

Merritt College

Disability Services Program Handbook Hardcopy (Draft)

Spring 2015





Disability Service Program Handbook

Disability Services Program (DSP)

- Introduction to DSP
- How to Refer a Student to DSP
- Learning Disabilities Referral/Information Form, PDF File

Working with Students with Disabilities

- Etiquette
- Teaching Students With Disabilities
- Teaching Students with Specific Disabilities

Accommodations and Services

- Classroom Accommodation Agreement, PDF File
- Alternate Media
- Alternate Testing
- Recommended Syllabi Statements

Rights, Responsibilities, and more...

- Faculty Rights
- Faculty Responsibilities
- Links for Faculty
- FAQ's for Faculty

Web Accessibility

- [Learn about web accessibility](#)

Acknowledgements

The revised Disability Services Handbook (DSP) for Faculty, Staff and Students was funded by a Merritt College Campus Innovation Mini Grant, Merritt College Title III Project: Strengthening Pathways, Systems, and Services to Maximize Student Success 2009-2010. The \$2,000.00 grant was to revise the outdated Disability Services Program Handbook (2007) and to provide alternative formats including web accessibility.

Numerous hours were spent researching what other community, four-year universities and private colleges included in their handbooks. The amount of information on the web is enormous and overwhelming. However, Cuesta College, a two-year community college in California, has a format that is user friendly, informative, and adaptable to our needs. Our basic format is borrowed from them as well as aspects from other colleges in California.

We would like to give thanks to our DSP Counselors, Instructors, and staff, who gave of their time and expertise to review and edit several drafts before the final version. Many, many thanks to students in the Disability Services Program who permitted us to take their pictures and tell their stories. It takes a lot of courage to self-disclose one's disabilities in such a public manner. However, the impact our program has is dependent upon these students and others just like them who spread the word that it is possible to succeed in college by taking advantage of all the resources available on each community college campus.

Our appreciation must also be expressed to Grant Committee members who selected our proposal in the first round in 2009. This was a clear indication to us that we absolutely needed to revise our DSP Handbook. Members: Anita Black, Title III Coordinator, Dr. Jennifer Shanoski, faculty; Alexis Alexander, faculty, Dr. Linda Berry, Vice President of Instruction; Ann Elliott, faculty; Dr. Eric Gravenberg, Vice President of Student Services; Jason Holloway, faculty; Anthony Powell, Dean of Student Services; Dr. Stacy Thompson, Dean Humanities; Anika Toussant-Jackson, Research; and, Marta Zielke, Centro Latino Coordinator.

We apologize for the extended time taken to complete this project. However, the enormity of this undertaking became clear as we searched the internet, reviewing hundreds of college websites for format, content and user ease. Moreover, the drafts were designed for uploading onto the website which compounded the task, but accomplished by Matthew Dimopoulos, web master and editor.

Thank you, Merritt College Family.

Barbara A. Dimopoulos, Learning Disabilities Specialist
Ronald Nelson, Disability Services Program Coordinator

How to get started with disability services

Remember: You can always briefly consult with a staff member or counselor during drop-in hours (R-109) or by telephone (510) 436-2429.

STEP 1: If new to Peralta colleges, complete the college application (www.peralta.edu). Make an appointment for Merritt College Orientation and Assessment (510) 436-2475 followed by an appointment with a DSP Counselor (510) 436-2429 in R-109.

STEP 2: Gather information on yourself:

- What are your goals for attending college?
- What are your learning strengths, weaknesses?
- How does your disability affect you?
- What works best for you?

STEP 3: Obtain verification of your disability from:

- Medical doctor, psychiatrist or psychologist
- High school Individual Education Plan (I.E.P.)/504 Plan
- Learning Disability Assessment
- Department of Rehabilitation evaluation

STEP 4: Complete the DSP Intake forms with information on yourself, your disability, and your doctor, agencies assisting you, and your need for services.

STEP 5: Meet with the DSP Counselor to develop a plan for your goals and support services. Together you will determine which services are most appropriate for you based on your disability and its/their functional limitations.

STEP 6: The DSP Counselor will give you an Accommodations Form listing your accommodations and services.

STEP 7: Meet with your instructors in private (office hours or by appointment) at the beginning of each semester with your up-dated Accommodations Form and discuss your specific needs. During the semester, you may need to remind your instructors about your accommodations.

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WELCOME!

Merritt College

Disability Services Program



LEARN TO ACTIVATE YOUR POWER!

**UNDERSTAND YOUR STRENGTHS, RIGHTS,
and ABILITY TO LEARN DIFFERENTLY.**

TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR OWN SUCCESS!

CHANGE YOUR WAY OF THINKING!

LIBERATE YOURSELF!

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.
It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.
We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?
Actually, who are you not to be?
- Nelson Mandela



Mission Statement

We are committed to:

- Empowering students with disabilities for success.
- Providing “equal access” services that will empower students with disabilities to be successful at Merritt College.
- Implementing accommodations based on the functional limitations of the disability in the academic setting, while empowering students with disability self-management and self-advocacy.
- Creating a level playing field in the classroom so that students have the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities and not focus on the disability.
- Advocating for the needs and rights of students with disabilities.

Goals

- Focus on the true ability of students.
- Determine and provide individualized accommodations.
- Foster equal treatment through all Merritt College Programs.
- Promote awareness of disability rights of equal access.

Disability reflects diverse characteristics and experiences and is an aspect of diversity integral to society. To that end, we collaborate with students, instructors, staff, and community members to create useable, equitable, inclusive and sustainable learning environments. The Disability Services Program is also committed to supporting Merritt College as a non-discriminating environment for qualified students with disabilities, providing appropriate, timely services.

Disability Services Program Handbook

The Disability Services Program (DSP) formerly known as Disabled Student Programs and Services (D.S.P.&.S.) at Merritt College serves more than 800 students with disabilities each year.

Our Program provides students with disabilities the specialized classes and support services which allow the students to more fully participate in and benefit from courses at the college. Classes include study skills, reading, writing, arithmetic, computer skills, and more. Services include alternative testing, American Sign Language interpreters, real-time captioners, alternative media, braille, and much more.

Merritt College is committed to assisting students with disabilities by providing physical access, appropriate support services, adaptive equipment, and basic skills classes. This handbook is designed to serve as a tool to help faculty understand how disabilities affect learning in a college setting and suggests adjustments that can be made in the environment or teaching style.

Merritt College DSP adheres to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Section 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the California Education Code, and Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations. Title 5 regulations provide guidance to the colleges in their legal and fiscal responsibilities to DSP and to students with disabilities.

The Disability Services Program assists the college in complying with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which states that "no qualified individual with disabilities shall, on the basis of their disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of or be subject to discrimination under any post-secondary program or activity receiving federal financial assistance".

Post-secondary institutions must ensure that students with disabilities are not excluded from programs because of the absence of educational auxiliary aids. Federal law states that "No otherwise qualified handicapped individual in the United States... shall, solely, by reason of his handicap, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance".

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 extends federal civil rights protection. It prohibits excluding people from jobs, services, activities or benefits based on disability. The laws are described in more detail in the Appendix.

After reviewing this web page, feel free to contact DSP if you have additional questions or concerns. The Disability Services Program is located in the Student Services Building, R-109; the telephone number is (510) 436-2429.

About our Staff

The Disability Services Program (DSP) is located in R-109. Students are greeted at the Student Reception Counter by one of our student assistants. Students can make appointments, leave messages for DSP Counselors, or have their questions answered. Our DSP staff Assistant is located to the left of the Student Reception Counter, behind the swinging gate-door. Our Staff Assistant can also assist with scheduling appointments and answering questions when no one is at the counter.

We currently have 1 part-time DSP Coordinator/Counselor and 5 part-time Counselors. All of our Counselors are knowledgeable and have many years of experience working with students with disabilities.

The Learning Disabilities Specialist (LDS) is full-time; the office is in P-305A inside the Learning Opportunity Program (LOP) classroom, P-305. In P-306, next door, is the High Tech Center/Computer Access Lab with adaptive technology. The Instructor is part-time.

The Alternate Media Specialist is located in R-109B. Students can make arrangements for acquiring the Universal Kurzweil Program, getting books on MP3 audio format, as well as other alternate media resources by making an appointment through our DSP Office: (510) 436-2429.

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Disabilities

- What is a Disability?
- Types of Disabilities
- The Americans with Disabilities Act
- Services Available in College Settings
- Steps I Should Take if I Think I Have a Disability
- Merritt College Disability Definitions

What is a Disability?

The information on this page will help you:

- understand many different types of disabilities
- learn the definition of disability
- determine whether or not you qualify for protection and accommodations

Types of Disabilities

You might have heard the saying that no two snowflakes are alike. The same thing can be said about a person with a disability. Persons with disabilities have many different characteristics. In fact, many persons with disabilities look just like everyone else. Their disabilities may be hidden.

Many types of disabilities exist, such as **physical, sensory, cognitive, psychiatric, and health-related**.

Physical disabilities often cause a person to use special equipment like a wheelchair, cane, or prosthetic limb. Persons with physical disabilities may have difficulty with movement or self-care, but are otherwise just like anyone else.

Another type of disability that people are familiar with is **sensory disabilities**. Sensory disabilities affect the senses and include blindness and deafness. Sensory and physical disabilities are usually easy for people to notice, but not all disabilities are visible.

An example of an invisible disability is a **psychiatric disability**. This category includes conditions like bipolar disorder, depression, and many others. Medications and therapies often help persons with psychiatric disabilities to live and function successfully in the community.

Cognitive disabilities vary tremendously and can also be difficult to see. Learning disabilities are in this category. A person with a learning disability usually has average to above average intelligence but difficulty learning, remembering and communicating information. Learning disabilities come in many different forms and although they usually affect a person's ability to complete school-related tasks, learning disabilities can also affect job performance.

Some people with sicknesses or diseases such as epilepsy, diabetes, and cancer are considered as having a **health-related disability**. Not everyone who is sick has a disability. You should check with your school's office for students with disabilities to see if you qualify for assistance.

Have you ever received special services or accommodations for any of the disability types described above?

The Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a law written to protect persons with disabilities from discrimination. The ADA defines disability as any physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities such as

- caring for oneself;
- performing manual tasks;
- walking, seeing;
- hearing;
- speaking;
- breathing;
- learning, or
- working.

For more information about the ADA, refer to the web page "More Rights and Responsibilities of Students with Disabilities."

Deciding whether a student meets the definition of disability under the ADA is handled on a case-by-case basis. Keep in mind that persons are not entitled to protection under the ADA simply because they have been diagnosed with a disability. The disability *must* substantially limit their ability to perform major life activities.

To help you understand the many disabilities covered by the ADA, a partial list follows:

- physical, sight, speech or hearing impairments,
- epilepsy,
- muscular dystrophy,
- multiple sclerosis,
- cancer, heart diseases,
- diabetes,
- chronic illnesses,
- HIV or AIDS,
- cognitive disabilities,
- psychiatric disabilities,
- specific learning disabilities,
- developmental disabilities, and
- recovered drug or alcohol addiction.

Services Available in the College Setting

First, a person with a disability must seek out accommodations and services at the college's Disability Services Program. This requires you to present the necessary paperwork to verify that you have a disability.

