the attendance requirements in case of health related absences
- Beverages allowed in class due to medications which may cause extreme thirst.

Visual Disabilities

Characteristics:

Visual disabilities vary widely, but are usually categorized into the following three divisions:

- “Totally blind” generally refers to students who learn via Braille or other non-visual media.
- “Legally blind” refers to individuals who have less than 20/200 vision in the more functional eye or a very limited field of vision (20 degrees at its widest point).
- “Low vision” refers to a severe vision loss in distance and near vision. Students use a combination of vision and other senses to learn, and they may require adaptations in lighting or print size, and occasionally Braille.

Instructional Strategies:

- If needed, identify yourself at the beginning of a conversation and notify the students when you are exiting the room.
- A student may use a guide dog or white cane for mobility assistance. A guide dog is a working animal and should not be petted.
- Verbally reinforce key points made in the conversation to facilitate the communication process, keeping in mind that nonverbal cues depend on good visual acuity.
- Allow the student to determine the most ideal seating location. He or she should be able to see, hear and touch as much of the presented material as possible.
- Provide a verbal description of class activities. For example, when a show of hands is requested, state how many hands were raised.
- Familiarize the student with the layout of the classroom or laboratory, noting the closest exits and locating emergency equipment.
- Ask the student if he or she will need assistance during an emergency evacuation and assist in making a plan if necessary.

Accommodations may include:

- Reading lists and syllabi in advance to permit time for transfer to alternate formats
- Use of readers, writers, and or adaptive technology to complete tests
- Extra time to complete tests when reader, writer or adaptive technology is used
- Reading aloud materials from overheads, blackboards or handouts
- Use of tape recorders for notetaking
- Provision of large print handouts or black print on white paper for maximum contrast

Frequently Asked Questions

How does a student become eligible to receive accommodations?

To become eligible, a student must have a documented disability and inform the college that he or she is requesting accommodations based on that disability. A student must:

- Contact Disability Support Services (DSS)
- Provide DSS with adequate and current documentation of the disability from a qualified professional
- Meet with a DSS counselor to determine appropriate accommodations
- Provide his or her instructors with the memo prepared by DSS specifying the authorized accommodations

Who determines the accommodations?

DSS staff determines the accommodations using:

- Documentation of the disability from qualified professionals provided by the student,
- Information gathered from a diagnostic student intake process, and
- Information from appropriate college personnel regarding essential standards for courses, programs, services, jobs, activities, and facilities.

The determination of reasonable accommodations considers the following:

- The barriers resulting from the interaction of the student's disability and the campus environment;
- The array of accommodations that might remove the barriers;
- Whether or not the student has access to the course, program, service, job, activity or facility without accommodations; and
- That essential elements of the course, program, service, job, activity or facility are not compromised by the accommodations.

Won't providing accommodations on examinations give an unfair advantage to a student with a disability?

Accommodations don't make things easier, just possible. They are designed to lessen the effects of the disability and are required to provide fair and accurate testing to measure knowledge and expertise in the subject. Accommodations are intended not to give an advantage, but to take away an inherent disadvantage. The purpose of such academic accommodations is to adjust for the effect of the student's disability, not to dilute academic requirements. The evaluation and assigning of grades should require the same standard for all students, including students with disabilities.

What am I to do when I receive a memo from DSS or SSSP with regard to a student in my class?

At a student's request, DSS or SSSP prepares an individualized memo to professors which will verify the fact that the student has a disability and has the appropriate documentation on file in our offices. It outlines the accommodations the student will

need for the semester.

We ask that you and the student discuss the implications of the disability as they relate to the specific course and exactly how the accommodations will be handled. If there are any questions, we ask that you contact the counselor whose name is listed on the accommodation memo for further discussion.

What should I do if a student speaks to me directly to negotiate accommodations without an accommodation memo from DSS or SSSP?

No instructor should provide a student with accommodation without verification from DSS or SSSP that the student has a documented disability. You should direct them to the DSS office and let them know they will need to make an appointment with a counselor. DSS staff will talk with the student about appropriate documentation and how they can go about getting it if they do not already have it available.

What if a student suddenly tells me about a disability late in the semester?

