Quick Fact Sheet

The Law
Section 504

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 states that:

“No otherwise qualified 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 or under any program or activity conducted by any Executive agency.

A “qualified person” is defined as one who meets the requisite academic and technical standards required for admission or participation in the postsecondary institution’s programs and activities. Section 504 protects the civil rights of individuals who are qualified to participate and who have disabilities such as, but not limited to, the following:

- Blindness or visual impairments
- Cerebral palsy
- Chronic illnesses (to include AIDS, arthritis, cancer, diabetes)
- Deafness or hearing impairments
- Drug or alcohol additions (Section 504 covers former users and those in recovery programs)
- Epilepsy or seizure disorders
- Mental retardation
- Orthopedic limitations
- Specific learning disabilities
- Speech disorders
- Spinal cord or traumatic brain injury
Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) is the civil rights guarantee for persons with disabilities in the United States. It provides protection from discrimination for individuals on the basis of disability. The ADA extends civil rights protection for people with disabilities to employment in the private sector, transportation, public accommodations, services provided by state and local government, and telecommunication relay services.

Commonly asked Questions Regarding the ADA and Section 504:

Q: May colleges deny services if a student does not document his or her disability?
A: Yes, a college has no obligation to provide service to a student who does not provide documentation of his or her disability.

Q: Can a college be held liable under the ADA if it is unaware of a student’s disability?
A: No, the college’s obligation to provide a reasonable accommodation applies only to known disabilities.

Q: Does an institution have an obligation to lower its admissions standards for individuals with disabilities?
A: No, an applicant’s disability should play no part in an admission decision and the institution has no obligation to lower its admissions standards to admit an applicant with a disability.

Q: What is the scope of the college’s obligation to provide auxiliary aids or services to students with disabilities in the classroom?
A: An educational institution has a duty to provide reasonable accommodations in the classroom for students with known disabilities when services have been requested in a timely manner.
Q: Does a college have any obligation to provide personal services or devices?
A: No, an educational institution is not required to provide a student with a disability with personal or individually prescribed devices.

Q: Must an institution lower its academic standards to accommodate a student with a disability?
A: No, but it should be noted that a college may be required to take some modifications to its academic requirements to ensure that such requirements do not discriminate or have the effect of discriminating on the basis of the student’s disability.

Q: Does an institution’s obligation extend to providing accommodations during a test to a student with a disability?
A: Yes, reasonable accommodations must be provided if appropriate notice is given.

Establishing Services
A variety of support services are available to students with disabilities. All services must be requested each semester of attendance. To request services, the following steps should be taken:

Students needing special services should contact with the ADA Coordinator for Students with Disabilities to request any assistance or accommodations. The ADA Coordinator can be reached at 251.405.7028 or 251.405.7017 for information in regard to services.

The student should bring appropriate documentation of the disability.

The coordinator will discuss the services and accommodations that are the most appropriate and acquaint the student with the process for securing those services.