

AHEAD Program Standards and Performance Indicators

The Association on Higher Education And Disability (AHEAD) is pleased to offer these revised Professional Standards and Performance Indicators to the field. The standards reflect the maturation of the postsecondary disability services profession, describe the breadth of skills and knowledge required of personnel administering the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD), and present a consensus among experts in the field regarding minimum essential services. These standards are intended to enhance service provision for college students with disabilities by directing program evaluation and development efforts, improving personnel preparation and staff development, guiding the formulation of job descriptions for OSD personnel, informing judges and requisite court decisions regarding appropriate practice and, lastly, expanding the vision of disability services at the postsecondary level.

1. Consultation / Collaboration

To facilitate equal access to postsecondary education for students with disabilities, the office that provides services to students with disabilities should:

1.1 *Serve as an advocate for issues regarding students with disabilities to ensure equal access.*

- Foster collaboration between disability services and administration as it relates to policy implementation.
- Ensure key administrators remain informed of emerging disability issues on campus that may warrant a new or revised policy.
- Foster a strong institutional commitment to collaboration on disability issues among key administrative personnel (e.g., deans, registrar, campus legal counsel).
- Work with facilities to foster campus awareness regarding physical access.
- Work collaboratively with academic affairs on policy regarding course substitutions.
- Foster an institutional commitment to promoting student abilities rather than a student's disability.
- Foster meaningful inclusion of students with disabilities in campus life (e.g., residential activities, extracurricular activities).

1.2 *Provide disability representation on relevant campus committees.*

- Advise campus student affairs regarding disability-related issues (e.g., student discipline, student activities).
- Participate on a campus-wide disability advisory committee consisting of faculty, students, administrators, and community representatives.
- Participate on campus administrative committees such as a campus committee on individuals with disabilities.

2. Information Dissemination

To facilitate equal access to postsecondary education for students with disabilities, the office that provides services to students with disabilities should:

2.1 *Disseminate information through institutional electronic and printed publications regarding disability services and how to access them.*

- Distribute policy and procedures(s) on availability of services via all relevant campus publications (catalogs, programmatic materials, web sites, etc.).
- Ensure referral, documentation, and disability services information is up to date and accessible on the institution's web site.
- Ensure that criteria and procedures for accessing accommodations are clearly delineated and disseminated to the campus community.
- Ensure access to information about disabilities to students, administration, faculty, and service professionals.
- Provide information on grievance and complaint procedures when requested.
- Include a statement in the institutional publications regarding self-disclosure for students with disabilities.

2.2 *Provide services that promote access to the campus community.*

- Facilitate the acquisition and availability of a wide variety of assistive technology to help students access materials in alternative formats (e.g., JAWS for Windows screen reader, Kurzweil Voice Pro, Mountbatten Braille).
- Provide information for the acquisition of computerized communication, text telephone (TT), or telecommunications devices (TDD) for the deaf.
- Promote universal design in facilities.
- Promote universal design in communication.
- Promote universal design in instruction.

2.3 *Disseminate information to students with disabilities regarding available campus and community disability resources.*

- Provide information and referrals to assist students in accessing campus resources.

3. Faculty / Staff Awareness

To facilitate equal access to postsecondary education for students with disabilities, the office that provides services to students with disabilities should:

3.1 Inform faculty regarding academic accommodations, compliance with legal responsibilities, as well as instructional, programmatic, and curriculum modifications.

- Inform faculty of their rights and responsibilities to ensure equal educational access.
- Inform faculty of the procedures that students with disabilities must follow in arranging for accommodations.
- Collaborate with faculty on accommodation decisions when there is a potential for a fundamental alteration of an academic requirement.

3.2 Provide consultation with administrators regarding academic accommodations, compliance with legal responsibilities, as well as instructional, programmatic, physical, and curriculum modifications.

- Foster administrative understanding of the impact of disabilities on students.