Students have a responsibility to give instructors and DSS adequate time to arrange accommodations. DSS staff encourage students to register with the office as soon as possible. Instructors can help by announcing in class and on their syllabus an invitation for students to identify themselves early in the semester. One example of such an invitation is: “Any student who may need an accommodation due to a disability, please make an appointment to see me during my office hours. A memo from Disability Support Services authorizing your accommodations will be needed.”

Once a student has identified him or herself as having a disability to the instructor and requests accommodations authorized by DSS, the college has a legal responsibility to make reasonable attempts to accommodate the need, even late in the semester. There is no responsibility, however, to provide accommodations prior to identification (i.e. allowing the student to retake exams with extended time.)

Can I review the student’s documentation of the disability?

DSS is the office designated to receive and interpret documentation of disability. DSS staff certify eligibility for services and determine accommodations. Disability information is confidential and students are not required to disclose this information to instructors. Neither DSS nor SSSP can release any confidential information about a student’s disability without the written permission of the student.

What if I suspect that a student has a disability?

Talk with the student about your concerns regarding his or her performance. If the concern seems disability related, ask if he or she has ever received assistance for a disability. If it seems appropriate, refer the student to DSS. Whether or not to self-identify to DSS is the decision of the student; however, to receive accommodations, disclosure to DSS with proper documentation is required. If the student has never been evaluated for a disability, the DSS office will provide a list of local resources where the student may be tested. The college does not diagnose disabilities.

What are some examples of reasonable accommodations that an institution may be expected to provide its students who have disabilities?

Reasonable accommodations are modifications or adjustments to a course, program, service job, activity or facility that enables a qualified individual with a disability to have an equal opportunity to attain the same level of performance or to enjoy equal benefits and privileges as are available to an individual without a disability.

Academic adjustments are provided to ensure that a student with a disability receives an equal opportunity to participate in the institution's programs and activities. Higher education institutions are not required to lower academic standards or compromise the integrity of the school or program. Example of adjustments may include extended time on tests, use of peer notetakers, use of computer with spellcheck, and provision of sign language interpreters.

How much additional time on exams is reasonable?

Extended time on exams is a customary accommodation for students who work more slowly for reasons of disability. For most students, double time is more than adequate. Most students do not even use this much. Students with more severe or multiple disabilities may require additional time. The college does not view untimed tests as reasonable.

Is there a test accommodation service at the college?

Yes, most students who only require additional time on their tests are able to take their tests in the Test Center without an appointment. You, the instructor, drops off the test at the Test Center, which is located in L-154 (or puts it in the "pony" if they are located in the Hickory Ridge Building) and then the Test Center will return the test to the instructor's mailbox. You must make arrangements with the student as to exactly when they are to have the test completed. There may have to be some time shifts (i.e. if the student has a test directly after your class, they may not be able to take it at the exact time the class takes it, but may be able to start it earlier in order to get extended time).

There are some students, such as those who are easily distracted or need to have their tests read aloud to them, who need to take their exams with no other students present. These students are responsible for making the arrangements with DSS or SSSP for a proctor or a reader as soon as they know the date of the tests. You will only need to drop off the test at the Test Center as outlined above.

What should I do if I have questions about or disagree with the recommended accommodations?

You, the instructor, should immediately contact the counselor from DSS or SSSP who sent the memo. If, after discussion and clarification from DSS or SSSP staff, you are not satisfied with the outcome, you can request a formal review of the situation, which would involve the college's 504 coordinator.

What should I do if a student with a disability is failing?

Treat the student as you would any student who is not performing well in your class.

Invite the student to your office to discuss reasons for the failing performance and what resources the student may use to improve. Encourage the student to see their DSS or SSSP counselor who can help them work with available resources on campus or see if they may be qualified for additional accommodations. Students with disabilities must meet the same requirements as the rest of the class so if they are offered all appropriate accommodations and are still not meeting the class requirements, they would fail the class as any other student would. Feel free to contact DSS or SSSP staff with any concerns you might have.

What can I do to begin the dialogue with students?

To encourage self-identification and to uphold the college's commitment to nondiscrimination, DSS asks that your course syllabus state that in order to receive accommodation on the basis of disability, a student must give notice and proper documentation to the Disability Support Services office which is located in room N-200.

