Documentation Guidelines for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is defined by the DSM-5 as a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with development and functioning in multiple aspects of daily life.

The University of Chicago requests current and comprehensive disability documentation to assess eligibility for disability services and reasonable accommodations for students with ADHD. The Student Disability Services (SDS) staff is available to provide guidance about documentation requirements for students registering with SDS or seeking an evaluation. We encourage you to consult with SDS as early as possible regarding any questions you may have about the documentation requirements and guidelines.

ADHD documentation should meet the standards below:

Documentation should be current
Eligibility for disability services at the post-secondary level is based on clear evidence of the current impact of the disability on functioning across multiple domains of life. ADHD evaluations should include age appropriate diagnostic measures and an evaluation summary that includes a description of the frequency, severity, and duration of ongoing ADHD symptoms that substantially impair functioning in two or more settings (e.g., home, school, work, extra-curricular activities).

The evaluation must be conducted by a qualified evaluator
Professionals conducting assessments and rendering diagnoses of ADHD and making recommendations for accommodations must be qualified and licensed to do so. Comprehensive training and relevant experience in differential diagnosis and the full range of psychiatric disorders are essential. The name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator should be clearly stated in the documentation. All reports should be on letterhead, typed, dated, and signed. Documentation completed by a family member will not be accepted.

Documentation should include the following:

Discussion of Childhood Onset: Because symptoms of ADHD typically occur during childhood, documentation should include a clinical summary of objective historical information that establishes symptomatology indicative of ADHD during childhood and adolescence as gathered from a developmental and family history. If ADHD was undiagnosed in childhood, an explanation for this must be offered. The evaluator must consider and address a thorough academic history including educational records (e.g., transcripts, report cards, teacher comments, tutoring evaluations), past psycho-educational testing, and third party interviews when available.

Evidence of Current Impairment: Documentation should include a description of current functional limitations that are a direct result of this disorder, such as attention, executive
functioning, broader cognitive (e.g., memory, visuomotor integration), and behavioral deficits. It should also provide a description of the efficacy of academic accommodations that have been utilized by the student. Relevant employment history and use of accommodations (if applicable) is also important. Information regarding the use of medication and therapy to address symptoms and the effectiveness of treatment should be provided as well, as relevant.

**Assessment for Academic Accommodations:** The disability documentation should demonstrate the current impact of ADHD on learning and the ability to function in an academic setting. Assessment measures should be administered to demonstrate how functioning is impaired in the relevant areas for the student including but not limited to: broad cognitive ability, processing speed, fluency, working memory, reading speed and comprehension using timed and untimed measures, in addition to attention and executive functioning.

Test scores should be provided for all measures. Checklists and/or surveys can supplement the diagnostic profile but are not alone sufficient to determine eligibility for academic modifications. Data and clinical observations provided must serve to support a substantial limitation in the academic task/area in which the individual is requesting an accommodation(s).

**Diagnostic statement** using the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual – Fifth Edition (DSM-5) is also requested.

**Recommendations**
The evaluator should describe the severity and impact of ADHD on the individual, including the manner in which the condition is substantially life limiting. The diagnostic report may include specific recommendations for accommodations that are appropriate at postsecondary level. A detailed explanation as to why each accommodation is recommended should be provided and must correlate with specific functional limitations determined through the diagnostic interview, observation, and/or testing.

SDS staff may seek clarification and additional information from the evaluator. SDS staff will make the final determination of eligibility for disability services and appropriate reasonable accommodations based on UChicago’s academic programs and services.

**Please Note:** Individualized Education Plans (IEP) and Section 504 Plans provide supporting information of the use of previous accommodations but are insufficient documentation for eligibility or disability services. They are helpful in establishing a history of accommodation use.

Please submit recent plans and approval forms for national standardized exams (ACT, SAT, GRE, LSAT, GMAT, MCAT).

SDS will make the final determination about eligibility for disability services in consultation with the student and use of the supporting information provided in the disability documentation.

Tutoring, coaching, and assistance with study strategies are highly recommended as strategies for success but they are not disability accommodations.

Students with outdated testing or who have documentation that does not meet UChicago guidelines are encouraged to consult with SDS regarding seeking a re-evaluation.