Department of Supportive Programs & Services (DSPS)

Faculty Resource

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## How much do you think you know about DSP&S?

**I have the right to tell a student with disabilities that he/she cannot record in my class.**

***False****. Section 504 specifically mentions that a qualified student can record. You may have certain requirements, such as* “*student agrees to destroy any recordings that were made when they are no longer needed for his/her academic work”. If you would like help with this, or have any questions, please contact us in the DSPS lab.*

**Giving extra time on tests gives students with disabilities an unfair advantage.**

***False****. Accommodations are legally mandated and are intended to provide students with documented disabilities an opportunity to be evaluated on ability, not disability. One example of why extra time is given is in the case of a student with learning disabilities. The extra time levels the playing field because the speeds at which a person does different mental tasks may be out of synch; therefore it is hard for neural pathways to work together. As neuropsychologist Roger Lauer describes it, it is like having a Ferrari engine with a Volkswagen transmission. With this said, you should grade the work of disabled student as you would grade the work of any others. Don’t think that you need to “go easy “on them. On the other hand, don’t give a harder test or grade students more harshly because they have the "advantage" of extra exam time or other instructional modifications, as this would nullify the effect of the accommodations.*

**I have a student who needs a note taker, so I should announce this to the class.**

***Partly true.*** *Announce that volunteer note takers are needed, but do not mention a student’s name. The students’ confidentiality is protected by Federal Family Educational Rights Privacy Act of 1974.*

**It is the responsibility of the student with the disability to provide documentation of his/her disability to DSPS.**

*True. It is the student’s responsibility to provide documentation to DSPS or an ADA officer. As an instructor, you will receive the prescribed accommodations, but will not be given any information about the student’s disability, as this is confidential. However, if you believe that a student has a disability, you may have a private discussion with the student about your observations of his or her academic performance. Refer the student to all support services available including our DSP& S office.*

**Words such as wheelchair bound, handicapped, or special needs are acceptable to use.**

***False.*** *These words are disrespectful and can make a person feel excluded and can cause a barrier to full participation.*

**You should not pet service dogs while they are working.**

***True.*** *While a service dog is working, he has a lot on his mind, and petting him can be very distracting. Even when a dog is “on a break”, do not touch without permission.*

**I have a student who qualifies for test accommodations, so I should send all of the tests to DSP&S without notification.**

***False****. The student needs to get the testing form signed by a DSP&S staff, (at least five days before the test date), bring that form to you, the instructor, for a signature and test instructions, and then bring that form back to the DSP&S office. The student will then be scheduled to take the test with DSP&S proctoring. This process needs to occur for each and every test.*

**What does Department of Special Programs and Services (DSPS) do?**

The Department of Supportive Services and Programs (DSPS), at Hartnell College, presently serves close to 500 students with various disabilities. In accordance with current federal and state legislation, and Hartnell’s mission statement, each student with a disability at Hartnell College is afforded “equal access to a quality education and the opportunity to pursue and achieve their goals”. In order to attain this, students with disabilities may require services and accommodations. To that end, DSPS is here to serve our students, and act as a resource to our faculty. We provide the following services: counseling and advising, academic support, sign language interpreters, note takers, special classes, special equipment, priority registration, test proctoring, specialized adaptive equipment, alternate media, and a high tech center with computer adaptations.

### Best practices for working with people with disabilities

**Learning Disabilities**

Learning disabilities is a term that refers to an assorted group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, writing, reading, reasoning, mathematical abilities, or social skills. Examples include dyslexia, dysgraphia, dysphasia, dyscalculia, and other learning disabilities in the basic psychological or neurological process. Learning Disabilities are “silent” disabilities, and are the most prevalent of the disabilities of college students. Since many students with disabilities, especially those with Learning Disabilities, look like any other student, it may be difficult to understand that these students need accommodations in order to level the playing field. To get an idea of what it is like for students with these disabilities, the Kirk Documentary Group & WGBH created a simulation that can be accessed on the Misunderstood Minds PBS website. It allows the viewer to click on a disability such as ADHD, deficits in reading, writing, or math. [Misunderstood Minds](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/misunderstoodminds/).

**Psychological Disabilities**

Many students with disabilities suffer with anxieties, especially students with psychological disabilities. For these students in particular, it is helpful to focus on the positive. In *Promoting Positive Attitudes*, Paul Wilson (2008) suggests that teachers “reassure pupils that the correctness of their answers does not reflect on them as people.” An incorrect answer does not diminish a student’s worth. For more tips and information here is a nice site: [A Guide for Accommodating Adults with Psychiatric Illness in the Classroom](http://amhd.org/About/ClinicalOperations/PSR/Resource%20for%20Educators%20with%20Psychiatric%20Disabilities.pdf)

**Blind and Low Vision**

For students who are blind, sighted people need to talk to non-sighted people the same way that they would talk to anyone else. It is perfectly fine to use the words “see” and “look” when talking to a blind person. For example, “see you later”, or “you look great” are conversational terms, and it would be awkward to try to avoid them. On the other hand, when instructing a student who is blind, the instructor should not point to something and tell the students to “look”, or ask students what they see.