What if a student with a disability is often absent?

Talk with the student about your concerns that absences are affecting class performance. Remind him or her of your policy on class absences. Determine with the student whether the missed work can be made up and make arrangements with the student to do so. While some disabilities may affect students' attendance and we may ask for some leniency in your attendance policy, students are still responsible to make up the work missed in an appropriate and timely manner if at all possible. Refer the student to DSS or SSSP if too much class work has been missed.

What is a notetaker?

A notetaker is another student in class who agrees to provide copies of lecture notes taken during class. The instructor's help is often requested in assisting the student with a disability find a conscientious volunteer who is a dependable student and capable notetaker. The notetaker is supplied with a notebook from DSS or SSSP which contains carbonless paper, and at the end of class the copies can just be removed immediately. The student with a disability is expected to attend class as usual when a notetaker is provided. Usually he or she is encouraged to take his or her own notes to the extent possible.

Do I need to alter my teaching style with an interpreter present?

Interpreters are professionals who facilitate communication between hearing individuals and people who are deaf or hard of hearing. The role of the interpreter is similar to that of a foreign language translator: to bridge the communication gap between two parties. Some adaptations in presentation style may be helpful. The interpreter will let you know if you need to slow down your rate of speaking or if they need you to repeat any information. A desk copy of the book is especially helpful for the interpreter if the class is using example, doing exercises from the text, or if the class has unusual, technical vocabulary necessitating a lot of finger spelling. Please realize that if students are looking at the interpreter, they cannot be reading a book, writing, or taking notes; a pause for students to finish their task may be required before continuing the lecture.

What can I expect if there is an interpreter in my classroom?

Interpreters are bound by the code of ethics of the National Registry of Interpreters of the Deaf, which states that interpreters are to serve as communication intermediaries who are not otherwise involved.

- When an interpreter is present, speak directly to the deaf or hard of hearing person rather than to the interpreter, and avoid using phrases such as “tell him” or “ask her”.
- Speak normally, noting that there may be a lag time between the spoken message and the interpretation.
- When referring to objects or written information, allow time for the translation to take place. Replace terms such as “here” and “there” with more specific terms, such as “on the second line” and “in the left corner”.
- Allow the deaf student and the interpreter to work out seating arrangements, with the interpreter usually located near the speaker.
- Inform the interpreter in advance if there is an audiovisual element in a presentation, so arrangements can be made for lighting and positioning.

What should I do if my class needs to evacuate the building in an emergency?

Students who are blind or have low vision may need another student to assist them exit the building. Students who use wheelchairs should not use an elevator. They should wait for fire or police personnel to safely assist them to exit the building. To prevent injuries, it is preferable that instructors or other untrained personnel not attempt to evacuate a student who uses a wheelchair. Please wait for trained emergency personnel.

What if a student has a seizure in my class?

DSS and SSSP encourage students with seizure disorder to discuss with their instructors at the start of the semester what to do if a seizure occurs during class time. Some students may request that emergency personnel be called; others may request action as listed below.

Seizures happen when there is a sudden electrical discharge in the brain. Each individual has a unique reaction. A seizure can result in a relatively slight reaction, such as a short lapse in attention, or a more severe reaction known as a grand mal seizure, which involved convulsions. Seizure disorders are generally controlled by medication, so the possibility of a seizure in the classroom is rare. If one does occur, campus security are trained to provide emergency assistance and should be called if the student has requested this response. The actions listed below are also suggested:

- Keep calm. Ease the student to the floor and open the collar of the shirt. You cannot stop a seizure. Let it run its course and do not try to revive the student.
- Remove hard, sharp, or hot objects that may injure the students, but do not interfere with his/her movements.
- Do not force anything between the student’s teeth.
- Turn the student’s head to one side for release of saliva. Place something soft under the head.
- Make sure the breathing is unobstructed, but do not be concerned if breathing is

- irregular.
- When the student regains consciousness, let him or her rest as long as desired.
 - To help orient the student to time and space, talk about where he or she is and what happened.
 - If the seizure lasts beyond a few minutes, or if the student seems to pass from one seizure to another without regaining consciousness, contact emergency personnel. This rarely happens, but when it does, it should be treated immediately.

