



**AOBFP**

**CRITERIA POLICY FOR**

**DOCUMENTATION OF A DISABILITY**

**REQUEST FOR ACCOMMODATION**

**CANDIDATE HANDBOOK**

All requests for accommodations must be approved in accordance with the AOBFP policy procedures and must be made on the "AOBFP Request for Accommodation Application" **EXCEPT** for test takers who require **only** minor modifications to the customary testing environment (e.g. wheelchair access, adjustable table or chair or special lighting) or who have documented medical needs (e.g. diabetes, epilepsy) that necessitate taking medications or snack breaks. Said test takers must submit a letter from a licensed M.D. or D.O. summarizing the nature of the disability and the minor modifications that are requested.

This information has been adapted from the 'Criteria Policy for Documentation of a Disability' handbook and application prepared by the National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners (NBOME). Policy is subject to change at the discretion of the Board.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

Under the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, individuals with disabilities are guaranteed certain protections and rights to equal programs and services. In order to access these rights, an individual must present documentation indicating the disability **substantially limits** one or more of the life activities of the individual. An individual is not substantially limited in a major life activity if the limitation does not amount to a significant restriction when compared with the abilities of the average person.

The following documentation requirements are provided in the interest of assuring that documentation is appropriate to verify eligibility and to support requests for accommodations, academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids. Documentation submitted in support of a request is forwarded to the AOBFP Review Committee for consideration.

A "Request for Accommodation Application" must be applied for by the individual requesting the accommodation. This application can be obtained directly from the AOBFP by either telephone or written request.

To support a request for test accommodations, please submit the following:

1. Completed AOBFP "Request for Accommodation Application" form sent no later than the initial postmark deadline for examination administration applied for.
2. Detailed, comprehensive written documentation describing the disability and its severity, including justification for the need of the requested accommodation(s). Documentation should include name, address, telephone and e-mail address of each professional providing a report(s) in support of the disability and/or requested accommodation. **ALL reports must be on letterhead, typed, dated, signed and otherwise legible.** Documentation is to be prepared and furnished at the applicant's expense.
3. Documentation Requirements:
  - a. **A Qualified Professional Must Conduct the Examination**

Professionals conducting assessments and rendering diagnoses of specific learning disabilities and making recommendation for appropriate accommodations must be qualified to do so. The name, title and professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about license or certification (e.g., licensed psychologist) as well as the area of specialization, employment and state in which the individual practices must be clearly stated in the documentation. For example, the following professionals would generally be considered qualified to evaluate specific learning disabilities provided that they have additional training and experience in evaluating adult learning disabilities: clinical or educational licensed psychologists;

neuropsychologists; learning disabilities specialists; physicians with training and experience in the assessment of learning problems in adults. The AOBFP has the discretionary authority to determine whether the use of diagnostic terminology indicating a specific learning disability by someone whose training and experience are not in these fields is acceptable.

In the event that the candidate is applying for special accommodations due to a physical disability, an evaluation of that disability is to be submitted by a D.O. or M.D. currently licensed to practice in the United States. The professional credentials of the evaluator that qualifies him/her to make the particular diagnosis, including information about their license or certification and specialization in the area of the diagnosis must be provided.

**b. Testing Must be Current**

The AOBFP acknowledges that once a person is diagnosed as having a qualified disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act, the disability is often viewed as life-long. Although the disability may continue, the severity of the condition may change over time.

Because the provision of all reasonable accommodations and services is based upon the AOBFP's assessment of the current impact of the individual's disability on his or her academic performance, a candidate must submit recent and appropriate documentation. The qualified professional's opinion must be based upon an examination or diagnosis no earlier than two years prior to the application for test accommodation.

Whenever possible, AOBFP Committee members will recommend what aspects of the documentation may need to be updated or augmented in order to be reviewed more fully. Candidates who submit documentation that is not current, and/or inadequate in scope and content, or that does not address the candidate's current level of function or the need for accommodation(s) will be required to update and/or supplement the evaluation.

**c. Documentation Necessary to Substantiate the Learning Disability must be Comprehensive**

Documentation must validate the need for services based on the candidate's current level of functional ability. A comprehensive assessment battery and the resulting diagnostic report must include a diagnostic interview, assessment of aptitude, measure of academic achievement and information processing.

The neuropsychological or psychoeducational evaluation for the diagnosis of a specific learning disability must provide clear and specific evidence that a learning disability does or does not exist. Assessment, and any resulting diagnosis, must consist of and be based on a comprehensive assessment battery that does not rely on any one test or subtest.

Minimally, the domains to be addressed must include the following:

**1. Aptitude/Cognitive Ability**

A complete intellectual assessment with all subtests and standard scores report is essential.

**2. Academic Achievement**

A comprehensive academic achievement battery is essential, with all subtests and standard scores reported for those subtests administered. The battery must include current levels of academic functioning in relevant areas such as reading (decoding and comprehensive), mathematics, and oral and written language.

**3. Information Processing**

Specific areas of information processing (e.g., short and long term memory; sequential memory; auditory and visual perception/processing; processing speed; executive functioning; motor ability) should be addressed.

