

Houston Community College System

Disability Support Services



Student Handbook

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Registration

Students wishing to receive services must register with the Disability Support Services Office (DSSO). Forms can be filled out in the DSSO.

I. Introduction

The following statements summarize policies and procedures specifically related to students with disabilities. The official "Policy and Procedure" should be consulted for detailed information. Equality of access Houston Community College ensures that no qualified person shall due to disability is denied access to, participation in, or the benefits of, any program or activity operated by Houston Community College. Each qualified person shall receive appropriate accommodations to ensure equal access to educational opportunities, programs and activities in the most integrated setting appropriate.

II. Federal and state laws

This policy is consistent with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which states that no recipient of federal financial assistance may discriminate against a qualified handicapped individual solely because of handicap. This policy is also consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the Texas Handicappers' Civil Rights Act (as amended). The policies and procedures that follow are the means by which faculty, staff, and students of the Houston Community College endorse and will apply the conditions of Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act to students.

III. Services for Students with Disabilities

The DSSO offers selected student services that are not provided by other college offices or outside organizations. Staffs in the DSSO assist students in negotiating disability-related barriers to the pursuit of their education. They strive to improve access to programs, activities, and facilities. They promote increased awareness of disability issues on campus. Services from the DSSO are free of charge.

The decision to use services is a matter of individual choice. Our experience has been that students achieve higher levels of academic and personal success when they demonstrate initiative and assertiveness.

Admissions

Applicants should remember they are working with a process that involves several offices and many people. Prospective students should begin the application process early in their senior year or the spring before they plan to enroll at Houston Community College. Transfer applicants are also welcome.

The Admissions Office staff considers the applicant with a disability in much the same manner as any other applicant. Taking COMPASS or other standardized placement test under accommodated conditions will not negatively affect the admissions decision.

To apply for admission to Houston Community College, go to www.hccs.edu to complete online application.

Reasonable accommodations for standardized placement tests

If special accommodation (such as extra time, cassette version, Braille copy, etc.) is needed to take the COMPASS or other nationally standardized tests, applicants should contact the DSSO, at the college where they plan to test, to request accommodations. Documentation of the qualifying disability will be required and accommodations will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Financial Aid

An important consideration in applying for financial aid is time. Begin early! If you submit the paper work before the deadlines, you will be better able to work out any problems that occur.

If you plan to request financial assistance from the Division of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), it is especially important that you complete this application process early. These agencies are a resource used in addition to funds that the student, parent or other sources could provide. Applications for financial aid (particularly the Pell Grant) must be made before the Division of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) or Division of Blind Services (DBS) can determine the nature and type of aid they will provide.

Some students with disabilities will be eligible to take a reduced course load without losing their financial aid. Contact your financial aid counselor or a DSS staff member to see if you are eligible.

Keep in mind that Houston Community College, DARS, or tuition waiver for deaf/hard of hearing and blind students will not take care of the financial aid process. You have the major responsibility to meet deadlines and be aware of the policies and procedures governing your financial assistance. For specific information about financial aid or assistance filling out forms, contact the Office of Financial Aid at your local campus or go to www.fafsa.ed.gov/.

New Student Orientation

Accommodations are made upon request to meet specific needs during orientation. This includes placement testing. Call the Disability Counselor at the Disability Support Service Office in advance in order to make arrangements. Because the ultimate responsibility for selecting the proper courses and completing degree requirements lies with the student, all students should read and understand the information in the HCC Catalog and Time Schedule. In addition, the following suggestions are made: Students with disabilities should begin planning their schedules well before registration. Students with visual impairments may need time to become oriented to a new building or to order taped textbooks. Deaf/Hard of Hearing Students is strongly encouraged to meet with instructors to acquaint them with interpreting, and

general communication techniques. Students' particular concerns will depend on their individual needs and the type of course.

Faculty Liaison

Students should speak with the instructor before or during the first week of class regarding any special needs. You must have a letter from the DSSO in order to receive reasonable accommodation. The letter verifies your disability and requests accommodations to meet your specific needs. If an instructor is unwilling to make a reasonable accommodation requested in your accommodation letter, contact DSS for assistance as soon as possible.

Faculty are encouraged to modify, rather than waive, course or degree requirements. Requests for curriculum modifications should be brought to the attention of the Lead Counselor for DSS. We strongly **encourage not to lower** academic standards for students with disabilities nor is it required.

Peer Notetakers

Some students with disabilities will tape lectures for reviewing later. Other students will ask for a volunteer in the class to use carbon or NCR (no-carbon-required) paper or photocopying in order to get a duplicate set of notes.

Notetakers will:

- Write down all relevant information including lecture notes, test and quiz dates, assignments, and important vocabulary.
- Attend all classes, be on time, and be prepared to take notes. (A notetaker who is unable to attend a class should inform the instructor and/or the student as appropriate.)
- Wait for the student outside the classroom, if the student requests this.