**Autism Spectrum**

People with Autism tend to be very literal, it is therefore important to avoid idioms, words with double meanings, and sarcasm. People with Autism have a penchant to be disorganized, and although there may be strategies used to help with this; the most important thing to remember is to not “harp” on the student, as this can make the problem much worse. Stress can cause a person with Autism (and other disabilities) to exhibit behaviors. This can be avoided by breaking down tasks into small chunks, and by using “positive and chronologically age- appropriate behavior procedures”. Here is a link that may prove to be helpful (it is based on working with children, but the tips are still valid) [22 tips for teaching students with Autism Spectrum disorders.](http://teaching.monster.com/benefits/articles/8761-22-tips-for-teaching-students-with-autism-spectrum-disorders)

**Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

One of the most important things to remember, when teaching a deaf student, is to face the student when speaking. This may seem obvious, but think about when you are writing on a whiteboard, as many times teachers will talk as they write. If a student has a sign language interpreter, be sure to not get in between the student and interpreter. Videos need to be close-captioned and a transcript should be provided.

The interpreter’s role is to facilitate communication between the deaf student and the teacher/class. Remember to always speak directly to the student and not to the interpreter. Due to slight “lag time” interpreters have when interpreting from English to ASL, give the Deaf Student(s) enough time to respond to questions asked in class, before continuing on your lectures.

Although most students with disabilities should take their own notes; this should not be required of the student who is deaf or hard of hearing. For example, if the students is looking down at the paper and writing notes during a lecture, he/she will not be able to get visual clues and/or see the interpreter.

**Mobility Impairments**

When talking with a person in a wheelchair, it is best to try to speak to them at eye level. A student's wheelchair is considered a part of their own personal space, and as such should not be touched by anybody else. A person’s wheelchair should always be considered a personal-assistance device rather than an object that somebody is "confined" to”. People in wheelchairs should not be relegated to the back row. Create an arrangement that allows the student to be a part of the regular classroom seating.

#### Laws that Govern Community Colleges

California Community Colleges are governed by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of physical or mental disability, and require colleges to provide reasonable accommodations and services to students with disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that all resources of a public institution are to be considered available to meet the needs of eligible students with disabilities. The U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights and other enforcement entities hold colleges accountable for ensuring these laws are followed.

##### Why this Matters to You

“The most significant barrier facing individuals qualified to receive specific accommodations is the lack of professional knowledge about issues pertaining to these accommodations” (Gregg, 2009). The information presented here is meant to be a useful tool for you so that you may have this knowledge. Not only will you be better equipped to help your students, but you may also save yourself some legal grief, as there have been cases in which teachers who denied services, benefits or opportunities to individuals with disabilities have been held personally liable. “Faculty members must accept that being employed by institutions that have compliance responsibilities under federal statutes and regulations means that their employment is condition upon their assisting those institutions in satisfying their compliance obligations” (Heyward, Lawton, & Associates,1995).

###### Confidentiality

A student’s disability should never be discussed in class or in front of other students. The student’s disability is extremely confidential and this confidentiality is protected by law.

Who is considered to be disabled in the eyes of the law?

 A person with a disability includes any person who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of the person's major life activities (e.g., reading, writing, speaking, hearing, seeing, walking, etc.). "Substantially" means that one's ability in a particular major life activity is significantly worse than that of the average person in the general population. The Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act protect the civil rights of individuals who are qualified to participate and have disabilities such as, but not limited to:

* Attention Deficit Disorders
* Blindness or low vision
* Cerebral palsy
* Chronic illnesses
* Deafness or hearing impairment
* Drug or alcohol addiction (only those in recovery programs and not currently using)
* Epilepsy or seizure disorders
* Learning Disability
* Orthopedic impairment
* Psychological or psychiatric disorders
* Speech disorders
* Spinal cord or traumatic brain injury
* Tourette's Syndrome

**Assisting Persons with Disabilities in an Emergency**

During a disaster we might all be called upon to help members of our college community who have disabilities. These are some easy-to-remember tips about how to offer help, and specifics for helping in the event of an emergency.

**Guidelines for Evacuating Persons with Disabilities**

Always ask how you can help before attempting any assistance or rescue. Ask how the person can best be moved and whether there are any special considerations or items that need to come with the person.

**Hearing Impairments**

Flick the lights when entering the room to get the person's attention.

Establish eye contact with the individual, even if an interpreter is present.

Face the light, do not cover or turn your face away, or chew gum.

Use facial expressions and hand gestures as visual cues.

Offer visual instructions to advise of safest route or direction by pointing towards exits.

Check to see if you have been understood and repeat if necessary.