For example, a student with a learning disability would need to go the Disability Services Program (DSP) office and present test scores and records that document the disability. Merritt College offers assessment for learning disabilities eligibility to enrolled students.

Then the student would discuss with a DSP Counselor which reasonable accommodations are needed to be successful.

The college uses the Individual Accommodations Model to determine appropriate and effective academic accommodations. The model helps both the student and the service provider select accommodations that are based on a student's needs, strengths, and goals. For a person with a learning disability, accommodations might include extended time on tests, test-taking in an isolated setting, a note-taker, or the use of a tape-recorder.

Steps I Should Take if I Think I Have a Disability

If you have a record of having a disability in the past or have one now, contact the Disability Services Program (DSP) office. You must present records to verify your disability. Next, you will need to determine whether your disability is substantially limiting your ability to be successful in the college setting. If it is, you may be entitled to accommodations. Keep in mind that accommodations must be reasonable and are provided to give you a fair chance at success in school not a privilege or unfair advantage.

If you think you may have a disability but do not have the necessary paperwork, contact DSP. They may be able to help you identify the steps you need to take to receive services and/or accommodations.

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Types of Disabilities: Merritt College Disability Definitions

Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations defines the following disabilities for California Community Colleges. Below is a listing of disabilities and hyperlinks (to be added to web format) to information on teaching students with these disabilities.

Acquired Brain Impairment: A verified deficit in brain functioning which results in a total or partial loss of cognitive, communicative, motor, psychosocial, and/or sensory perceptual abilities.

Communication Disability: An impairment in the processes of speech, language, or hearing.

Developmentally Delayed Learner: The developmentally delayed learner exhibits below average intellectual functioning and has potential: for measurable achievement in instructional and employment settings.

Learning Disability: A persistent condition of presumed neurological dysfunction which may exist with other disabling conditions and continues despite instruction in standard classroom situations. To be categorized as learning disabled, a student must exhibit:

- average to above average intellectual ability;
- severe processing deficit(s); and,
- severe aptitude achievement discrepancy(cies)

Mobility Disability: A visual impairment, mobility or orthopedic impairment, or other health impairment.

Psychological Disability: A persistent, psychological or psychiatric disorder, or emotional or mental illness. The following are not included: sexual behavior disorders, compulsive behaviors, and psychoactive substance abuse.

Visual Disability: A visual impairment.

Other Disabilities: This category includes all students with disabilities who are not appropriate for any of the above categories and have a major life impairment and are in need of instruction and/or support, as verified by a Merritt College DSP Counselor.

How to Refer a Student to DSP

If a student has a disability and requests accommodations or services, refer the student to DSP.

It is likely that there are students in your classroom who you suspect may need services and accommodations. If you decide to approach the student to discuss a possible need for services, please be sensitive that the student may either be reluctant to discuss his/her disability, or may have difficulty explaining it to you.

If you are unsure of how to approach a student you suspect might have a disability, someone in DSP would be happy to discuss this with you. Call the DSP Office at (510) 436-2429 and ask to speak to a DSP Counselor.

It would be helpful to announce in class at the beginning of each semester and to put a Reasonable Accommodation statement in your syllabus.

Learning Disabilities (LD) Referral form

If you think a student might have a learning disability, please fill out the LD Referral form, provide it to the student, and encourage the student to make an appointment with DSP. (Go to: <http://www.merritt.edu/wp/dsp/>)

A Guide to Disability Etiquette

Ask the student

While we encourage students to discuss their needs with their instructors, this is not always done. If you have questions about whether or not a student needs an accommodation, the first person to ask is the student.

Ask before doing

Do not assume people with disabilities need your help. Ask if you can be of assistance.

Be aware of your language

Using terms such as "student with disabilities" rather than "disabled students" puts the emphasis on the person rather than their disability.

Relax

Do not be afraid to approach a person with a disability. Do not worry about using words like "walk" with a person using a wheelchair. As with anyone else, just treat them, as you would like to be treated - with the same respect and consideration that you have for everyone else.

Speak directly to the student

Do not consider a companion to be a conversation go-between. Even if the student has an interpreter present, speak directly to the student, not to the interpreter. Make eye contact.

Give your full attention

Be considerate of the extra time it might take for a person with a disability to get things said or done. Do not talk for the person who has difficulty speaking, but give help when needed. Keep your manner encouraging rather than correcting.

Speak slowly and distinctly

When talking to a person who is hard of hearing or has other difficulty understanding, speak slowly without exaggerating your lip movement. Stand in front of the person and use gestures to aid communication. Many students who are deaf or hard of hearing rely on being able to read your lips. When full understanding is doubtful, write notes.

Appreciate abilities

Students with disabilities, like those without disabilities, do some things well and others not as well. By focusing on what they can do, instead of what they can't, you will help build confidence.

Use common sense

Although some students with disabilities may require significant adaptation and modification in the classroom, more often common sense approaches can be applied to ensure that students have access to course content.

When necessary, work with the Alternate Media Specialist to provide students with materials in alternate formats.

For information on working with individuals with specific disabilities, visit the [teaching students with disabilities web page](#).

Teaching Students with Disabilities

Students bring a unique set of strengths and experiences to college, and students with disabilities are no exception. While many learn in different ways, their differences do not imply inferior capacities. *There is no need to dilute curriculum or to reduce course requirements for the disabled student.* However, special accommodations may be needed, as well as modifications in the way information is presented and in methods of testing and evaluation. Faculty will be aided in these efforts by drawing upon the student's own prior learning experiences, using available college and department resources, and collaborating with the campus Disability Services Program (DSP).

Specific suggestions for teaching disabled students can be discussed with the DSP Counselors or the Learning Disabilities Specialist; however the following general considerations may be helpful.

1. Identifying the Student with a Disability

Determining that a student is disabled may not always be a simple process. *Visible disabilities* are noticeable through casual observation an immediately recognizable physical impairment, for example, or the use of a cane, a wheelchair or crutches.

Other students may have *hidden disabilities*, such as hearing deficiencies, legal blindness, cardiac conditions, learning disabilities, cancer, diabetes, kidney disease and psychiatric or seizure disorders, all of which are usually not apparent.

Finally, there are students with *multiple disabilities*, which are caused by such primary conditions as muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy or multiple sclerosis. Depending on the nature and progression of the illness or injury, it may be accompanied by a secondary impairment in mobility, vision, speech, or coordination which may, in fact, pose greater difficulties.

Some disabled students will identify themselves as such by contacting the Disability Services Program office and their instructors before or early in the semester. Others, especially those with "hidden" disabilities, may not because of shame, their distaste for pity, or their fear of disbelief either about the legitimacy of their problem or the need for accommodation. Such students, in the absence of instructional adjustment, may run into trouble in their college work. In a panic they may self-identify just before an examination and expect instant attention to their needs.

The faculty member should make an announcement at the beginning of the term inviting students with disabilities to schedule appointments. If you suspect that a student has a disability, discuss the question with the student. You may find such an approach awkward, at least initially, but the end result will be extremely beneficial if the student's condition is made known at the very outset.

2. Sharing the Responsibilities

To the extent manageable, students with disabilities bear the primary responsibility for identifying their disabilities and making necessary adjustments to the learning environment. However, for testing arrangements and the use of department resources, the cooperation of the faculty member is vital.

3. Faculty-Student Relationships

Dialogue between the student and instructor is essential early in the term, and follow-up meetings are recommended. Faculty should not feel apprehensive about discussing the student's disabling condition as it relates to the course. There is no reason to avoid using terms that refer to the disability, such as "blind," and "see," or "walk." However, care should be taken to avoid generalizing a particular limitation to other aspects of a student's functioning. The disabled student will probably have had some experience with the kind of initial uneasiness you may bring to the relationship. The student's own suggestions, based on experience with the disability and with school work, are invaluable in accommodating disabilities in college.

The "[Disability Etiquette](#)" web page has information on working with people with disabilities.

4. Attendance and Promptness

The student using a wheelchair or other assistive devices may encounter obstacles or barriers in getting to class on time. Others may have periodic or irregular curtailments of functioning, either from their disability or from medication. Flexibility in applying attendance and promptness rules to such students would be helpful.

5. Classroom Adjustments

A wide range of students with disabilities may be served in the classroom by making book lists available prior to the beginning of the term; by thoughtful seating arrangements, by speaking directly toward the class, and by writing key lecture points and assignments on the chalkboard.

6. Functional Problems

In addition to the adjustments for each category of disability, some understanding is required in coping with more subtle and sometimes unexpected manifestations of disability. Chronic weakness and fatigue characterize some disabilities and medical conditions. Drowsiness, fatigue or impairments of memory or speed may result from prescribed medications. Such curtailments of functioning and interference with the student's ability to perform should be distinguished from the apathetic behavior it may resemble.

7. Note-Taking

Students who cannot take notes nor have difficulty taking notes adequately would be helped by allowing them to tape-record lectures, by assisting them in borrowing classmates' notes, or by making an outline of lecture materials available to them.

8. Testing and Evaluation

Depending on the disability, the student may require the administration of examinations orally, the use of readers and/or scribes, extension of time for exams, a modification of the test formats or, in some cases, make-up or take-home exams. For out-of-class assignments, the extension of deadlines may be justified. The objective of such special considerations should always be to accommodate the student's learning differences, not to compromise scholastic requirements. The same standards should be applied to students with disabilities as to all other students in evaluation and assigning grades.

Adapted from "Reasonable Accommodations," The City College of New York.

9. Teaching Students with Specific Disabilities

Practical suggestions on how to work with students with disabilities, possible accommodations, and definitions of the disabilities:

- Acquired Brain Impairment
- Communication Disability
- Developmentally Delayed Learners
- Learning Disabilities
- Mobility Disability
- Other Disabilities
- Psychological Disabilities
- Vision Disability

10. Resources for Instructors

To arrange for an appointment with a DSP Counselor:

- Download the Disability Verification Form.
- Fill it out.
- Call (510) 436-2429 or drop by R-109 to make an appointment.
- Bring completed form(s) and supporting disability documentation to your appointment.

Acquired Brain Impairment (ABI)

It is estimated that 50,000 people per year suffer a head injury severe enough to keep them from returning to their pre-injury level of functioning. College age students are in a high-risk age group for this type of injury; two-thirds of all head injury cases occur among persons aged 15-24. Some students with Acquired Brain Impairment (ABI) have mobility problems that will require accommodations. Many do not, so their disability may not be readily apparent and some may be reluctant to reveal it to you. Many of these individuals have been through extensive rehabilitation; they are proud of the progress they have made and want to be self-sufficient. At the same time, they often are painfully aware that they do not learn as easily as they did before their injury, and this can cause great frustration.

Among the cognitive deficits persons with head injuries may experience are difficulties with concentration, memory, problem solving, and abstract reasoning. In our experience at Merritt College, the problem students mention most is memory. You may find that such students do well on test items that require them to recognize answers (multiple choice, matching) but do poorly on items requiring total recall (fill in the blank, essay)

Definitions

Acquired Brain Impairment (ABI) means a deficit in brain functioning which is non-degenerative and is medically verifiable, resulting in a total or partial loss of one or more of the following: cognitive, communication, motor, psycho-social and sensory perceptual abilities. (Administrative Code, Title 5)

Students with acquired brain injuries enroll in High-Tech Center/Computer Lab courses to learn keyboarding and word. In some cases, testing accommodations such as extended time or use of a scribe are appropriate for students with acquired brain injuries.

