



SOUTHEAST ARKANSAS COLLEGE

Handbook for Students with Disabilities

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Welcome

Welcome to Southeast Arkansas College (SEARK) and the Office of Disability Services! The Office of Disability Services purpose is to coordinate support services and programs that enable equal access to an education at SEARK. Students who utilize the Office of Disability Services (ODS) are some of the most successful students on campus. We are proud of our students and passionate about the ODS mission. The ODS is located in the Student Services Building, Advisement Center, Room 161. Please come by the ODS office for more information.

Mission

The Office of Disability Services (ODS) is committed to providing a variety of support services in compliance with Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, the Americans Disability Act. The goals of ODS are to empower students, foster independence, promote achievement of career and educational goals, and assist students to discover, develop, and demonstrate their full potential and abilities. Services are available to any student with a documented vision, physical, mobility, learning, medical, hearing, neurological, or psychiatric disability. In addition, ODS provides a variety of assisting services which gives the student with special needs and circumstances an equal opportunity to succeed but does not compromise academic standards. The ODS works collaboratively with faculty, staff, students, and administrators to make the process of seeking accommodations as streamlined as possible.

Your Rights as A Student

A student with a disability has the right to obtain timely, reasonable accommodation of his/her disability in order to have the same opportunity for success enjoyed by students who do not have a disability. The Americans with Disability Amendment Act (2008) defines a person with a disability as having:

- A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities
- A record of such an impairment; or
- being regarded as having such impairment.

Under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

“No otherwise qualified person with a disability in the United States... shall solely by reason of... disability, be denied the benefits of, be excluded from participation in, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

SEARK College, as a public institution, is subject to these laws. The College's goal is to provide full access to education for all students and person with disabilities, and to create a fully accessible campus.

Students have the right to confidentiality regarding their disability. Information will be disclosed to relevant campus personnel from the ODS office only on an as-needed-basis. Typically, this would be to provide a needed accommodation. Students can choose to disclose information to faculty on their own if they wish, but should not be asked by faculty, staff, or administration the exact nature or diagnosis of their condition.

Student Responsibilities

All students at SEARK College have the right to pursue an education of excellence. Along with this right, students with disabilities have certain responsibilities regarding the accommodations that will help them attain this end.

- Make an appointment to meet with the Disability Counselor as early as possible prior to the start of the semester preferably within the first two weeks of a semester. You can make an appointment with the Disability Counselor using the following website <https://searkofficeofdisabilityservices.setmore.com/>. If requesting accommodations that require time to prepare, such as scheduling a sign language interpreter, the accommodation request must be submitted one month prior to the start of a semester.
- 2-4-8-12 Program- In an effort to increase the retention rate amongst students with disabilities; the ODS has started a 2-4-8-12 program. The 2-4-8-12 program is required for all students who receive accommodations from the ODS. Students will meet with the Disability Counselor during the 2nd, 4th, 8th, and 12th week of the semester. These meetings will focus on the academic progress of each student as well as address any issues the student is facing.
- Obtain the appropriate documentation request form for the stated disability that accommodations are being requested which include learning, medical, mental impairment or psychiatric. These forms are located in ODS or they may be downloaded from <http://www.seark.edu/academic-support/disability-services>. Medical documentation must reflect the student's present level of functioning with respect to the major life activity affected by the disability. Diagnostic information must include specific recommendations as well as the rationale for each. **The cost of obtaining professional documentation is the sole responsibility of the student.**
- The ODS will only accept documentation that has been prepared within the last three years.
- Submit to ODS the documentation request form which has been completed by the appropriate qualified professional with documented reasonable accommodation recommendations.

- The Disability Counselor will verify eligibility and discuss with the student the recommended accommodation(s).
- The Disability Counselor and student will identify and agree upon reasonable accommodation(s).
- The Disability Counselor will complete the student accommodation form which identifies recommended reasonable accommodation(s).
- The student will assume responsibility for taking the completed student accommodation form to each of the student's instructor(s) to discuss the identified accommodation(s) on the form.
- The instructor and the student will discuss the requested reasonable accommodations.
- The instructor will sign the student accommodation form indicating his or her notification to provide reasonable accommodation services. Each instructor will keep a copy of the signed form for his or her records.
- The student will return the original student accommodation form to ODS after each of the student's instructor(s) have signed the form.
- The Disability Counselor will keep a signed copy of the documentation request form with the medical documentation information included and the signed student accommodation form in the Disability Counselor's office.
- Requests to rescind or modify any accommodation(s) must be submitted in writing to the Disability Counselor.
- **The accommodation(s) will have to be renewed each semester.**

SEARK College is not required to provide accommodations until the student has provided documentation of a disability.

