Working with Students with Disabilities

UAB Disability Support Services

Allison Solomon, Director
Valerie DuBose, Assistant Director
Brittany Gregg, Counselor
Cara Blakes, Graduate Assistant
Why does DSS Exist?
- Ensure accessibility
- Prevent discrimination

Why is this presentation important?
Protect faculty and staff by promoting awareness of your responsibilities
The Top 10 List

1. The Law
2. Understanding UAB’s responsibility
3. The syllabus statement
4. Responding to requests
5. Confidentiality

6. Determination of accommodations
7. Confusing accommodations
8. Testing accommodations
9. Over-accommodating
10. Call DSS
The Law

• Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
  (Enforced by the Office of Civil Rights)

• Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
  (Enforced by the Department of Justice)
The Law continued

• US Department of Education expectations, case law and OCR rulings have impacted accessibility standards

• This will eventually impact accessibility standards at UAB.
The Law continued

Other implications of the new expectations:

- Online Courses (should be compatible with Assistive Technology)
- Videos (all videos utilized in class or online should be captioned)
- Web Design (should be compatible with Assistive Technology)
- Technical Standards
Understanding UAB’s Responsibility

UAB is required to provide access to programs and activities of the institution to **qualified individuals** who have a **documented disability**.

Accommodations are a collaborative effort between DSS, faculty, departments and programs.
The Syllabus Statement

• Clarifies the student’s responsibility
• Clarifies your expectations

Sample: *If you are registered with Disability Support Services, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss accommodations that may be necessary. If you have a disability but have not contacted Disability Support Services, please call 934-4205 or visit DSS at 516 Hill University Center.*
Responding to Requests

• If a student requests an accommodation or modification, they are expected to go through DSS

• Once a student is registered with DSS, they are instructed by DSS to communicate directly with faculty to arrange accommodations
“Reasonable” Accommodations

• Requested accommodation must be reasonable

• Example: CPR, Clinical Settings

• Refer to your program’s essential functions and technical standards
Confidentiality

• What information is considered confidential?

• Stigma is a significant issue among students registered with DSS.

• Never ask what a student’s disability is.
Confidentiality

What if you suspect a student has a disability?

• Offer behavioral observations, such as examples from writing, test taking, attention in class.

• Ask the student if he or she can explain the difficulties.

• If they cannot, then it may be appropriate to refer them to DSS to discuss their limitations.
Determination of Accommodations

• Students are required to self-identify.

• They must complete an application and submit complete documentation.

• They then meet with a counselor for a thorough one-on-one interview.
Determination of Accommodations

• There must be a **substantiated and documented** medical reason and need for the accommodation.

• Documentation must be submitted by a **qualified professional**.

• Accommodations are not granted just because they would help a student do better in class. They are granted because, without them, they would not be able to fully participate and/or access the class.
Confusing Accommodations

• Reasonable number of disability-related absences
  • Note-taking
  • Use of spell-check/dictionary
  • Captioning
• Access to Assistive Technology
• Permission to take short breaks
Testing Accommodations

Common testing accommodations:

• Extended time
• Reduced distraction testing environment
• Use of assistive technology
• Scribe or reader

Faculty can provide these accommodations or DSS can.
• Test Security at DSS
Over-Accommodating

• Students with disabilities are to be held to the same standard as all other students.

• The ADA states that essential skills should not be waived or “watered down”.

• Consequences: upon graduation, students with disabilities would find themselves at a disadvantage because they are unable to perform the skills their degree declares they are capable of.
If you don’t remember anything else...

- **Communicate with students** the 1st day of class & in syllabus about arranging accommodations

- **Do not single out or call attention** to a student with a disability or perceived disability

- **Make sure all faculty are aware** – including staff, graduate assistants & adjunct faculty

- **Contact DSS**. - We’re here to help!
Questions?

dss@uab.edu

www.uab.edu/dss

934-4205