

State of Florida

Instruction Booklet

Request for Examination Accommodations for Examinees with Disabilities

Bureau of Education and Testing
2601 Blair Stone Road
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0791

Prepared by the Bureau of Education & Testing

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DBPR 2002-064B
Rule 61-11.008, F.A.C.

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Introduction

The Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation provides reasonable and appropriate accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act for individual with documented disabilities who demonstrate a need for accommodations.

The following information is provided for applicants, treating sources, evaluators, and others involved in the process of documenting a request for examination accommodations. We strongly encourage applicants requesting examination accommodations to share these guidelines with their medical and educational professionals, so the appropriate documentation can be assembled to support the request.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and accompanying regulations define a person with a disability as someone with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

The purpose of examination accommodations is to minimize the handicapping effects of such functional limitations on examination performance, so that the applicant can demonstrate their capabilities.

An applicant's requested accommodations must agree with the identified functional limitations, so that the area of impairment is alleviated by an auxiliary aid or adjustment to the examination procedure. For example, a functional limitation in the ability to control the fine motor movements needed to fill in computer answer sheets may be appropriately accommodated by providing assistance in recording answers.

While the use of examination accommodations may enable the individual to better demonstrate his/her knowledge mastery, accommodations do not guarantee improved performance, examination completion, or a passing score.

Examination Accommodations

Examination accommodations may include but are not limited to the following:

- Assistance in marking answers
- Extended examination time
- Reader for the examination
- ZoomText on Computer Based Test
- Printed copy of verbal instructions read by the exam administrator
- Private testing area

How to Request Examination Accommodations

The applicant must notify the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation Special Testing Coordinator that they have a disability and are requesting examination accommodations. An application for accommodations can be obtained online at <http://www.myfloridalicense.com/dbpr/servop/testing/ADA.html> or by contacting the Special Testing Coordinator at 850-487-9755.

1. Submit a completed and signed **Application** for Candidate's Requesting Special Testing Accommodations, DBPR 2002-064, Part I and II.

2. Attach **documentation** certifying the disability from a qualified professional appropriate for evaluating the disability and licensed pursuant to Chapters 460 (Chiropractic), 490 (Psychological Services or School Psychologist), 458 (Medical Practice), 459 (Osteopathy), 461 (Podiatry), 463 (Optometry), or 468, Part I (Speech Language Pathology & Audiology), of the Florida Statutes. Please see below for more information about this documentation.
3. A **personal statement** from the applicant, describing their disability and how it affects their daily life and educational functioning, can facilitate the DBPR review process. A personal statement *sometimes* helps applicants avoid having to obtain additional documentation to fill gaps in the medical records.

Send the application for special testing accommodations, medical documentation and personal statement to:

Department of Business and Professional Regulation
Special Testing Coordinator – Bureau of Education & Testing
“Confidential”
2601 Blair Stone Road
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0791

The completed application and accompanying documentation must be received by the Special Testing Coordinator 60 calendar days prior to the final published application deadline or prior to scheduling a test date for the appropriate exam being taken. Early requests are encouraged and speed up the review process.

If a need arises for further documentation of the disability or associated functional limitations, a decision about accommodations may be delayed until the next scheduled examination administration.

*To protect your confidentiality, always send examination accommodation information separately to the above address. **Do not include these materials with your State Board examination application.***

Documenting a Need for Accommodations

The following guidelines are provided to assist applicants in documenting a need for accommodations based on an impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Documentation submitted to the Department may be referred to disability experts for an impartial, independent review.

The person requesting accommodations must initiate the written request for examination accommodations. Requests by a third party (i.e., academy) will not be accepted.

Records submitted in support of a request for accommodations must:

- **Identify the professional credentials and license of the treating or evaluating source.**
- **Be current.** The provision of accommodations is based on assessment of the **current** impact of the applicant’s disability on the examination activity. For chronic, developmental disorders, such as Learning Disorders, older evaluations completed at or near adulthood may be sufficient to affirm the diagnosis and assess current severity and functional limitations imposed by the disorder. However, when the course of a disability tends to vary across time and settings, as with Anxiety Disorders, evaluation or treatment records within the past three years is required.

