



The University of New Mexico
Division of Student Affairs
Accessibility Resource Center
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Guidelines for Documenting Visual Impairments

Students seeking support services from Accessibility Services on the basis of a previously diagnosed vision loss must submit documentation that verifies their eligibility under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendment Act (ADAAA). The documentation must describe a disabling condition, which is defined by the presence of significant limitations in one or more major life activities. Merely submitting evidence of a diagnosis is not sufficient to warrant academic accommodations.

Documentation from a recognized agency as being eligible for services, for example the New Mexico Commission for the Blind, will be accepted, unless there is evidence to believe that eligibility was inappropriately determined, in which case, UNM will follow its policies and procedures to determine eligibility for services and/or academic adjustments. Students will be required to meet UNM policies and procedures to establish any other disability.

An ophthalmologist, optometrist or other qualified professional should make the diagnosis and complete the appropriate documentation. Documentation should include:

- A clear statement of vision-related disability with supporting numerical description. The age of acceptable documentation is dependent upon the nature of the condition and the student's request for accommodations. Visual disabilities of a changing nature may need to be documented more frequently. Also include a statement as to whether the condition is progressive or stable.
- Include the following sections that are relevant to the individual:
 - Eye Health
 - Visual Fields
 - Binocular Evaluation
 - Accommodative Skills
 - Oculomotor Skills
- A summary of assessment procedures and evaluation instruments that were used to make the diagnosis and a narrative summary of evaluation results.
- Narrative or descriptive text providing both quantitative and qualitative information about the student's abilities is helpful in understanding the student's profile, including the use of corrective lenses and ongoing visual therapy (if appropriate). Medical information relating to the student's needs and the impact on the demands of an academic program.
- A statement of the functional impacts or limitations of the vision loss on learning or other major life activity and the degree to which it impacts the individual in the learning

context for which accommodations are being requested (i.e. the implications for reading, mobility, seeing the black board).

- Specific cognitive processing strengths, weaknesses, and deficits.
- Recommended accommodations.
- All reports should be on letterhead, typed, dated, signed, and otherwise legible. The name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about license or certification as well as area of specialization, employment, and state in which the individual practices must be clearly stated. Use of diagnostic terminology indicating a specific disability by someone whose training and experience are not in these fields is not acceptable. Evaluators should not be related to the individual being assessed.
- Diagnoses written on prescription pads and/or parent's notes indicating a disability are not considered appropriate documentation.