3.3 Provide disability awareness training for campus constituencies such as faculty, staff, and administrators.

- Provide staff development regarding understanding of policies and practices that apply to students with disabilities in postsecondary settings.
- Provide staff development to enhance understanding of faculty's responsibility to provide accommodations to students and how to provide accommodations and modifications.
- Provide administration and staff training to enhance institutional understanding of the rights of students with disabilities.
- Participate in administrative and staff training to delineate responsibilities relative to students with disabilities.
- Training for staff (e.g., residential life, maintenance, and library personnel) to facilitate and enhance the integration of students with disabilities into the college community.

3.4 Provide information to faculty about services available to students with disabilities.

- Provide staff development for faculty and staff to refer students who may need disability services.

4. Academic Adjustments

To facilitate equal access to postsecondary education for students with disabilities, the office that provides services to students with disabilities should:

4.1 *Maintain records that document the student's plan for the provision of selected accommodations.*

- Create a confidential file on each student including relevant information pertaining to eligibility and provision of services.
- Document the basis for accommodation decisions and recommendations.
- Develop a case management system that addresses the maintenance of careful and accurate records of each student.

4.2 *Determine with students appropriate academic accommodations and services.*

- Conduct a review of disability documentation.
- Incorporate a process that fosters the use of effective accommodations, taking into consideration the environment, task, and the unique needs of the individual.
- Review the diagnostic testing to determine appropriate accommodations or supports.
- Accommodation requests are handled on a case-by-case basis and relate to students' strengths and weaknesses, which are identified in their documentation.
- Determine if the student's documentation supports the need for the requested accommodation.
- On a case-by-case basis, consider providing time-limited, provisional accommodations pending receipt of clinical documentation, after which a determination is made.

4.3 *Collaborate with faculty to ensure that reasonable academic accommodations do not fundamentally alter the program of study.*

- Provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure program accessibility, yet do not compromise the essential elements of the course or curriculum.
- Ensure an array of supports, services and assistive technology so that student needs for modifications and accommodations can be met.

5. Counseling and Self-Determination

To facilitate equal access to postsecondary education for students with disabilities, the office that provides services to students with disabilities should:

- 5.1 *Use a service delivery model that encourages students with disabilities to develop independence.*
- Educate and assist students with disabilities to function independently.
 - Develop a program mission that is committed to promoting self-determination for students with disabilities.

6. Policies and Procedures

To facilitate equal access to postsecondary education for students with disabilities, the office that provides services to students with disabilities should:

6.1 *Develop, review and revise written policies and guidelines regarding procedures for determining and accessing “reasonable accommodations.”*

- Develop, review and revise procedures for students to follow regarding the accommodation process.
- Develop, review and revise policies describing disability documentation review.
- Develop, review and revise procedures regarding student eligibility for services.
- Develop, review and revise eligibility for services policies and procedures that delineate steps required for students to access services, including accommodations.
- Develop, review and revise procedures to determine if students receive provisional accommodations during any interim period (e.g., assessment is being updated or re-administered).

6.2 *Assist with the development, review, and revision of written policies and guidelines for institutional rights and responsibilities with respect to service provision.*

- Assist with the development, review, and revision of policies and procedures on course substitutions, including institution requirements (e.g., foreign language or writing requirements).
- Assist with the development, review, and revision of policy and procedures regarding priority registration.
- Develop, review and revise policies and procedures that maintain a balance between "reasonable accommodation" and "otherwise qualified" while "not substantially altering technical standards."
- Develop, review, and revise policies regarding the provision of disability services (e.g., interpreter services).
- Develop, review and revise disability documentation guidelines to determine eligibility for accommodations at the postsecondary level.
- Assist the institution with the development, review, and revision of policies regarding the faculty's responsibility for serving students with disabilities.
- Collaborate with the development, review, and revision of policies regarding IT (e.g., alternative formats).