Students with ABI may demonstrate one or more characteristics and the form may be mild, moderate, or severe:

- Difficulty organizing thoughts, cause-effect relationships, and problem solving
- Difficulty processing information and word retrieving
- Difficulty generalizing and integrating skills
- Difficulty interacting with others
- Compensating for memory loss
- Needing established routines with step-by-step directions
- Needing repetition or some type of reinforcement of information to be learned
- Demonstrating poor judgment and memory problems
- Exhibiting discrepancies in abilities such as reading comprehension at a much lower level than spelling ability
- Having difficulty with projection and clarity in voice

Possible Accommodations

- Alternative testing (extended time, reader, scribe, distraction reduced setting, and/or computer)
- Note-taking assistance
- Academic support

Communication Disability

More individuals in the United States have a hearing impairment than any other type of physical disability. A hearing impairment is any type of auditory impairment while deafness is an inability to use hearing as a means of communication. Hearing loss is measured in decibels and may be mild, moderate, or profound. A person who is born with a hearing loss may have language deficiencies and exhibit poor vocabulary and syntax. Title V lists Hearing Impairments under the heading Communication Disability.

Definitions

- **Hearing Impairment** A generic term used to describe all types of hearing defects, ranging from a minute loss to profound deafness.
- **Hard of Hearing** A specific condition in which hearing is defective to varying degrees; usually a hearing aid can enhance the understanding of speech.
- **Deaf or Deafness** An inability to use hearing as a means of communication; hearing aids can enhance awareness of vibrations such as horns or sirens, but not speech.

Suggestions

Communication

Lighting is very important when communicating with a deaf or hard of hearing person. Do not stand in front of a window or bright light when talking. Try to talk where there is adequate, well distributed light. Be sure to face them when talking. Speak slowly and do not over exaggerate your lip movements. Keep your hands away from your face. Facial activities such as cigarette smoking, vigorous gum chewing, or biting your lips prevent clear communication. Using facial expressions, gestures, and other "body language" is helpful in conveying your message. Be aware that individuals who can hear make the best lip readers, (also call "speech readers"). Of individuals who had extensive training in lip reading, hard-of-hearing students can understand up to 50 percent of speech, and deaf students can understand only up to 25 percent. It takes a great deal of concentration to lip read.

If you see a student with a hearing aid, this does not mean that the student can understand verbal language. The student may require an alternative form of communication, (i.e., an interpreter, note taker, or use of other hearing aid devices.) When using an interpreter to communicate with a student, address the student

directly saying "How are you today?" Many students who are hard-of-hearing do not hear tone of voice, therefore, some expressions, such as sarcastic statements, might be misleading if taken literally. Try to avoid giving misleading information this way. Also, try to avoid using idioms or colloquial expressions.

Seating

A student who is deaf or hard-of-hearing depends on visual cues to supplement what he or she does not hear. Seating is an important consideration. The student will need to be near the front so that his or her view is not obstructed. If a student has a unilateral hearing loss, he or she should be seated so that maximum use of the good ear is permitted.

Participation

Because of a time lag between the spoken word and the interpretation, the student's contribution to the lecture or discussion may be slightly delayed. Students may have some speech and/or language impairments. Although this does not affect a student's ability to learn new information, some difficulty in the acquisition of new vocabulary may lead to reluctance to participate in class. Assumptions should not automatically be made about the student's ability to participate in certain types of classes. For example, students may be able to learn a great deal about music styles, techniques, and rhythms by observing a visual display of the music on an oscilloscope or similar apparatus or by feeling the vibrations of music.

Testing

Most students will be able to take tests and evaluations in the same way as other students. Some may need additional time in order to gain a full understanding of the test questions. It has been found that if the test is written, some students do better if an interpreter reads and translates the questions to the student in sign language. However, many other students prefer to read tests themselves. If the method of evaluation is oral, the interpreter can serve as the reverse interpreter for the student. Avoid oral administered exams requiring written answers.

The primary form of communication with the deaf community is sign language. In view of this, many persons who are deaf or have profound hearing loss since birth or an early age have not mastered the grammatical subtleties of their "second language" English. This does not mean that instructors should overlook errors in written (or spoken) work. However, they should know that this difficulty with English is not related to intelligence but is similar to that experienced by students whose native language is other than English.

American Sign Language Interpreters

Some students will attend classes with an oral or sign language interpreter. The interpreters will usually situate themselves in front of the class to interpret lectures and discussions. Interpretation will be easiest in lecture classes and more difficult in seminar or discussion classes. Because class formats are so varied, it is recommended that the professor, interpreter, and student arrange a conference early in the course to discuss any special arrangements that may be needed. Please be aware of the difficulties the student may have trying to watch a film and the interpreter at the same time. Because an interpreter's proficiency level decreases after 20 minutes, faculty can help make sure that the student is receiving clear and concise transmission by allowing breaks for any class over 50 minutes. If you need to communicate directly with the interpreter, he or she will interpret your conversation into sign language for the student. However, always speak directly to the student.

Real-time Captioners

Some students with hearing loss require the services of a real-time captioner during lectures instead of a sign language interpreter. Real-time captioners use a laptop to type the instructor's lecture and student responses so that the student can understand what is going on during the class session.

Note-takers

Because the student will need to watch the interpreter when you or anyone else is speaking, it will be necessary to select a note taker. Your help in doing this will be very much appreciated. Please take a moment to review the Instructor Guidelines for Choosing a Note-taker.

Possible Accommodations

- Alternative testing (extended time, reader, scribe, Distraction, reduced setting, and/or computer)
- Note-taking assistance
- Academic support

Developmentally Delayed Learners (DDL)

Developmentally delayed learners (DDL) represent a range of students who experience from mildly to severely, delayed intellectual functioning. As a result, the student's general ability must be verified, and the related educational limitations of the students' disability must be identified. Once this information is gathered, a certificated DSP staff member will determine whether a student is qualified, as defined by the American Disabilities Act of 1990 to receive services from DSP. Once a determination is made, the certificated staff member may recommend services on or off campus, which have a reasonable chance of enhancing students' goal attainment.

Definition

According to the Title 5 regulations which govern the California Community Colleges, the definition is as follows:

The developmentally delayed learner is a student who exhibits the following:

- a. Below average intellectual functioning;
- b. Potential for measurable achievement in educational and employment settings.

Students who have mild developmental delay may qualify for services comparable to services afforded to many students with learning disabilities. Individuals who experience moderate to severe developmental delay may be unable to satisfactorily complete the academic and vocational programs at Merritt College.

Possible Accommodations

- Alternative testing_(extended time, reader, scribe, Distraction, reduced setting, and/or computer)
- Note-taking assistance
- Academic support
- DSP courses (study skills, computer skills)

Learning Disabilities (LD)

Learning disabilities affect the manner in which individuals with average or above average intelligence receive, process, retain and/or express information. A learning disability is NOT to be confused with generalized low ability. Learning disabilities are invisible but may affect a student's performance in reading, writing, spoken language, mathematics, orientation in space and time and/or organization. The areas of difficulty will vary from one student to another.

Definition

According to the Title 5 regulations which govern the California Community Colleges, the definition of a learning disability is as follows:

Learning disability in California Community College adults is a persistent condition of presumed neurological dysfunction which may also exist with other disabling conditions. This dysfunction continues despite instruction in standard classroom situations.

Learning disabled adults, a heterogeneous group, have these common attributes:

- average to above average intellectual ability;
- severe processing deficit; and,
- severe aptitude-achievement discrepancy(ies)

Characteristics

Students with learning disabilities might exhibit one or more of the following characteristics:

Reading

- Confusion of similar words, difficulty using phonics, problems reading multi-syllable words
- Difficulty finding important points or main ideas
- Slow reading rate and/or difficulty adjusting speed to the nature of the reading task
- Difficulty with comprehension and retention of material that is read, but not with materials presented orally

Writing

- Difficulty with sentence structure, poor grammar, omitted words
- Frequent spelling errors, inconsistent spelling, letter reversals
- Difficulty copying from chalkboard

- Poorly formed handwriting -- might print instead of using script; writes with an inconsistent slant; have difficulty with certain letters; space words unevenly
- Compositions lacking organization and development of ideas

Listening

- Difficulty paying attention when spoken to
- Difficulty listening to a lecture and taking notes at the same time
- Easily distracted by background noise or visual stimulation
- Might appear to be hurried in one-to-one meetings
- Inconsistent concentration

Oral Language

- Difficulty expressing ideas orally which the student seems to understand
- Difficulty describing events or stories in proper sequence
- Difficulty with grammar
- Using a similar sounding word in place of the appropriate one

Math

- Difficulty memorizing basic facts
- Confusion or reversal of numbers, number sequences or symbols
- Difficulty copying problems, aligning columns
- Difficulty reading or comprehending word problems

Study Skills

- Problems with reasoning and abstract concepts
- Exhibits an inability to stick to simple schedules, repeatedly forgets things, loses or leaves possessions, and generally seems "personally disorganized"
- Difficulty following directions
- Poor organization and time management

Social Skills

- Difficulty "reading" facial expressions, body language
- Problems interpreting subtle messages, such as sarcasm or humor
- Seems disorganized in space -- confuses up and down, right and left; gets lost in a building, is disoriented when familiar environment is rearranged
- Seems disoriented in time, i.e. is often late to class, unusually early for appointments or unable to finish assignments in the standard time period.
- Displays excessive anxiety, anger, or depression because of the inability to cope with school or social situations

Suggestions

Detailed Syllabus: provide a detailed syllabus that includes course objectives, weekly topics classroom activities, required reading and writing assignments, and dates of tests, quizzes, and vacations. Leave a blank space for notes after the outline for each week's work.

Rules Clarification: Clarify rules in advance, how students will be graded, whether makeup tests or rewrites of papers are allowed, what the conditions are for withdrawing from a course or getting an incomplete. Include in the syllabus.

Reviews and Previews: It is extremely helpful if the instructor briefly reviews the major points of the previous lecture or class and highlights main points to be covered that day. Try to present reviews and previews both visually and orally.

Study Aids: Use study aids such as study questions for exams or pretests with immediate feedback before the final exam.

Multi-sensory Teaching: Students with learning disabilities learn more readily if material is presented in as many modalities as possible (seeing, speaking, and doing.)

Visualization: Help the student visualize the material: Visual aids can include films, computer graphics, and illustrations of written text.

Color: Use color. For instance, in teaching respiration technology, everything related to the body's respiratory system might be highlighted in green and the digestive system in orange. In complex mathematical sequences, use color to follow transformations and to highlight relationships.

Tactility: Provide opportunities for touching and handling materials that relate to ideas. Cutting and pasting parts of compositions to achieve logical plotting of thoughts is one possibility.

Announcements: Whenever possible, announcements should be in oral and written form. This is especially important for changes in assignments or exams.

