

Background Information about Disability Services

In the K-12 education system, law mandates seeking out and serving students with disabilities. In post-secondary education, the instructors and administrators, no matter how compassionate or concerned, are not permitted to seek out students with disabilities. Instead, the law requires that students with disabilities must identify themselves and request accommodations in order to be served.

This different approach is mandated by two acts of legislation that address persons with disabilities: the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973:

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 guarantees civil rights for Americans with disabilities. Section 504 of this act is the section of the law that specifically refers to post-secondary and vocational education services. It states that "...no otherwise qualified handicapped individual in the United States shall, solely by reason of handicap, be excluded from 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:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 has a broader scope than Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and applies to employment, public services, transportation, and public accommodations regardless of whether federal funding is received. This law covers structural accommodations as well as learning accommodations, and refers to a broad scope of disabilities – including physical, learning, emotional, and psychological/psychiatric disabilities.

The University's Responsibilities for Serving Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities deserve the chance to achieve their goals. If students' disabilities prevent them from achieving a goal, reasonable accommodations should be provided to equalize their opportunity to succeed. The accommodations provide equal opportunity but do not guarantee success.

It is important for students to remember that Section 504 and the ADA do not ask colleges and universities to lower their standards. Universities and colleges still have the freedom to establish academic requirements and standards. They only require that REASONABLE accommodations necessary to eliminate discrimination on the basis of disability be provided.

Reasonable accommodations are always determined on an individual basis and must be supported by recent documentation from a professional who has diagnosed the student's disability. Some examples of reasonable accommodations include (but are not limited to or guaranteed to include):

- Textbooks in alternative formats
- Extra time to complete tests

- Alternative testing sites
- Alternative testing formats
- Tape-recording lectures
- Note taking services
- Advance access to course syllabi

Students with disabilities are also entitled to confidentiality. Please be assured that JBU will not share information related to your disability without your written permission.

The Student's Responsibilities

Accommodations are available but must be requested by the student with the disability. JBU has established a set of procedures that should be followed by all students seeking accommodations to ensure a timely response to their requests.

The first responsibility is to provide adequate documentation of your specific disability. This documentation should be no more than three (3) years old and must be signed by an appropriate professional qualified to diagnose the disability. An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 Plan is insufficient to serve as documentation. For specific information about documentation, please see the Guidelines for Documentation. While JBU is committed to helping all students achieve their goals, accommodations are available only to those students who have a documented disability. For more specific information about documentation, please see the [Guidelines for Documentation](#).

The second responsibility involves identifying yourself as a student with a disability. This involves making an appointment with the Coordinator of Disability Services to discuss your disability as well as possible accommodations that may be necessary to provide you an equal opportunity to succeed.

After reviewing the documentation provided and discussing your individual situation with you, the Coordinator of Disability Services will prepare a memo for your professors notifying them that you have registered with the Office of Disability Services and that you may be seeking accommodations in their class.

Your third responsibility, then, is to deliver these letters to your professors and talk with them about the accommodations necessary in your situation. It is your responsibility to do this early in the semester and well in advance of any affected assignments or tests. If the professor wants verification that your requests are valid beyond the letter provided, he or she needs only to call the Coordinator of Disability Services for confirmation. Professors are not required to provide accommodations until the student delivers the letter from the Office of Disability Services and discusses the necessary accommodations with the professor.

Finally, it is your responsibility to contact the Coordinator of Disability Services if you are having problems with these procedures or in your college experience. This should be done in a timely manner. It is also important for you to realize that accommodations are not retroactive.