What should I do if a student for whom I received a memo starts behaving erratically in the classroom?

You should treat the student as you would any other student in the classroom who is behaving erratically. All students on campus must follow the Student Code of Conduct as published in the catalog and the student handbook. You must emphasize that to the student. You can contact the student's DSS or SSSP counselor to discuss the behavior as the counselor can reinforce to the student that his or her behavior must follow college rules and regulations regardless of whether or not they have a disability.

Course Substitution Policy

Under defined circumstances, the faculty of the Student Support Services and Disability Support Services programs may find it necessary to assist a student in obtaining a waiver for a particular course. The guidelines for the substitution of course(s) in A.A. degree requirements for learning disabled students at Howard Community College are as follows:

- I. Eligibility:
- A. The student has written documentation that he/she is disabled and that he/she cannot complete the course work as a result of his/her disability.
 - B. The student has demonstrated that he/she cannot complete the course by making at least two sincere attempts at passing the course.
 - C. The student has demonstrated that he/she has taken advantage of all the academic support (i.e. tutoring, institutional specialist, and faculty) services available on campus.

Appeal Procedures:

- A. The eligible student must submit a written request to the vice president and dean of instruction for a course substitution.
- B. The vice president and dean of instruction will convene a panel consisting of one faculty member from the student's major area, one faculty member from the content area and one staff member from Student Support Services or Disability Support Services.
- C. The panel will make a recommendation to the division chairperson of the

- respective student's program area. The panel should exercise fair and reasonable deliberation in deciding the course substitution.
- D. The respective division chairperson will make a recommendation to the vice president and dean of instruction for the approval or denial of the particular course replacement.
 - E. The decision of the vice president and the dean of instruction is final.

Because of the ever-increasing number of students attending the college, the faculty of Howard Community College has become "expert" at finding ways to meet students' special needs. We welcome the opportunity to help students to achieve success at Howard Community College.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Assistive Technology is available on our campus for students with documented physical or learning disabilities, who are enrolled in **credit** classes. Students enrolled in non-credit classes must arrange accommodations through the Continuing Education Department or through an outside agency. **At least two weeks before the beginning of a school term**, eligible students are asked to contact Disability Support Services at (410) 772-4629 to set up an appointment to meet with a counselor. Once the counselor and the student determine what accommodations are appropriate, the student is instructed to contact Carol Manchester, at (410) 772-4822 to schedule an assistive technology assessment. Carol will arrange a series of training appointments to instruct them on the use of the technology most appropriate to their needs, if such training is deemed necessary. Some assistive computer programs take from **one week to three weeks** to master, depending on how computer literate the student is.

Listed below are some examples of assistive technology. This list is by no means exhaustive and is subject to changes as new and better devices become available to assist our students.

- Screen magnifiers, which are used by people with visual disabilities to enlarge and change colors on the screen to improve the visual readability of rendered text and images.
- Screen readers are used by people who have low vision or have reading disabilities, to read textual information through synthesized speech. Some screen readers have scanning, reading and writing capability. You are able to scan a page from a book and then the screen reader will read the page back to you and highlight the words as they are spoken to you. Screen readers can read characters, words or lines of text. Screen readers can also read e-mail, web pages or read text back to you that has just been typed.

- Voice recognition software may be used by some people who have physical disabilities.
- Ergonomic keyboards and alternative mouse pointing devices are used by people with certain physical disabilities.
- CCTV takes material placed on a platform and magnifies the material on a large screen TV located just above the platform (in Library).
- Reading pens will scan a printed word and you can see its definition displayed on the built-in LCD screen. It will also read out loud the definition or earphones can be used in the classroom
- Electronic dictionaries that have full speech controls to read screens or speak individual words at the speed you choose. They are less than 6 inches square and have a large-type display option, with a high-contrast screen for low vision users.
- Furniture for use in the classroom for student with physical disabilities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Howard Community College has had a long history of assisting students with disabilities to achieve success, or to “get there from here”. Our faculty has proven themselves again and again in providing a superior level of instruction and support necessary to help these students succeed. We, in the office of Disability Support Services and Student Support Services, are here to assist you in any way possible in achieving our mutual goal of student success. Please feel free to contact us if we can help in any way.