Distinct Speech: Speaking at an even speed, emphasizing important points with pauses, gestures, and other body language, helps students follow classroom presentations. Avoid lecturing while facing the chalkboard.

Eye Contact: This is important in maintaining attention and encouraging participation.

Demonstration and Role Play: These activities can make ideas come alive and are particularly helpful to the student who has to move around in order to learn.

Learning Styles: Administer a learning style inventory to the entire class.

Other Tips

- Emphasize new or technical vocabulary.
- Allow time for students to work in small groups to practice, to solve problems, and to review work.
- Break down teaching into small units. Short daily reading assignments will help the student with learning disabilities learn how to budget and organize study time. Build up to longer units.
- Teach students memory tricks and acronyms as study aids. Use examples from current course work, and encourage students to create their own tricks.
- Encourage students with learning disabilities to sit in front of the classroom.
- Give feedback. Errors need to be corrected as quickly as possible.
- Assist the student in teaming up with a classmate to obtain copies of notes.
- Read aloud material on the board or on transparencies.
- Remind students often of your availability during office hours for individual clarification of lectures, reading, and assignments.
- Periodically offer tips and encourage class discussion of ways for improving studying such as organizational ideas, outlining techniques, summarizing strategies, etc.
- Permit use of a calculator when mathematical disability is severe.
- Permit the use of a dictionary or spellchecker for essay exams.
- In exam questions, avoid unnecessarily intricate sentence structure, double negative and questions embedded within questions.
- Give less weight to spelling when the disability is severe.
- Encourage students to use a word processor with a "spelling check" capability.
- Encourage students to dictate best ideas into a tape recorder before writing a report.
- Use yellow chalk (as opposed to white or other colored chalks) on chalkboards, to help students who have visual impairments.

Possible Accommodations

- Alternative testing (extended time, reader, scribe, distraction reduced setting, and/or computer)
- Note-taking assistance
- Textbooks in audio format - MP3
- Academic support
- DSP courses (study skills, computer skills)

Mobility Disability

A variety of orthopedic/mobility related disabilities result from congenital conditions, accidents, or progressive neuro-muscular diseases. These disabilities include conditions such as spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy, amputation, muscular dystrophy, cardiac conditions, cystic fibrosis, paralysis, polio/post-polio and stroke. Functional limitations and abilities vary widely even within one group of disabilities. Mobility impairments include students using wheelchairs, crutches, braces, walkers, or canes; however, not all students with mobility impairments require mobility aids.

Definition

- Physical Disability - Visual, mobility, orthopedic or other health impairment
- Mobility and Orthopedic - A serious limitation in locomotion or motion functions which indicate a need for services
- Other Health Impairment - A serious dysfunction of a body part or system which necessitates the use of one or more services

Accessibility

If it seems that a student may have to miss a special meeting, conference with you, or other such event because of an inaccessible location, please move your conference or meeting to an accessible location, if possible.

Lateness and Absences

Students with mobility impairments may also require more time to get to and from classes because the accessible travel routes are sometimes round about; they are dependent on the elevators being in operating order, and they have more difficulty making up for time lost when an earlier class is held overtime. Other reasons for these students occasionally being late are waiting for assistance in opening doors, and maneuvering along crowded paths and corridors. If a student who uses a wheelchair or has another mobility related disability is frequently late, it is, of course, appropriate to discuss the situation with him/her and seek solutions. Most students will schedule their classes with ample time between them; however this is not always possible. Students who rely on attendant care or mobility assistance may sometimes experience disruption in their schedules that are beyond their control.

Some students are susceptible to physical problems which can require them to be absent during a prolonged course of medical treatment. If this occurs, understanding is appreciated. The student is responsible for notifying his or her instructor of the situation. Some individuals with mobility impairments have disabilities that involve unavoidable personal hygiene problems that may cause them to be absent from class without advance notice. Such problems occur infrequently, but should be given due consideration by faculty members.

Field Trips

If a class involves field work or field trips, ask the student to participate in the selection of sites and modes of transportation. Students are not "confined" to wheelchairs. They often transfer to automobiles and to furniture. Some who use wheelchairs can walk with the aid of canes, braces, crutches, or walkers. Special arrangements will have to be made for field trips when students have difficulty transferring from wheelchair to other vehicles.

Classroom Considerations

Classes taught in laboratory settings will usually require some modification of the work station. Considerations include under counter knee clearance, working counter top height, horizontal working reach, and aisle widths. Working directly with the student may be the best way to provide modifications to the work station. Those students, who may not be able to participate in a laboratory class without the assistance of an aide, should be allowed to benefit from the actual lab work to the fullest extent. The student can give all instructions to an aide from what chemical to add to what type of test tube to use to where to dispose of used chemicals. The student will learn everything except the physical manipulation of the chemicals.

Classes in physical education and recreation can almost always be modified so that the student in a wheelchair can participate. Classmates are usually more than willing to assist, if necessary. Most students who use wheelchairs do not get enough physical exercise in daily activity, so it is particularly important that they be encouraged, as well as provided with the opportunity, to participate.

Other Tips

- Most students who use wheelchairs will ask for assistance if they need it. Do not assume automatically that assistance is required. Offer assistance if you wish, but do not insist, and be willing to accept a "No, thank you." graciously.
- A wheelchair is part of the person's body space. Do not automatically lean on the chair; it is similar to hanging or leaning on the person.
- When talking to a student in a wheelchair for more than a few minutes, sit down if possible.
- Because a student sitting in a wheelchair is about as tall as most children, and because a pat on the head is often used to express affection toward children, many people are inclined to reach out and pat the person in a wheelchair on the head. These students usually find this to be demeaning.

Possible Accommodations

- Alternative testing (extended time, reader, distraction, reduced setting)
- Note-taking assistance
- Adapted equipment

Other Disabilities

This category includes all other verifiable disabilities and health related limitations that adversely affect educational performance. Some other disabilities are:

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

Definition

Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD) is a chronic neurological condition characterized by problems with attention, focusing and persistence and often, but not always, hyperactivity. ADD/ADHD must be diagnosed by a medical doctor, psychiatrist or licensed psychologist and sometimes medication is prescribed.

Characteristics

Students with ADD/ADHD may exhibit one or more of the following characteristics:

Classroom Skills

- Difficulty paying attention when spoken to; inconsistent concentration.
- Difficulty listening to a lecture and taking notes at the same time.
- Easily distracted by background noise or visual stimulation, may appear to be hurried in one-to-one meetings.
- Difficulty memorizing basic facts.

Study Skills

- Difficulty reading or comprehending word problems.
- Compositions lack organization and development of ideas.
- Trouble sustaining attention. Restless, fidgety. Lacks attention to details.
- Forgets things, loses or leaves positions. Difficulty following instructions.
- Impatient and easily frustrated. For many students the harder they try the worse their symptoms become.

Social Skills

- Easily overwhelmed by tasks of daily living. Poor organization and time management.
- Difficulty completing projects. Inconsistent work performance.
- Trouble maintaining an organized work area.
- Makes decisions impulsively. Difficulty delaying gratification, stimulation seeking.
- Makes comments without considering their impact.

Many of the suggestions for students with Learning Disabilities are applicable to students with ADD/ADHD.

Possible Accommodations

- Alternative testing (extended time, reader, scribe, distraction reduced setting, and/or computer)
- Note-taking assistance
- Textbooks on tape
- Academic support
- DSP courses (study skills, computer skills)

Cardiac Disorders

Additional considerations are generally not needed for students with cardiac disorders except when the course requirements involve an unusual amount of physical activity or if medical complications arise that cause them to miss class.

Chemical Dependency

These are students who are in recovery and have been verified as having a chemical dependency on drugs or alcohol.

Diabetes

Students with diabetes generally require no classroom accommodations. Occasionally they may need to snack during class. Students generally schedule time to eat before strenuous physical activity. Problems such as diabetic coma and insulin shock may occur when there is an imbalance of insulin, food, and energy expenditure. If these problems arise, please call the campus emergency number, #####

If a student seems dazed, confused, or is unresponsive, please call the Campus Police emergency number, (510) 466-7236 or 911 to assist the student. These may be a sign of diabetic shock.

Multiple Sclerosis and Muscular Dystrophy

Although these symptoms are sometimes invisible they may affect the student in a multitude of ways. The symptoms have a tendency to come and go, but they continue to progress. Understanding the fluctuations that may occur in the student's behavior makes it easier to understand variations in classroom performance.

Short of Stature

Students of short stature will have in-classroom access problems similar to those of a student in a wheelchair.

Speech Impairments

Impairments range from problems with articulation or voice strength to being totally non-vocal. They include stuttering (repetition, blocks, and/or prolongations occasionally accompanied by distorted movements and facial expressions) chronic hoarseness (dysphonia), difficulty in evoking an appropriate word or term (nominal aphasia), and esophageal speech (resulting from a laryngectomy). Many students with speech impairments will be hesitant about participating in activities that require speaking.

Mental Health Disabilities

The Disability Services Program at Merritt College has noticed a marked increase of students accessing services that have diagnosed mental health disabilities. Many other students that come to our office may not yet have a documented mental health diagnosis, but they are evidencing symptoms. These disabilities and/or symptoms have a definite impact on academic performance and interaction with others.



Symptoms

The following information is meant to increase your understanding of these students and the educational implications of their disabilities/symptoms.

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While a single symptom or isolated event is rarely a sign of mental illness, a symptom that occurs frequently, lasts for several weeks, or becomes a general pattern of an individual's behavior, may indicate the onset of a more serious mental health problem that requires treatment. Some of the more significant indicators of a possible mental illness include:

- Marked personality change over time
- Confused thinking, grandiose ideas
- Prolonged feelings of depression or apathy
- Feelings of extreme highs or lows
- Heightened anxieties, fears of anger or suspicion, blaming others
- Social withdrawal, increased self-centeredness
- Denial of obvious problems and strong resistance to offers of help
- Substance abuse
- Thinking or talking about suicide

Students who access Health Center Services and receive services and accommodations through the Disability Services Program and receive accommodations because of a mental health disability would have current documentation by a certified health professional verifying their disability. They would also be participating in some form of treatment intervention, either medication therapy or psychotherapy or a combination. With the student's informed consent the Disability Services Program endeavors to work in collaboration with mental health professionals in hospitals and community agencies to ensure that students with mental health disabilities are capable of sustaining normal academic stress.

Students who evidence symptoms such as those described above, but have never been diagnosed, may be referred to a community agency, medical doctor or psychiatrist for assessment.

As faculty, providing a supportive learning environment and working closely with Health Center personnel and the Disability Services Program will be key factors to the success of students with mental health disabilities.

Types of Mental Health Disabilities and Educational Implications

1. Adjustment Disorders

- This disorder develops in response to particular stressor
- If treated, complete recovery is anticipated to occur within a 6 month period.