Students will:

- Also, take notes for themselves, unless Deaf or Hard of hearing or physically incapable of doing so.
- Use the notetakers' notes to fill in your own notes.
- Supply paper for their notetakers.

- Arrive in class early enough to supply the notetaker with any materials he or she might need and find a seat with good visibility.
- Read their notes over to check for assignments and dates.
- Ask the notetaker about anything in the notes, which is not clear.

Adaptive Technology

Disability Support Services Office provides adaptive equipment for use on campus. Equipment includes large print monitors, CCTV's, Comtek units, Jaws, and a variety of software packages. Limited training is provided by DSSO. For more information, contact your DSS office well in advance of the start of the semester.

Discrimination

The Affirmative Action Office coordinates the college's compliance with Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. The college does not discriminate against students with disabilities in recruitment, admission, or treatment after admission. In addition, the college makes reasonable adjustments to permit students with disabilities to fulfill academic requirements and provides auxiliary aids to ensure that they are not excluded from programs because of their disabilities. Students who believe that the college may not be meeting these responsibilities or who believe that they have been otherwise discriminated against based upon their disability may contact the ADA Counselor at the Disability Support Services Office.

IV. Students with Learning Disabilities (LD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Acquired Brain Injury (ABI)

The purpose of this section is to provide a description of the services available at Houston Community College and allow you to compare them to the services available at other campuses. All of the services described here are available for students with a LD, ADHD, or an ABI. However, eligibility for specific accommodations and/or services is always based on the strengths and weaknesses that are reported in the psycho-educational assessment or any other documentation that a student supplies to the DSS office.

Taped Textbooks

We have services available through Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFB & D). The address to contact is :

Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFB & D)
20 Rozel Rd.,
Princeton, NJ 08540,
(800) 221- 4792.

Equipment Loan

The DSSO office loans out some equipment including handheld cassette recorders and Comtek units. To request equipment; see your assigned DSS counselor.

V. Students with Visual Impairments

Students with a visual disability must plan their schedules well in advance of each term because support services such as textbooks on tape, special equipment or readers must be arranged before the term begins. Students should consult their instructors in advance about classroom accommodations, teaching techniques, and testing procedures.

Orientation and Mobility

Depending on the individual, it may be necessary for some students to receive orientation and mobility training. This is done through the Division of Blind Services or Lighthouse.

Division of Blind Services

A state-federal program, which provides financial and other assistance to eligible blind or visually, impaired students while they are in school. To be eligible for services, students must meet DBS requirements for certification as "legally blind."

Readers

Reader services will be available for Testing **ONLY**. Please contact your DSS counselor for further information.

Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) and JAWS services are available at the DSSO.

VI. Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing

We provide interpreter services and Computer-Aided Real time Captioning (CART). Contact the Interpreter Services Supervisor at (713) 718 6333.

Assistive Listening Devices

Each semester the DSS office will lend FM amplification systems for students to use in the classroom and other school related functions. Contact the Disability Support Services office.

If you plan to use a FM system on a long-term basis, it is suggested that you purchase your own FM system or ask your rehabilitation counselor to purchase one for you.

VII. Fire and Emergency Evacuations

The issue of safe evacuation in case of a fire or other emergency is an important concern on campus. The major problem is that, during an emergency, most elevators cease to operate for reasons related to smoke and electrical fires. Therefore, the best method for your evacuation in a particular situation becomes most important. You should consider the following guidelines when you are making an evacuation plan or are evacuating:

- If you have an attendant, the two of you should discuss emergency evacuation plans in advance.
- If you are unable to use the stairways independently, it may sometimes be advisable to remain near an elevator or major stairway to allow fire department or security personnel to locate you quickly.
- Keep as many closed doors as possible between you and the fire. Seal off the cracks with clothing.
- Call 911 to alert the fire department of your location.
- If you have a window to the outside, make sure the door is closed, then open the window slightly and signal the fire fighters.
- Do not use elevators; as indicated above, they may be hazardous during fires. Only trained firefighters are qualified to judge the safety of using an elevator in a particular fire emergency.

These guidelines are offered as general suggestions and not an official plan of action. Your safety depends on your judgment and knowledge of general safety precautions.

VIII. Confidentiality

Disability Support Services professional staff is very sensitive to and respectful of both your rights to privacy and confidentiality. However, you may also want to remind your instructors of your right to confidentiality.

A. Accessibility and Equal Opportunity

1. Student Employment

Post-secondary programs that employ students may not discriminate based on disability.