6.3 *Develop, review and revise written policies and guidelines for student rights and responsibilities with respect to receiving services.*

- Develop consistent practices and standards for documentation.
- Develop, review and revise policies regarding students' responsibility to provide recent and appropriate documentation of disability.
- Assist with the development, review, and revision of policies regarding students' responsibility to meet the Institution's qualifications and essential technical, academic, and institutional standards.
- Develop, review and revise policies regarding students' responsibility to follow specific procedures for obtaining reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids.
- Assist with the development, review, and revision of procedures a student must follow regarding program modifications (e.g., course substitutions).
- Develop, review, and revise procedures for notifying staff (e.g., interpreter, notetaker) when a student will not attend a class meeting.

6.4 *Develop, review and revise written policies and guidelines regarding confidentiality of disability information.*

- Develop, review and revise policy articulating students understanding of who will have access to their documentation and the assurance that it will not be shared inappropriately with other campus units.
- Develop, review and revise policies and procedures regarding privacy of records, including testing information, prior records and permission to release confidential records to other agencies or individuals.

6.5 *Assist with the development, review, and revision of policies and guidelines for settling a formal complaint regarding the determination of a "reasonable accommodation."*

- Assist with the development, review, and revision of procedures for resolving disagreements regarding specific accommodation requests, including a defined process by which a review of the request can occur.
- Assist with the development, review, and revision of compliance efforts and procedures to investigate complaints.
- Assist with the development, review, and revision of a conflict resolution process with a systematic procedure to follow by both the grievant and the institutional representative.

7. Program Administration and Evaluation

To facilitate equal access to postsecondary education for students with disabilities, the office that provides services to students with disabilities should:

7.1 *Provide services that are aligned with the institution's mission or services philosophy.*

- Develop a program mission statement and philosophy that is compatible with the mission of the institution.
- Program personnel and other institutional staff understand and support the mission of the office for students with disabilities.

7.2 *Coordinate services for students with disabilities through a full-time professional.*

- At least one full-time professional is responsible for disability services as a primary role.

7.3 *Collect student feedback to measure satisfaction with disability services.*

- Assess the effectiveness of accommodations and access provided to students with disabilities (e.g., timeliness of response to accommodation request).
- Student satisfaction data is included in evaluation of disability services.

7.4 *Collect data to monitor use of disability services.*

- Provide feedback to physical plant regarding physical access for students with disabilities.
- Collect data to assess the effectiveness of services provided.
- Collect data to identify ways the program can be improved.
- Collect data to project program growth and needed funding increases.

7.5 *Report program evaluation data to administrators.*

- Develop an annual evaluation report on your program using the qualitative and quantitative data you've collected.

7.6 *Provide fiscal management of the office that serves students with disabilities.*

- Develop a program budget.
- Effectively manage your program's fiscal resources.
- Seek additional internal or external funds as needed.
- Develop political support for your program and its budget.

7.7 *Collaborate in establishing procedures for purchasing the adaptive equipment needed to assure equal access.*

- Assist with the determination of the needs for assistive technology and adaptive equipment at your institution.
- Advise other departments regarding the procurement of needed assistive technology and adaptive equipment.
- Provide or arrange for assistance to students to operate assistive technology and adaptive equipment.

8. Training and Professional Development

To facilitate equal access to postsecondary education for students with disabilities, the office that provides services to students with disabilities should:

8.1 *Provide disability services staff with on-going opportunities for professional development.*

- Provide orientation and staff development for new disability personnel.
- Ensure that professional development funds are available for disability personnel.
- Provide opportunities for ongoing training based on a needs assessment of the knowledge and skills of disability personnel.

8.2 *Provide services by personnel with training and experience working with college students with disabilities (e.g., student development, degree programs).*

- Ensure staff can understand and interpret assessments/documentation.

8.3 *Assure that personnel adhere to relevant Codes of Ethics (e.g., AHEAD, APA).*

- Refer to and apply a relevant professional code of ethics when dealing with challenging situations.