Educational implications could include:

- Loss of initiative to attend class or complete homework assignments
- When accompanied with depression or anxiety learning may be temporarily impacted in ways similar to anxiety and depressive disorders (see below)
- Inappropriate interactions with others (i.e. may be belligerent)

2. Anxiety Disorders

- This would include disorders in which the major feature is anxiety
- Types include: panic disorders, agoraphobia, specific phobias, obsessive-compulsive disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, generalized anxiety disorder

Educational implications could include:

- Student may be afraid/anxious of school related activities such that he/she fails to attend class, or keep scheduled appointments
- High anxiety can paralyze the ability to think and act
- Student may respond physically such as becoming ill or highly agitated
- High anxiety can cause physical responses that inhibit learning (the material is not absorbed and/or the material is not recalled)

- When anxiety is high, the student is more likely to respond with anger and aggressiveness or to withdraw
- The student with high anxiety is more susceptible to the consequences of fatigue than the average student

3. Mood Disorders

- These disorders can be acute, severe, and of relatively short duration, or they can be chronic conditions
- The types include major depressive disorder, dysthymic disorder, bipolar disorder, cyclothymic disorder and substance induced mood disorder

Educational implications could include:

- Lack of energy or desire to perform
- Not able to think or act quickly
- Sadness or mania makes others uncomfortable
- Many symptoms cause physical discomfort (such as lack of appetite leading to poor eating/self care)
- Lowered self esteem, resulting in negativism
- Difficulty concentration
- Poor motivation
- Side effects of medication can include blurred vision, drowsiness and restlessness

4. Personality Disorders

- These disorders are characterized by a pattern of inner experience and behavior that deviates markedly from the expectations of the individual's culture
- They are pervasive and inflexible
- Leads to distress or impairment
- Typically start in adolescence or early childhood
- Can become stable over time
- Types include paranoid, schizoid, schizotypal, antisocial, borderline, narcissistic, avoidant, dependent and obsessive-compulsive personality disorders

Educational implications could include:

- Difficulties with relationships
- Others become easily frustrated with them
- Often feel "punished" without knowing why
- Difficulty trusting people
- May be manipulative and blame others
- Crisis is often occurring

5. Eating Disorders

- These disorders are characterized by anxieties about weight gain
- There can be long term, irreversible consequences which can affect one's physical and emotional health
- Types include anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa

Educational implications could include:

- Absences from school for treatment of health problems because of eating habits
- Side effects of malnutrition such as lethargy, forgetfulness, poor judgment, and poor concentration

Instructional Strategies

As members of the Merritt College community, you have ongoing and direct contact with students. This places you in a position to potentially identify students who are struggling with personal or academic issues.

As faculty, you may notice significant changes in a student's work habits, behaviors, performance and attendance such as: frequent absences; low morale; disorganization in completing school work; lack of cooperation or a general inability to communicate with others; frequent complaints or evidence of fatigue; problems concentrating, or making decisions, or remembering things; missed deadlines, poor exam grades; decreased interest or involvement in class topics or academics in general.

People who experience problems such as those mentioned above may simply be having a bad day or week, or may be working through a difficult time in their lives. A pattern that continues for a long period may, however, indicate an underlying mental health problem. These students should be referred to the Health Center and the Disability Services Program. Your willingness to respond to these students will, of course, be influenced by your own personal style and your own philosophy about the limits of responsibility in assisting students. As well, a student's openness to assistance, and such factors as class size, length and depth of your relationship, and the location of the contact, all have an impact on the type of interaction you can have with a student.

Other than referring students to the Health Center and the Disability Services Program, consider the following as possible strategies for supporting students with mental health diagnoses and/or symptoms:

- Provide **explicit guidelines** for assignments
- **Minimize distractions** in the learning environment
- Deal immediately with any **negative behavior by peers** towards the student
- Permit students to **leave the classroom** if anxiety becomes unmanageable
- Provide **copies of your notes** to cover emergency absences

Faculty should also feel free to call the Health Center and the Disability Services Program should they wish to consult about a situation. Specific student information, however, cannot be discussed without the student's informed consent.

Academic Accommodations

Students with disabilities are expected to meet the entrance requirements of their program and accomplish the core competencies to be successful in their programs. To achieve this, accommodations are provided, under Human Rights legislation, to minimize or eliminate any disadvantage their disability presents. Accommodations are unique to each individual.

The Disability Services Program makes recommendations for accommodations based on confidential documentation that the student provides. **Some of the most commonly provided academic accommodations for students with mental health disabilities are:**

- Private space when writing exams
- Additional time to write exams as determined by DSP
- Alternative evaluation procedures (e.g. oral exams)
- Regular tutorial services
- Provision of a note taker for lectures
- Reduced course load

Also, as is available to all Merritt College students, on-going counseling services and a variety of workshops are provided. Please refer to our [current workshop schedule](#).

For more information about mental health disabilities and the impact on students, please refer to the Canadian Mental Health Association website.

Who to Contact

Merritt College
Disability Services Program
Student Services, R-109
(510) 436-2429

Other resources:

The Mental Health Services Act (MHSA),

The State Interagency Partners California Community Colleges Mental Health Services Committee (CCCMHSC).

Psychological Disability

In the past few years the community colleges have been seeing more students who have a history of a psychological disability. While the vast majority of these students are stable and show no symptoms, others may have fluctuations in behavior and performance. Some may experience medication side effects or develop problems at college because they have ceased taking their medication or take their medications inconsistently. Other students may be experiencing emotional difficulties for the first time. It is important to remember that these students have as little control over their disabilities as do students with physical disabilities.

As is the case of students with other invisible disabilities, students with psychological disabilities are often hesitant to disclose their disability. They may go to great lengths to hide their difficulty due to fear of the stigma that often comes with disclosure. It has been the experience of the DSP staff that most students with psychological disabilities are not disruptive. Usually students with this type of disability who self-identify with DSP have been in therapy or are under medical treatment.

Definition

According to Title 5, psychological disability means a persistent psychological or psychiatric disorder, or emotional or mental illness.

A psychological disability must be verified by an appropriately licensed or certified professional (licensed psychologist or psychiatrist), and the accommodations for the students with psychological disabilities must adhere to disability-related support services defined in Title 5 regulations and may not include psychotherapy.

Characteristics might include:

- Poor concentration
- Difficulty tolerating stress
- Episodes of lower level academic performance

Possible Accommodations

- Alternative testing (extended time, reader, scribe, distraction reduced setting, and/or computer)
- Note-taking assistance
- Textbooks in audio format
- Academic support

Visual Disability

Only a small minority of people is actually totally blind; most are considered "legally blind". Even with correction, a legally blind person's best eye sees less at 20 feet than a normal eye sees at 200 feet. Difficulties experienced by many individuals with visual impairments may include: recurring eye strain while reading, inability to read standardized print, inability to read poor quality print or certain colors of print, and sensitivity to bright light. Students who have been blind since birth, or shortly after, have no visual memories. Their concept of objects, space, and distance may be different from those who became blind later in life. Mobility skills of individuals may vary also, depending on the age of onset of blindness and the quality and extent of mobility training and mobility talent. Some students who are blind will use Braille with competence, but many do not use it. Most students with visual impairments can acquire information through listening. Some students who are blind are competent typists, but their written communication and spelling skills sometimes reflect their natural dependency on audio transmission of information.

Definition

According to Title 5 regulations, visual impairment means total or partial loss of sight.

Suggestions

- Treat the students with visual impairments very much like you would any other student. Use words like "see" without being self-conscious.
- If you are in a room alone with a blind person, explain what you are doing, such as shuffling papers. Tell him/her when someone comes in the room or when you leave the room.
- It is never impolite to ask if a student with a visual impairment needs or would like assistance.
- When using visual aids in the class, be as descriptive as possible. Words like "this" or "that" can be confusing.
- Make copies of overhead materials or diagrams so that the student can later ask an assistant to describe the information in detail to understand the material better.
- A student may use a Guide Dog. These dogs have been trained to guide people who are blind, to keep out of the way, and to be quiet. These working dogs should not be treated as pets and should not be petted while working.
- When relocation of a class is necessary, a note on the chalk or door is not adequate. It would be helpful to have a sighted student wait for the visually impaired student to arrive.
- "Talents" are often merely the development of latent mental resources or the result of great persistence. It can be frustrating after such hard work for others to refer to their sensory abilities as a "sixth sense" as it does not acknowledge the tremendous efforts expended.

Possible Accommodations

- Alternative testing (extended time, reader, scribe, distraction reduced setting, and/or computer)
- Note-taking assistance
- Textbooks in MP3 format
- Academic support
- Reader services
- Enlarged or braille printed materials

Alternate Media

DSP provides alternate media for class handouts, quizzes, tests, textbooks, and videotapes for students with verified disabilities including vision impairments, dyslexia, deafness, and some other disabilities. The Alternate Media Specialist works with faculty members to make sure students with disabilities receive their course materials in alternate media at the same time their classmates receive traditional print handouts. For more information, please see the Alternate Media Flyer.

Alternate Media Request Form

Students complete this form to request course books and/or materials in an alternate format (i.e. audio, large print, braille, electronic text). The form may also be filled out and submitted over the Internet using the online form.

Alternative Testing

DSP provides alternative testing for students with verified disabilities. The student obtains an Alternative Testing Form from the DSP office, fills it out, asks the instructor to sign it, and returns the form 1 week before a test or 2 weeks before a final. Alternative testing may be used to allow the student extra time, to provide a quieter environment, to allow a blind student to use a computer or a reader/scribe, or for other appropriate accommodations.

Alternative Testing Request Form

Student obtains this form from DSP.

Syllabi Statements

Academic Accommodations and Alternate Media Syllabi Statements

The Disability Services Program recommends that instructors include the following two statements on their syllabi.

Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities are encouraged to meet with me in private to discuss their services and accommodations. Please bring your "Services and Accommodations" form from the Disability Services Program to our meeting. This information will be kept confidential and will not affect your grade.

Also, students who think they could use support from the Disability Services Program for temporary or permanent conditions, or if you suspect you might have a learning disability, please contact their office: (510) 436-2429 or visit R-109 to make an appointment.

(Please give this a separate heading and do not place under "miscellaneous.")

Academic Accommodations:

Students have the right to request reasonable modifications to college requirements, services, facilities or programs if their documented disability imposes an educational limitation or impedes access to such requirements, services, facilities or programs. A student with a disability who requests a modification, accommodation, or adjustment is responsible for identifying himself/herself to the instructor and, if desired, to the Disability Services Program (DSP) office. Students who consult or request assistance from DSP regarding specific modifications, accommodations, adjustments or use of auxiliary aids will be required to meet timelines and procedural requirements established by the DSP office.

Alternate Media:

Students with a print disability--a visual limitation or reading difficulty that limits access to traditional print materials--may request printed materials in alternate media. Examples of alternate media formats include electronic format (e.g., PDF or Word file), braille, tactile graphics, audio format, and large print. Students can make alternate media requests through DSP.

Rights and Responsibilities - College, Faculty, and Students

- College Responsibilities
- Student Rights
- Student Responsibilities
- Faculty Rights
- Faculty Responsibilities

College Responsibilities

- Prohibit discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities.
- Reduce or eliminate physical, academic and attitudinal barriers.
- Provide reasonable accommodations.
- Maintain the strictest of student confidentiality.
- Develop a shared responsibility and community for individuals with disabilities.
- Assist the student in self-advocacy.
- Assist the student in problem solving.
- Guide the student to possible resources that might assist him or her, whether it is on campus or networking in the community.
- Be sensitive to the individual personalities of students, whether it is in communicating their needs or an attempt to maintain dignity with a very difficult issue.
- Serve as liaison with faculty when a medical emergency necessitates an extended absence.