Offer pencil and paper. Write slowly and let the individual read as you write. In an emergency, written communication may be especially important if you are unable to understand the individual's speech.

Be patient, the individual may have difficulty comprehending the urgency of your message.

In an emergency, if possible, provide the individual with a flashlight for signaling their location in the event that they are separated from the rescuing team or buddy and to facilitate speech-reading in the dark.

**Mobility Impairments**

Someone using a crutch or a cane might be able to negotiate stairs independently. One hand is used to grasp the handrail; the other hand is used for the crutch or cane. It is best *not* to interfere with this person's movement.

You might be of assistance by offering to carry the extra crutch while exiting.

Help clear the exit route of debris so the floor is clear for wheelchairs or persons using other mobility aids.

In an emergency evacuation situation, stairways and halls can be crowded, if so, you can act as a buffer and "run interference."

Be sure the person has their crutches, canes, walkers or other mobility devices with them.

**Evacuating persons who are non-ambulatory**

Attempt a rescue evacuation **only** if you have had rescue training unless the situation is life threatening. Some persons may have such minimal mobility that lifting them may be dangerous.

Not all persons can move from their wheelchairs and be carried safely.

Most wheelchair users are trained in special techniques to transfer from one chair to another. Depending on their upper body strength, they may be able to do much of the work themselves.

If you assist a wheelchair user, avoid putting pressure on the person's extremities and chest. Such pressure might cause spasms, pain and even restrict breathing.

If you have to lift a wheelchair user out of their chair to carry them, please be aware that carrying someone slung over your shoulders (like the "fireman's carry") is like sitting on their chest and poses danger for individuals who fall within categories of neurological and orthopedic disabilities. Note the location of the wheelchair and upon exiting the building immediately inform Campus Safety of the location of the wheelchair so they can retrieve it. The wheelchair is essential to the person's mobility and safety.

The college currently has an Evacuation Chair which is stored in the DSPS office, CALL Building room 102 (inside DSPS Lab).

**Blindness or Visual Impairment**

Tell the person the nature of the emergency and offer to guide him/her by offering your left/right elbow. Do not grab a visually impaired person’s arm, or push their body.

Speak naturally and directly to the individual. Do not shout.

Offer assistance but let the person explain what help is needed.

Describe the action to be taken in advance.

Be sure the person brings with them all mobility tools such as canes.

If leading someone:

Let them grasp your arm or shoulder lightly, for guidance. He/she may choose to walk slightly behind you to gauge your body reactions to obstacles; be sure to mention, stairs, doorways, narrow passages, ramps, overhanging objects, uneven pavements, etc.

Never "move" the blind person, or touch or move their cane.

When guiding to a seat, place the person's hand on the back of the chair.

When you have reached a safe location, orient the person to where she/he is and ask if any further assistance is needed.

**Psychological Impairments**

A person with a psychological disability may have difficulty processing emergency warnings and alerts or difficulty focusing on instructions under duress.

Speak calmly yet with authority when providing directions.

Ask them to focus on their breathing, slowly and deeply to aid them to be calmer.

Explain that others are feeling anxious and fearful also and everyone will work together, if possible escort the individual to a point of safe harbor/assembly area.

**Suggestions When Assisting Owners of Service Dogs**

Do not pet or offer the dog food without the permission of the owner.

When the dog is wearing its harness, he is on duty; if you want the dog not to guide its owner, have the person remove the dog's harness.

Plan for the dog to be evacuated with the owner.

In the event you are asked to take the dog while assisting the individual, it is recommended that you (the helper) hold the leash and not the dog's harness.

The Service Dog might become disoriented, ask the advice of the dog’s partner regarding your level of assistance.

**Respiratory Disorders**

With respiratory disorders, such as asthma or emphysema, the onset of symptoms can be triggered by stress, exertion, or exposure to small amounts of dust or smoke.

Remind the individual to bring inhalation medication when evacuating.

**Cardiac conditions**

Persons with cardiac conditions should be reminded to take their medications when evacuating.

Offer them assistance in walking; they may have reduced stamina and require frequent rest periods.

**Pregnancy**

Not usually considered a disability, it can result in reduced stamina or impaired mobility, especially in negotiating stairs in an evacuation.

Offer to walk with the woman and be of support both emotionally and physically.

Remain with her until you have reached safety and she has a safe, warm place to sit

In Conclusion

If you receive a Letter of Accommodation and have difficulty providing the accommodations listed, or if you disagree with the accommodations, please contact the Specialist who signed the letter.

Sesame Street (1992) had it right with *We’re different, We’re the Same, and We’re all Wonderful*. Although some learning theories may be superior to others in regards to people with disabilities, the point is to remember that these are adult individuals, with individual learning styles, and one should remain open-minded and flexible. It is important to remember that students with disabilities are people first – get to know them as such, and work together to find what works best. DSPS is here to assist students and staff.