2. Support Services

- Accessible parking
- Referral to appropriate on- or off-campus resources, services, or agencies
- Reader services
- Peer note-taker services
- Assistance with arranging testing accommodations
- Interpreter services for the deaf, including arranging DARS funded interpreters
- Arrangements for auxiliary aids, and FM amplification systems

In order to ensure sufficient time to make provisions for appropriate auxiliary aids, it is the responsibility of the student to request the necessary accommodation or auxiliary aid in a timely manner. If a request is submitted after the relevant deadline, Disability Support Services Office will make every reasonable effort to accommodate the request but cannot guarantee that such a request can be met. Untimely requests may result in delay, substitution, or denial of accommodation.

B. Coordination of Programs and Disabilities Support Services

Disabilities Support Services office (DSSO) is responsible for the coordination of programs and services for qualified applicants for

admission and enrolled students with disabilities. Such coordination relates solely to students' disabilities.

The DSS office requires verification of the student's disability in order to determine appropriate accommodations.

Confidentiality

The DSS office protects each student's right to privacy, except as permitted by the student expressly for providing support services to that student.

C. Responsibilities of Students with Disabilities

Documentation of Disability

All students seeking assistance from DSS must disclose the presence of a specific disability to the DSS office. Before receiving requested accommodations, the student may be required to submit medical or other diagnostic documentation of disability and/or limitations.

Interpreter Requests

Requests for interpreter or real time captioning services must be made at least **thirty (30)** days before the start of classes.

Untimely requests may result in delay, substitution, or denial of accommodation. If a request is submitted late, the DSS staff will make every reasonable effort to accommodate the request. Services can be suspended after 3 absences. At this time, the student will be required to meet with their DSSO Counselor.

How to File Appeals

Questions or concerns related to reasonable accommodations not resolved with individual DSS staff shall first be discussed informally with the Director of Disability Support Services and are subject to informal consultation with the Associate Dean of Students. The student may formally present matters not resolved informally to the ADA Coordinator, in the Affirmative Action Office, and/or the Dean of Students Office. Formal appeals include a written statement regarding the nature of the complaint, results of the informal meetings, and requested resolution. All formal appeals will be

promptly investigated and a decision will be rendered within 30 working days of the date of receipt.

All materials relating to individual cases shall be held and maintained in confidence. These materials shall not be maintained any longer than three years after the date of creation.

D. Reasonable Accommodations

1. Academic Requirements

Reasonable accommodations will be modified, as necessary, to ensure that they do not discriminate against qualified applicants or currently enrolled students with disabilities. At the student's request, DSS staff recommends academic adjustments in compliance with state and federal mandates. Academic requirements that are essential to programs of instruction are not considered discriminatory.

2. Testing Accommodations

It is the student's responsibility to request test accommodations according to the procedures outlined by this policy. Testing accommodation may include but need not be limited to:

- Extended time
- Enlarged materials or alternate type size
- Reader and/or scribe
- Environment free of distractions
- Word processor
- Spell checker/calculator

E. DSS Student Intake Process

1. Obtain a **copy** of your **Comprehensive Individual Assessment** or **Full and Individual Evaluation** from high school. Click on [documentation](#).
2. Obtain a **copy** of your last **ARD** meeting.
3. Obtain **required documents** from a licensed professional of the healing arts (example: M.D., Psychologist, LPT, LPC, LMFT, LMSW-ACP), which indicate your current disability and

how it may impact your educational process. Documentation of your disability consists of a **comprehensive Medical or Physical Evaluation and/or Psychological Evaluation**. This is required before accommodations can be provided.

4. Obtain an official **copy** of your **Transcript** of Records from previous school(s) you attended. The easiest way to do this is to have it sent to your home, and bring the **unopened copy** with you when you visit your ADA counselor. Your ADA counselor will break the seal and it will become your official transcript.
5. **Schedule an appointment with an ADA counselor** at the campus you plan to attend. ADA counselor contact information may be found below these steps.
6. Bring your **Comprehensive Individual Assessment, ARD,** and/or **Comprehensive Medical/Psychological evaluation** with you to your scheduled appointment.
7. Your ADA counselor will review your documentation and determine which **placement test** is appropriate for you. Please **bring two forms of ID** (drivers license/picture ID and Social Security card, Insurance card, etc.).
8. Bring your **test results** back to the DSS office and **schedule another appointment**.
9. Come to your scheduled appointment and we will help you develop your class schedule and write an accommodations letter for you.

Accommodations are granted on a semester-by-semester basis. You must visit with an ADA counselor each semester to obtain a current accommodation letter.

F. Student Support Services

Students will be provided accommodations based on their disability.

DSSO does not provide personal attendant care.

G. Adaptive Equipment

Additional Adaptive Equipment can be checked out per request.

Adaptive equipment available for loan from DSS includes:

- Personal FM system
- Tape recorders
- Comtek