Student Rights

According to the California Code of Regulations (Title 5), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), and The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), students with disabilities have the right to:

- Access to the college and its programs despite a disability.
- Receive reasonable accommodations that provide equal opportunity.
- Access to auxiliary aids and/or assistive technology.
- Not be counseled toward “more restrictive career objectives”.
- Receive assistance from DSP in removing any physical, academic, or attitudinal barriers.
- Not be discriminated against due to a disability or receive any retaliatory discrimination.
- Be informed that participation in DSP is entirely voluntary.
- Shall not be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity in a public entity. In essence, you shall not be discriminated against in any way on the basis of disability.

- Receiving DSP support services/accommodations or DSP instruction shall not preclude you from participating in any other course, program or activity offered by the college.
- All records maintained by DSP personnel pertaining to your disabilities shall be protected from disclosure and shall be subject to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 1974) requirements for handling of student records. However, your consent to release of information is not required as long as the disclosure is to other school officials (including instructors) within the college whom Merritt College has determined to have legitimate educational interests. Portions of the information you present to DSP may be shared with the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges or other state or federal agencies; however, disclosure to these parties is made in strict accordance with applicable statutes regarding confidentiality, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. According to Section 7 of the Federal Privacy Act, providing your social security number is voluntary.
- As a qualified student with a verified disability, you have the right to receive reasonable academic accommodations based on your educational limitations in order to have access to activities, programs, and services. The college faculty and staff shall not automatically reject an accommodation unless other effective, more feasible ones exist, or the identified accommodations have been determined to lower academic standards or otherwise fundamentally alter the nature of the program in question.
- If you wish to file a formal complaint regarding discrimination on the basis of disability, contact the ADA/504 Coordinator on campus (Vice President of Student Services). You may also contact the US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights.

Student Responsibilities

DSP receives special funding to provide services to students with disabilities and is required to meet state and federal regulations. To help us comply with these regulations, you, as a student receiving DSP services, have the following responsibilities:

- Provide DSP with the necessary documentation of a disability
- Request services
- Meet with a DSP Counselor to complete a Student Educational Contract;
- Demonstrate measurable progress toward the goals in your Student Educational Contract;
- Notify DSP in advance of any absences from class or appointments if you are using readers, interpreters, tutors, and/or other assistants (failure to notify DSP might result in the Loss of services);
- Return any equipment on loan from DSP at the end of each semester (if the equipment is not returned, you will be held responsible for replacement costs and a “hold” will be placed on your official transcript)
- Maintain behavior appropriate in an educational setting
- Provide for her/his personal independent living needs or other personal disability related needs
- Abide by the Student Code of Conduct and the Academic Honesty policy.
- Adhere to DSP policies for accommodations; and
- Adhere to the Merritt College Code of Conduct and to abide by the Student Code of Conduct and the Academic Honesty policy.

Student Code of Conduct at Merritt College (PCCD Board Policy 5500)

<http://web.peralta.edu/das/files/2012/11/BP-5500-Student-Standards-of-Conduct.pdf>

You are held individually responsible to abide by the information contained in the Merritt College Catalog and by the Student Code of Conduct. Failure to read and comply with college regulations will not exempt students from whatever penalties they might incur.

You are expected to conduct yourself in an acceptable manner while on campus and when representing Merritt College in any off-campus activity. Specific rules and regulations and applicable penalties for violation of the Student Code of Conduct (Ed Code 66300) are available in the Office of Instruction at any time. You have the responsibility to be aware of the College regulations.

Academic Honesty at Merritt College

The Student Code of Conduct published in the Merritt College catalog defines dishonesty as ". . . cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information to the college." Such behavior shall constitute sufficient cause for the initiation of disciplinary action.

More Information on Rights and Responsibilities for Students with Disabilities

Information on Suspension of DSP Services

Faculty Rights

- **Classroom Behavior.** All Merritt students must adhere to the Merritt College Code of Conduct regardless of whether they have a disability. Infractions of this code should be directed to the Vice President of Student Services. If the student has been identified as a student with a disability, this information should be provided to the Vice President of Student Services to facilitate collaboration with DSP.
- **Challenging Accommodations.** A faculty member has the right to challenge an accommodation request if s/he believes the accommodation compromises the standards of the class. Also, if the accommodation would result in a fundamental alteration of the program, the institution is being asked to address a personal need, or the accommodation would impose an undue financial or administrative burden on the institution then the college may deny a request for a specific accommodation.
- **Taping Lectures.** It is the faculty member's right to request a written Services and Accommodations Form before allowing the student to tape record the class.

Faculty Responsibilities

- **Shared Responsibility.** As an employee of Merritt College, which has compliance obligations under federal laws, the faculty member shares the responsibility to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. The faculty member is a partner in helping to meet the needs of the qualified disabled student and participates in the development of accommodations for their students.
- **Confidentiality.** Students with disabilities are protected under Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 1974) and the civil rights laws. At no time should the faculty make any statements or implications that the student is any different from the general student population.

Examples:

- Do not ask the student to come to the classroom and then leave with a test in hand.
- Do not place the student in any obvious place to take an exam because you want to be close to them in case they have a question.
- Do not discuss the student's needs or accommodations other than in a private place.
- Do not make comparisons between students with disabilities and other students.

Syllabus Statement

It is recommended that each course syllabus contain a Reasonable Accommodation statement. For example:

“If you have a disability and might need accommodations (support services) in this class, please contact the **Disability Services Program** in Building R-109 as soon as possible to ensure that you receive the accommodations in a timely manner. You may also discuss your need for accommodations with me. This information will be kept confidential and will not affect your grade.”

Faculty--FAQs

What is the function of the Disability Services Program (DSP)?

The Disability Services Program assists the college in complying with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which states that "no qualified individual with disabilities shall, on the basis of their disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of or be subject to discrimination under any post-secondary program or activity receiving federal financial assistance".

What are the obligations of students with disabilities?

In order to enjoy the protections of Section 504 and the ADA, the student has an obligation to self-identify that he or she has a disability and needs accommodation. The institution may require that the student provide appropriate documentation at student expense in order to establish the disability and the need for accommodation. [See Rights and Responsibilities]

How does DSP know if a student has a disability?

According to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, "A person with a disability includes any person who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of such person's major life activities; has a record of such an impairment; or is regarded as having such an impairment". The law recognizes education as being a major life activity.

Verification of a disability must be on file in order for DSP to provide services. Verification may be in letter format, on a form provided to the verifying professional, or made by qualified personnel in the DSP office.

Who qualifies for DSP services?

A student with a disability is a person enrolled at a community college who has a verified impairment which limits one or more major life activities and which imposes an educational limitation.

What is an educational limitation?

An educational limitation means disability related functional limitation in the educational setting. This occurs when the limitation prevents the student from fully benefiting from classes, activities, or services offered by the college to

non-disabled students, without specific additional support services or instruction as defined in Section 56005.

What are support services?

Support services are those specialized services available to students with disabilities, which are in addition to the regular services provided to all students. Such services enable students to participate in regular activities, programs and classes offered by the college. (e.g., note takers, readers for the blind, alternative testing). [See Overview of Services]

How is one determined eligible for DSP?

In order to be eligible for support services as authorized by Title 5 and Section 504, a student with a disability must have an impairment, which is verified by one of the following means:

- Observation by DSP professional staff with review by the DSP Coordinator; or
- Assessment by appropriate DSP professional staff; or
- Certified or licensed professionals outside of DSP qualified to make a valid assessment.

How do students know what services they need?

After the student's educational limitations have been identified by appropriate DSP professional staff or other qualified professional, the DSP Counselor will meet with the student to complete a Student Educational Contract (SEC), which not only lists the educational goals of the students, but identifies the appropriate services to accommodate the educational limitations.

Is a student's disability information kept confidential?

All information is strictly confidential, and no written information is released without a student signing an informed consent. Accommodations are determined in consultation with the student and the DSP staff and must be appropriate to the student's disability. [See Confidentiality]

An instructor asks, when I have a student with a disability in my class, may I contact DSP for more information about the student's disability?

No, the student's disability is confidential. However, the DSP Counselor or Learning Disabilities Specialist (for students with learning disabilities) can provide information about the student's educational needs in class.

[See DSP Contact Information]

Will the requested accommodations compromise the standards, goals, and objectives of my class?

Accommodations are an opportunity for the student to be evaluated on the student's knowledge and performance in the class and not on the effects of the student's disability. According to guidelines from the Department of Education, institutions of higher education must modify academic requirements that are discriminatory. Modification may include extending time for completing degree requirements, allowing course substitutions, and adapting the manner in which particular courses are conducted. Institutions are not required to compromise on requirements that are essential to the program or course of instruction, or that are directly related to licensing requirements (Section 104.44a).

Why do some students get more time on assignments and tests than others?

The request for additional time for the student to work on an assignment or test varies from student to student depending on the severity of the student's disability. [See Alternate Testing]

If the student is already doing well in the class, why is it necessary to provide any accommodations?

Title 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 establish that students with disabilities must have equal opportunity. A student's good performance in class, including finishing exams on time, does not support the argument that the student is being provided equal opportunity. The student may still require accommodations in order to have equal opportunity in the classroom. [See [ADA](#)]

What if I have questions about the request for accommodations, or I disagree with it?

The instructor should contact the DSP Counselor who works with the student. [See Services and Accommodations Request Procedure]

What if I start the exam with the student in the class and then move the student to another location when the class ends?

Students with disabilities (as most other students) do not perform optimally when interrupted while taking a test. Moving the student is not generally desirable and is discouraged and can be a violation of their right to accommodations and equal opportunity.

Should I accommodate a student without a request of accommodation from DSP?

Students often discuss their accommodation needs directly with the instructor; however, if you want a valid verification of disability provided by DSP, the student must be registered with the DSP office and have the necessary documentation of disability on file before a Services and Accommodation Form is issued. Student registration with DSP assures the instructor that student has a verified disability on file.

Are all students with disabilities registered with DSP?

No. Some students may not be registered with DSP (registration is voluntary); however, in order for DSP to serve the student with a verified disability, registration with DSP is necessary.

What should I do if a student presents a request for accommodation only a few hours before an examination?

A good-faith effort should be made to provide reasonable accommodations whenever they are requested. You may contact the DSP Department to confirm that the student has a verified disability.

Are general education and/or major requirements ever waived or altered for students with disabilities?

Under the provisions of Title 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, institutions of higher learning must not exclude a qualified student with a disability from any course of study, and must not establish rules and policies that may adversely affect students with disabilities.

On a case-by-case basis, community colleges may find it necessary to modify requirements in order to accommodate the student's disability. Modifications might include substitutions or waivers of courses or degree requirements.

NOTE: The student's DSP Counselor can be contacted for a consultation for additional information. Also, the Internet can be a good resource--please visit our web page on teaching students with disabilities.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality

What are the rules regarding confidentiality?

Why do we need these rules?

What does this mean for Merritt College?

But doesn't FERPA give faculty the right to more information?