- **Describe how the diagnosis was established, based on relevant history, test results, and clinical description.** When formal testing is part of this evaluation, test scores should be reported, to allow an independent review of the medical or psychological basis for the diagnosis and its severity. When informal evaluation procedures are used, these should be described in enough detail that an independent reviewer can assess their significance. For mental impairments, the diagnostic taxonomy of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM-V) is recommended.
- **Describe functional limitations that are attributable to the diagnosed disability.** *Diagnosis alone is not sufficient to meet documentation requirements under ADA.* The diagnosed condition must also be found to be the basis for significant functional limitations in the applicant's daily life.

Information provided by non-licensed professionals may also be helpful in documenting an applicant's need for evaluation accommodations. While diagnosis by an acceptable medical source under ADA (see above) is required, other sources of information may be given great weight in determining the appropriateness of examination accommodations. Information from these auxiliary sources may help to justify accommodations by corroborating the diagnostic conclusion and clarifying the severity of functional restrictions. This would include school records such as Individualized Educational Plans, as well as evaluations from educational practitioners as long as other documentation is provided from an acceptable source that supports a diagnosis.

Documentation of prior accommodations under ADA is helpful and relevant, but not sufficient. In accordance with ADA and with Florida Statute, the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation is obligated to make an independent determination of the appropriateness of examination accommodations. It is helpful for the treating or evaluating source to recommend specific accommodations and explain why they are needed to minimize the effects of functional restrictions on test performance.

Documentation of Learning Disorders and ADHD

The following information is provided to clarify documentation requirements for applicants requesting accommodations on the basis of developmental disorders such as Learning Disorders (LD) or ADHD. These guidelines apply also to other, less common developmental disorders and to learning and attention problems with known pathophysiology, such as lead poisoning or early hypoxia.

- Because these disorders begin while growing up, good history-taking is important in evaluating adults with these conditions. This may include family, social, school, medical, and work histories. When possible, review of prior school and medical records is helpful, to document the given history. When these records are not available, the history-taking and clinical interview become more important.
- Diagnosis of these conditions requires that non-pathological explanations for an applicant's limitations be considered and ruled out. For example, low academic performance must not be due to simple lack of exposure to instruction, to a language barrier, to test anxiety, or to low achievement motivation. When the history complicates diagnosis, documentation of impairments in specific mental abilities that subserve skill acquisition become more important for affirming a diagnosis. Similarly, diagnosis of ADHD and requires that lapses in attention and concentration are not attributable to simple procrastination disinterest in a task, or low-self-confidence, or to other medical conditions such as metabolic disorders.

- Diagnosis must be based on a convergence of clinical findings, not only one or two tests. For example, a low score on a reading test is not sufficient to document LD and high scores on a self-rating assessment scale are not sufficient to diagnosis ADHD.
- Where diagnosis relies on interpretation of test scores, these scores must be provided, to allow for an independent review of the basis for a diagnosis and assessment of its severity.
- Learning Disorders must be assessed by a licensed psychologist, school psychologist, or appropriately trained physician.
- ADHD may be assessed by psychologists or physicians but not by school psychologists.

Application Review Process

In reviewing each application for examination accommodations under ADA, the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation makes every effort to affirm the medical and functional basis for the requested accommodations based on records provided by the applicant, granting generous margins for judgment by their medical sources. While reasonable flexibility is applied in the interest of sparing applicants from unnecessary pursuit of additional documentation, the Department may require additional documentation when the records provided in support of an application do not allow independent reviewers to affirm, with acceptable confidence, a need for the requested accommodations.

Change in Disability or Accommodations Requested

If there are changes in the nature or extent of your disability or if the accommodations will differ from previously provided accommodation, you must submit a timely request and provide updated documentation that explains the change.