**4. Psychological/psychiatric history, including (A) standardized psychometric assessment of personality and emotional functioning (MMPI-II or MCMI-II); (B) standard diagnostic interview for presence of current psychiatric disorder; and (C) if the candidate has undergone treatment for a psychological or psychiatric condition within the past three years, provide a report, including diagnosis, from the treating mental health professional.**

**5. Behavioral indices (required only for candidates seeking accommodations on the basis of attention deficit disorder or hyperactivity disorder) using standardized psychometric assessments of behavioral indices of attention deficit disorder, such as The Wender Scales or the Achenbach Scale.**

Other assessment measures may be helpful in determining performance across a variety of domains. Formal assessment measures may be integrated with the above instruments to help rule in or rule out the learning disability to differentiate it from coexisting neurological and/or psychiatric disorders (i.e., to establish a differential diagnosis). In addition to the standardized tests, it is also very useful to include informal observations of the candidate during test administration. Raw test data should be available upon request.

**d. Documentation Must Include a Specific Diagnosis**

**Nonspecific diagnoses, such as individual “learning styles”, “learning difference”, “academic problems”, “computer phobias”, “slow reader”, and “test difficulty” or “anxiety” in and of themselves do not constitute a learning disability. It is important to rule out alternative explanations for problems in learning, such as emotional, attentional, or motivational problems, that may be interfering with learning but do not constitute a learning disability. **The diagnostician must use direct language in the diagnosis and documentation of the learning disability, avoiding the use of such terms as “suggests” or “is indicative of”.****

If the data establishes that a learning disability is not present, the evaluator must state that conclusion in the report.

**e. Actual Test Scores from Standardized Instruments must be Provided**

Standard scores and/or percentiles must be provided for all normed measures. Grade equivalents must be accompanied with standard scores and/or percentiles. The data must logically reflect a substantial limitation to learning for which the candidate is requesting the accommodation(s). The particular profile of the candidate's strengths and weaknesses must be shown to relate to functional limitations that may necessitate accommodations.

The test used must be reliable, valid and standardized for use with an adult population. The test findings must document both the nature and severity of the learning disabilities. Informal inventories, surveys and direct observation by a qualified professional may be used in tandem with formal tests in order to further develop a clinical hypothesis.

**f. Each Accommodation Recommended by the Evaluator must Include a Rationale**

It is important to recognize that accommodation needs can change over time and are not always identified through the initial diagnostic process. **Conversely, a prior history of accommodation(s), without demonstration of a current need, does not in and of itself warrant the provision of a like accommodation(s).**

The diagnostic report must include specific recommendations for accommodation(s) as well as a detailed explanation of why each accommodation is recommended. The evaluator(s) must describe the impact the disability has on a specific major life activity as well as the degree of significance of the impact on the individual. **If no prior accommodation(s) had been provided, the qualified professional and/or the candidate must include a detailed explanation of why accommodation(s) is needed at this time.**

If an accommodation(s) is not clearly identified in the report submitted, the AOBFP will seek clarification, and, if necessary, more information. The applicant may be requested to secure a second opinion from an outside expert or the AOBFP may submit the applicant's documentation to an outside expert. The cost of the review for a second opinion by an outside expert will be paid the AOBFP. The AOBFP will make the final determination as to whether appropriate and reasonable accommodations are warranted and can be provided to the candidate.

## **EVALUATION OF ACCOMMODATION REQUESTS**

The AOBFP will review accommodation requests upon receipt of the aforementioned required documentation. The review process will attempt to determine (1) if an applicant is disabled and the nature of the disability, (2) whether the disability interferes with the candidate's ability to take the certifying examination, (3) whether the requested accommodation is necessary to allow the candidate to take the examination, (4) whether a different accommodation would better serve the purpose of the certifying exam while still allowing the candidate to take the examination.

Based upon the review of all documentation, the AOBFP may decide to: (1) grant a request for accommodation, (2) grant an accommodation that is different than the requested accommodation, (3) deny the request for accommodation, (4) require additional documentation. The AOBFP will notify the candidate in writing of their decision within ninety (90) days of its receipt of a request for accommodation.

## **APPEALS**

If a request for accommodation has not been granted, a candidate may request that the Board reconsider its' decision or appeal their decision to the Appeals Committee of the Bureau of Osteopathic Specialists. Any appeal must be submitted to the Secretary of the Bureau of Osteopathic Specialists within sixty (60) days of the date of the AOBFP's written decision concerning the request for accommodation. Note that participation in the appeal process shall delay examination to a future administration.

## **PROCEDURES FOR EXAMINATION ADMINISTRATION**

The examinations for disabled persons will be administered on the same date(s) and locations as the scheduled examinations. Where appropriate, to reduce the effect of the candidate's disability on his/her performance on the exam, the following accommodations may be provided: (1) disabled persons may be tested separately, (2) disabled persons may be given assistance in reading or recording answers, (3) auxiliary aids and services may be offered, but only if they do not fundamentally alter the measurement of skills or knowledge the examination is intended to test and they would not result in an undue burden to the Board; and/or (4) time extensions may be granted to accommodate disabled candidates. Other accommodations may be made upon presentation of appropriate information and documentation supporting the requested accommodation.

## **REAPPLICATION**

In general, reapplication for special accommodations is not required for each examination administration. However, applicants seeking accommodation of a new disability or a different accommodation of the same disability must submit a new application.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The AOBFP will adhere to its confidentiality policies. The request for accommodation and supporting evaluation will not be released without the candidate's consent, except as may be required under compulsion of legal process.