Confidentiality

All information about a student's disability is considered to be confidential. It is shared only when there is compelling reason to do so. Records and information are protected by:

- The Family Educational Rights And Privacy Act, 1974
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

Your consent for release of information is not required as long as the disclosure is to other school officials (including instructors) within the college whom Solano College has determined to have legitimate educational interests..

What are the rules regarding confidentiality?

Disability related information should be treated as medical information and handled under the same strict rules of confidentiality, as is other medical information. This includes the comprehensive documentation from an appropriate source that persons with disabilities must provide to establish the existence of their disability and their need for accommodation or consideration.

Disability related information should be collected and maintained on separate college forms and kept in secure files with limited access.

Disability related information should be shared only on a limited basis within the institutional community. It may be shared only when there is a compelling reason for the individual from the institution seeking information regarding some specific aspect of this confidential information.

Why do we need these rules?

Some disability related information is clearly medical in nature, and as such, must remain confidential as noted. Other disability related information might trigger negative connotations about the person with the disability. People whose disability is a result of HIV, seizure disorder or psychiatric illness, for example, deserve and expect to have their privacy protected by having this information handled in a highly confidential manner. The government statutes regarding persons with disabilities hold the promise that they will provide the same level of protection for any one individual, or class of individuals, with a disability than they do for another. Therefore, since some disability related information must be guarded closely, keeping all such information equally protected is a conservative, safe and legally acceptable practice.

What does this mean for Merritt College?

The Disability Services Program is assigned the responsibility for collecting and holding disability related documentation for students with disabilities.

The information regarding a student's disability should be shared by those who hold the documentation on a limited basis, and then only when there is compelling reason for such disclosure. This may mean sharing with faculty only the information that a student has a documented disability and need for accommodations. In the U.S., the Department of Justice has indicated that a faculty member generally does not have a need to know what the disability is, only that it has been appropriately verified by the office assigned this responsibility on behalf of the institution. Thus, faculty would have no legal right to demand access to the actual documentation, including testing scores, dates or names of professionals providing such documentation.

Administrators may have a need to collect data such as how many students are being served, the nature of their disabilities and recommended accommodations. Under typical circumstances, however, they do not have a need for personally identifiable information about whom those students are for purposes of statistical or survey reporting. One way to protect the confidentiality of students with disabilities is by being careful to see that their names do not appear on general listings that may be circulated throughout the institutional community in other contexts.

Information regarding someone's disability or their status as a person with a disability is sensitive and should be managed carefully. Interoffice correspondence regarding the needs of a student with a disability should not be placed in shared files without password protection. The same memo sent to a number of students with disabilities by computer with a multiple address listing, may lead to a violation of confidentiality by revealing the names of those students to each other.

But doesn't FERPA give faculty the right to more information?

In the U.S., the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, also known as the Buckley Amendment, provides faculty with access to educational information in institutional files regarding students with whom they are working. Disability related records provided by a physician, psychiatrist, psychologist, or other recognized professional are not subject to free access under FERPA. The Act exempts such disability related records that are used for support of the student and are available only to service providers and other professionals chosen by the student.

References

AHEAD

<http://www.ahead.org/>

CAPED Communiqué, Fall/Winter 1994.

<http://www.caped.net/>

DSP&P Q & A, Chancellor's Office, May 1993.

<http://www.cccco.edu/>

<http://www.cccco.edu/ChancellorsOffice/Divisions/StudentServices/DSPS/tabid/616/Default.aspx>

DSP&S Handbook Merritt College, 2002, 2007.

Cuesta College DSP&S Faculty Handbook (web, 2011)

<http://academic.cuesta.edu/acasupp/DSPS/index.htm>

San Joaquin Delta College (web, 2011)

<http://www.deltacollege.edu/dept/dsps/index.html>

Red River College

<http://www.rrc.mb.ca/index.php?pid=716>

Solano College

<http://www.solano.edu/counseling/dsp/>

Web Accessibility Home Page

Why create accessible web pages?

- Because it's the right thing to do.
- Because it's the law, Section 508, Section 504, ADA, ...
- So all our students, parents, prospective students, faculty, staff, and administration can access all of our web pages.

Accessibility Guidelines

Web Guidelines

Visit our Web Accessibility Guidelines

Web Accessibility Checklist

Check our Web Accessibility Checklist

Warning! "The following links will take you to sites outside the Merritt College web server. Merritt College has no control over the content or availability of these sites."

www.w3c.org

Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) Guidelines.

Section 508 Standards

Information about the Section 508 law, which covers accessibility of electronic information.

Usability.gov

A good resource for designing usable, useful, and accessible web sites. Includes several links to accessibility guidelines.

Section 508 vs. WCAG Priority 1 Guidelines

A side-by-side comparison of the Section 508 Web Standards and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Priority 1 Checkpoints.

Web Colors

Use care to make sure there is good contrast between backgrounds and text. For example, tan text on a light brown or orange background is hard to read because of a lack of contrast. Light text against a dark background has good contrast, but it is sometimes necessary to increase the font size to make the text easy to read. The dark background can bleed onto the letters, making them difficult to read. Consider using CSS for assigning font sizes, this way it is possible to make changes to all the print in your web site by modifying just one file!

Consider having a background color, such as a light eggshell or very light gray tone, or a background image, such as the one shown on this web page. Many people find it easier to read web pages when the background isn't quite such a bright white.

A RGB Hex Triplet Color Chart is useful for determining the numbers for various colors.

Please Don't Blink!

Avoid using the <blink> tag, or any other feature which causes the screen to flash between 2 and 55 times per second. Avoid the use of scrolling text, or marquees, since this may be difficult for many people to read. Use caution with animated gif files as they may cause the screen to flicker, and they can also distract people. If you use animated gifs, consider limiting the number of times the animation takes place.

Get the Merritt College "Look"

Would you like your web pages to have the look and feel of the Merritt College home page? It is fairly simple to set up your documents to use the Merritt College banner and CSS.

JavaScript

If you choose to use JavaScript on your web pages, it is necessary to add the noscript tag. This tag should include the information, or links, which were provided by the JavaScript. Please contact the Alternate Media Facilitator for assistance with noscript tags, (805) 546-3100 x2825.

Evaluation and Repair Tools

- A-Prompt. This shareware program can be used to analyze and repair your web pages. Always make a backup copy of your web page before running this tool, since it sometimes makes undesirable changes.
- Bobby. There are both online and freeware versions of the Bobby accessibility tester. The freeware program can be used to analyze a web page on your local computer before it is posted to the internet. The reports can be a little difficult to understand.
- InFocus. This is a very good commercial accessibility testing and repair tool, but Merritt College has not purchased any licenses.

Web Accessibility Support and Training

Contact the Alternate Media Specialist (510) 434-3910.

Online Training

- "Web Accessibility for Section 508" This website has excellent training on web site accessibility.

Training Manuals:

Warning! "The following links will take you to sites outside the Merritt College web server. Merritt College has no control over the content or availability of these sites."

- The "Dive into Accessibility Book" does a great job describing 5 people with different disabilities, and how to make web pages accessible for each of them.
- EASI, or Equal Access to Software and Information, provides information on how to create accessible web pages.
- The High Tech Center Training Unit (HTCTU) publishes documents on web site accessibility.
- There is a FrontPage 2002 Tutorial available on the Microsoft Web site.

- If you include PDF files on your web pages, you should create accessible PDF files by following the directions on Adobe's web site.
- If you use PowerPoint presentations, there is an [accessibility plug-in](#) to make them accessible. The tool creates accessible HTML code for you, and prompts you for alt tags and other accessibility information.
- Web Design Group produced several web pages on cascading style sheets and how to include them in your web pages, see
- The "Simplified Web Accessibility Guide" is a PDF document with great, easy to read, information on web accessibility.
- The Webaim tutorial covers how to make accessible web content using FrontPage 2000.

More Useful Links

[Usability.gov](#)

An extensive listing of web accessibility resources.

[W3Schools](#)

Inside W3Schools you will find a large number of free Web building tutorials, from basic HTML and XHTML tutorials, to advanced XML, XSL and WAP tutorials. W3Schools has thousands of cut-and-paste examples. With the on-line HTML editor you can edit the examples and experiment with the code on-line, and then cut the code and paste it into your own web pages.

[JimThatcher.com](#)

Discusses Section 508, includes a free web accessibility course, and provides a tutorial for creating accessible web pages.

[Webaim](#)

A useful website with many web related topics, including one that demonstrates how inaccessible web-based forms can be and the different workarounds that can be incorporated into the HTML coding. The site also contains an example of how a screen-reader will render an on-line form audibly. Includes a tutorial on how to make [accessible web content using FrontPage 2000](#).

American Sign Language Interpreting Ethics

Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Code of Ethics

The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. has set forth the following principles of ethical behavior to protect and guide interpreters and transliterators and hearing and deaf consumers. Underlying these principles is the desire to insure for all the right to communicate.

This Code of Ethics applies to all members of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. and to all certified non-members.

- Interpreters/translitterators shall keep all assignment-related information strictly confidential.
- Interpreters/translitterators shall render the message faithfully, always conveying the content and spirit of the speaker using language most readily understood by the person(s) whom they serve.
- Interpreters/translitterators shall not counsel, advise or interject personal opinions.
- Interpreters/translitterators shall accept assignments using discretion with regard to skill, setting, and the consumers involved.
- Interpreters/translitterators shall request compensation for services in a professional and judicious manner.
- Interpreters/translitterators shall function in a manner appropriate to the situation.
- Interpreters/translitterators shall strive to further knowledge and skills through participation in work-shops, professional meetings, interaction with professional colleagues, and reading of current literature in the field.
- Interpreters/translitterators, by virtue of membership or certification by the RID, Inc., shall strive to maintain high professional standards in compliance with the Code of Ethics.

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Sign Language Interpreting

Information for faculty

A sign-language interpreter will accompany the student to class. Below are some guidelines for working with deaf or hard-of-hearing students.

Communication

When talking with the student, look directly at him or her, and speak as you would to a hearing person. Remember that while the interpreter's hands are moving, your message is still in transit.

If you need to communicate directly with the interpreter, he or she will interpret your conversation into sign language for the student.

Positioning/Lighting

The interpreter will make sure the positioning of the student is relative to you and to any videotape, film, or overhead projection you are showing. Please try to avoid having windows or any other strong light source directly behind you.

Clear line of sight and sufficient light for the student and interpreter to see one another is essential at all times.

Note-taker

Because the student will need to watch the interpreter when you or anyone else is speaking, it will be necessary to select a note-taker. Your help in doing this will be very much appreciated. Please take a moment to review the section, Instructor Guidelines for Choosing a Note-taker.

Useful Links

- [Sign Language Interpreting Homepage](#)
- [Teaching Students with communication disabilities](#)

Instructor Guidelines for Choosing a Note-taker

Occasionally an instructor is asked to assist in locating a competent student volunteer to serve as a note-taker for a student with a disability. The following guidelines for instructors are suggested to minimize the time involved and to assist in selecting skilled note-takers.

If you have any questions or if a note-taker is not available, please contact DSP office.

1. After a DSP Counselor has authorized a note-taking assistant, the DSP Staff Assistant will contact you and identify the student that needs a note-taker.
2. Please announce, without mentioning the student's name, that a volunteer is needed to take notes for another student. Please be discreet as identifying a disabled student during class may be embarrassing to that student. Try to identify students who are organized, write legibly, and are skilled note-takers. Also, when making the announcement, stress the importance of taking good notes.
3. After announcing the need for a note-taker, ask potential note-takers and the DSP student to meet with you briefly after class so you can introduce the two students to each other. The students will make their own arrangements for sharing notes. Both student and note-taker need to immediately contact DSP Staff Assistant.

If needed, DSP will help train the note-takers. A copy machine is available in the DSP office to duplicate notes (free of charge). DSP strives to make this process as simple as possible for the instructor, student, and note-taker.

Procedure for Requesting an Interpreter

1. A DSP Counselor verifies the disability, determines the need, and authorizes sign language interpreting services.
2. Student requests a sign language interpreter by completing an application form.
3. Student makes an appointment to arrange for an interpreter through DSP.
4. The DSP Coordinator or DSP Staff Assistant schedules interpreting services and contacts instructors to inform them that a deaf student and sign-language interpreter will attend a specific class.
5. It is the responsibility of the deaf student to notify DSP 24 hours in advance when:
 - Student plans to miss class
 - Room, day, or time of class is changed
 - Class is cancelled
 - Student is dropping class

NOTE: Student must call immediately so interpreter may be notified in a timely manner.

6. If student misses a class without canceling services in advance, the student must contact the DSP Coordinator or NCC DSP Staff Assistant immediately to let them know when s/he will be returning to class.
7. If student misses a class three (3) times without sufficient notice, service will immediately be cancelled. In order to resume service, student must meet with the DSP Coordinator.
8. If interpreter does not show up for class, student must wait five (5) minutes, then contact the DSP Coordinator or DSP Staff Assistant for a replacement interpreter, if one is available.
9. In order to receive interpreting service for other academic related activities, student must submit a special request form to the DSP Coordinator or DSP Staff Assistant at least one week in advance.
10. Student should notify the DSP Coordinator or DSP Staff Assistant immediately if there is a problem with the interpreting services provided. The DSP Coordinator or other delegated certificated or administrative personnel will observe and/or make any necessary changes warranted.
11. Interpreter will wait outside of classroom and will wear a solid, skin contrasting color top.
12. If a student does not arrive at a scheduled class, the Interpreter will wait five (5) minutes for each half-hour of class time. If student does not arrive within the allotted time period, the interpreter will leave and notify the DSP Coordinator or DSP Staff Assistant.
13. Interpreters do not personally participate in class discussion or activities.
14. Interpreters will keep all information confidential.
15. Interpreters will abide by the National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Code of Ethics.

Any violation of above procedures may result in suspension of sign language interpreting service. Suspension of future interpreting services will be determined following a review by the Dean of Student Services, the DSP Coordinator and Learning Disabilities Specialist (when appropriate).

If interpreting services are suspended, the student will receive written notification. If a student wishes to appeal the decision, the student should meet with the Dean of Student Services. The student may also file a complaint with the District 504/ADA Officer (Vice President of Student Services).

Disability Laws

The Americans with Disabilities Act, ADA
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1986
ADA Related Links

Overview of the ADA

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) extends federal civil rights protection in several areas to people who are considered "disabled". Built upon a body of existing legislation, particularly the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Civil Right Act of 1964, the act states its purpose as providing "a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities." The ADA is not an affirmative action statute. Instead, it seeks to dispel stereotypes and assumptions about disabilities, and to assure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency for disabled people. To achieve these objectives, the law prohibits covered entities from excluding people from jobs, services, activities or benefits based on disability. The law provides penalties for discrimination. Not every disabled person is covered by the ADA. Certain standards must be met for a person to qualify for the act's protections. To be considered "disabled" under the ADA, a person must have a condition that impairs a major life activity or a history of such a condition, or be regarded as having such a condition. A disabled person must be qualified for the job, program or activity to which he or she seeks access. To be qualified under the ADA, a disabled person must be able to perform the essential functions of a job or meet the essential eligibility requirements of the program or benefit, with or without an accommodation to his or her condition. Much of the language in the ADA is taken from existing federal civil rights law and court. decisions. Definitions of terms such as employee, employer, commerce, etc., are taken from Title VII of the Civil Right Act. Other terms, such as "reasonable accommodations," "qualified individual with a disability", "essential functions" and "undue hardship," come directly from Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits federal fund recipients from discriminating on the basis of disability in their programs and activities. The ADA has five titles which cover employment, public services and transportation, public accommodations, telecommunications, and miscellaneous provisions. The various sections of the act become effective at different times. An overview of the separate provisions follows:

Public Services and Transportation (Title 11)

Title II of the ADA prohibits state and local governments, and educational institutions from discriminating against disabled people in their programs and activities. The law requires bus and rail transportation to be accessible to disabled passengers. Air transportation is not covered by the ADA. New public buses and new train cars in commuter, subway, inter-city (Amtrak) and light rail systems must be accessible to disabled riders. All new stations and facilities and "key" subway and light rail stations must be made accessible. Where fixed-route and rail bus service is offered, a public transit agency must also offer para-transit service.

Public Accommodations (Title 111)

The ADA prohibits private operated public accommodations from denying goods, programs and services to people based on their disabilities. Covered businesses must accommodate disabled patrons by changing policies and practices, providing auxiliary aids and improving physical accessibility, unless that would impose an undue burden. New and renovated commercial buildings must be accessible. Existing public accommodations must remove architectural and communications barriers where such removal is "readily achievable." Title III also requires providers of private transportation service, such as private bus lines and hotel vans, to make their vehicles and facilities accessible.

Telecommunications (Title IV)

Title IV of the ADA requires telephone companies to provide continuous voice transmission relay services that allow hearing and speech-impaired people to communicate over the phone through telecommunications devices for the deaf. In addition, Title IV requires that federally funded television public service messages be closed-captioned for hearing-impaired viewers.

Other Provisions (Title 5)

Miscellaneous provisions in Title 5 require the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board to issue accessibility standards; attorneys' fees be awarded to prevailing parties in suits filed under the ADA; and federal agencies to provide technical Title V states specifically that illegal use of drugs is not a covered disability under the act. It also provides that states are not immune from suits under the ADA and that other federal, state and local laws that provide equal or greater protection to individuals with disabilities are not superseded or limited by the ADA.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

The following discussion highlights Section 504 as it pertains to the academic and program aspects of community colleges. The discussion is not inclusive of all aspects of Section 504 or even of all those relating to post-secondary institutions. For the purpose of explaining who is covered by this law, 504 offers the following definitions:

Definitions

Individuals with Disabilities Any person who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activity (functions such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working); has a record of such an impairment; is regarded as having an impairment, or has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits major life activities only as a result of the attitude of others toward such impairment.

Qualified Individuals with Disabilities An individual with disabilities who meets the academic and technical standard requisite to admission or participation in the educational program or activity.

Program Accessibility

Section 504 prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in recruitment, admission, and treatment after admission. It mandates all recipients of federal funding to make adjustments and accommodations in their programs and activities in order to provide qualified individuals with disabilities with opportunities equal to those enjoyed by qualified individuals without disabilities.

Section 504 requires that each program or activity operated by the institution be readily accessible to individuals with disabilities when viewed in its entirety. An institution is not required to make each of its existing facilities or every part of a facility accessible. Extensive facility renovations are not always necessary to meet this requirement as long as other methods can be used effectively to achieve program accessibility. Priority must be given, when using other methods, to those alternatives, which would offer programs and activities "in the most integrated setting possible." Any programs that are currently inaccessible because of the need for major structural modifications should have been changed no later than June 1981. It is possible that when the Americans with Disability Act Committee conducted the self-study for our transition plan that we overlooked some areas where changes need to be made. Your continued input is vital if the goal of full participation for students with disabilities is to be met.

Reasonable Adjustments to Academic Requirements

Section 504 prohibits exclusion of qualified students with disabilities from any course or area of concentration on the basis of disability. Moreover, it is considered discriminatory to counsel students with disabilities toward more restrictive careers than students without disabilities, unless such counsel is based on strict licensing or certification requirements in a profession. Post-secondary institutions are, therefore, required by 504 to make reasonable adjustments to permit students with disabilities to fulfill academic requirements. Reasonable adjustments may include the following: increased time allowances to complete degree requirements, substitution of equivalent courses for those that cannot be made accessible for students with disabilities, changes in teaching methods, and changes in the manner of conducting classes. Course examinations and other methods of evaluating a student's academic achievement must be conducted in a way that will reflect the student's achievement rather than his impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills (except when such skills are the factors which are being measured).

Post-secondary institutions must take steps to ensure that students with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills are not, in effect, excluded from programs because of the absence of education auxiliary aids. "Auxiliary aids" may include taped texts, interpreters or other effective methods of making orally delivered materials available to students with hearing impairments, readers in libraries for students with visual impairment, and other similar services and actions. Institutions, however, need not provide attendants, individually prescribed devices, readers for personal use or study, or other devices or services of a personal nature. It is unlawful to prohibit students with disabilities from using any auxiliary aid, including tape recorders, in the classroom when the aid is needed to ensure full participation of the student.

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1986

Section 508 was enacted to eliminate barriers in information technology, to make available new opportunities for people with disabilities, and to encourage development of technologies that will help achieve these goals.

ADA Related Links

Warning! "The following links will take you to sites outside the Merritt College web server. Merritt College has no control over the content or availability of these sites."

Americans with Disabilities act of 1990

<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/pubs/ada.txt>

Merritt College Discrimination Information

<http://>

Peralta.edu Board Policy on Unlawful Discrimination & Sexual Harrassment

<http://web.peralta.edu/hr/files/2010/09/Complaint-and-Investigation-Procedures-for-Employees-and-Students-Unlawful-Discrimination-and-Sexual-Harassment2.pdf>

Section 508

<http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm>

<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/508/508law.html>

Section 504

<http://ericec.org/sect504.html>

Your Rights Under 504

<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/504.html>

Implementing Guidelines for Title 5 Regulations

<http://www.htctu.fhda.edu/cccdocs/GUIDE1.html>

Resources

American Association of People with Disabilities

<http://www.aapd-dc.org/>

AT Network <http://www.atnet.org>

California Department of Social Services

<http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/default.htm>

California Directory of Resource Information for Deaf and Hard Of Hearing People

<http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/getser/officeofdeafaccess.htm>

California Foundation for Independent Living Centers

<http://www.cfilc.org/>

California State Independent Living Council <http://www.calsilc.org/>

California State Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) www.rehab.cahwnet.gov

Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation <http://www.bu.edu/cpr/reasaccom/>

Community Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired

<http://www.communityblindcenter.org>

Goodwill Industries <http://www.goodwill.org>

JAN on the Web <http://janweb.icdi.wvu.edu/>

LD Online <http://www.ldonline.org/>

Microsoft Accessibility www.microsoft.com/enable

Regional Center of the East Bay <http://rceb.org/>

The Office of Services to the Blind (OSB)

http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/BlindServices_187.htm

United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) <http://www.ucpsj.org>

Web Able www.webable.com