Documentation Criteria

The Office of Disability Services requires a written verification form prepared by an appropriately licensed professional that clearly diagnoses a disability and/or provides records showing the history of the disability. Medical doctors, psychiatrist, psychologist, and school psychologist are among the professionals who routinely evaluate, diagnose, and treat disabilities. The following guidelines are provided to assure that diagnostic reports are appropriate to document eligibility. This list is not intended to be exhaustive or to restrict assessment in other pertinent and helpful areas such as vocational interest and aptitudes.

Qualified personnel:

- **ADHD:** Licensed psychologists, psychiatrist or members of a medical specialty.
- **Hearing and speech disabilities:** audiologist, ear, nose, and throat specialist, speech therapists, psychologist, or other qualified medial specialist.

- **Learning disability:** licensed psychologist, psychiatrist, school psychologist, or other qualified licensed medical professional.
- **Medical disability/chronic health:** family physicians, orthopedists, neurologists, endocrinologist, cardiologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, or members of a medical specialty.
- **Neurological disabilities:** neurologists, neurosurgeons, orthopedists, or endocrinologist.
- **Psychiatric disabilities:** psychologists, psychiatrists, licensed counselors, or other mental health professionals.
- **Vision disabilities:** ophthalmologists, optometrists, family, physicians, or other medical specialist.

Documentation

- In all instances, the information provided must clearly document, diagnose, and discuss the condition.
- Copies of medical records are not considered appropriate documentation.
- Evaluation must be **current**. As a guideline, the ODS generally requires documentation prepared **within the last three years**. The office reserves the right to request an updated or more extensive evaluation.
- The written report must include a specific diagnosis with clear evidence and identification of a disability. For example, terms such as “learning styles”, “learning problems” and “academic difficulties” do not constitute a learning disability. Diagnostic reports must include the names and titles of the diagnostician as well as the date(s) of testing. Reports must be typed or otherwise legible. Reports from friends or relatives of the student or student’s immediate family are not considered appropriate documentation.

Confidentiality

Information regarding a student’s disability is considered confidential. Disability information is not part of a student’s academic record and is not noted on the transcript. Disability information is kept in a separate file in the ODS. Information is kept for five years after the last semester of enrollment. Students returning to SEARK College after a three-year absence will need to supply new documentation of their disability.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) do not allow faculty or others access to disability-related information (e.g. diagnosis, medications).

Information can be shared without the student's written permission in the event of a medical emergency, an official court order, or behavior that endangers the health and safety of the student or others.

The ODS will not disclose any student's medical or registration information to an employer or other outside organization without the student's permission.

A student can pick up a FERPA release form from the Disability Counselor if they wish to disclose medical, registration, financial aid, academic records, and/or any disability services information to an employer, outside agent or person.

Accommodation Letters for Instructors

Each student is required to meet with the ODS at or prior to the start of each semester. At this time, the staff member will prepare a letter of accommodation memo that indicates the necessary accommodations.

No individual instructor has unilateral authority to deny a student an academic adjustment and/or auxiliary aids or service approved by the College's ODS personnel.

Students with disabilities must be qualified to participate in any academic program or activity, with or without reasonable accommodations. The College does not waive essential program requirements or permit substitutions for courses deemed essential to its academic programs. For example, students with disabilities are expected to meet GPA requirements, degree requirements, field experiences, and all other essential course requirements of a program.

Accommodations

In postsecondary education, classroom accommodations are referred to as academic accommodations. These compensatory techniques are designed to give students with disabilities a fair opportunity to learn and to demonstrate their knowledge. The accommodations available to students are on a case-by-case basis. Some common accommodations are:

- Priority Registration
- Consideration for Absences
- Extended Time on In-class Assignments and Examinations
- Tape Recorded Lectures
- Reader
- Scribe

- Distraction Reduced Environment
- Note Taker
- Extended time on exams
- Distraction-reduced testing environment
- Preferential seating

There are NO exams with unlimited time.

Communication Facilitators

- Captionist
- Sign Language Interpreters

Attendance

Attendance is expected according to the syllabus for each course. If a student has a disability-related reason for requesting an exception to the attendance policy, the student should contact the ODS to begin a process of examining the essential elements of the course and determining whether and to what extent a modification to that attendance policy is reasonable. Faculty cannot unilaterally determine essential requirements; this is done in conjunction with the ODS.

Request for Sign Language Interpreters

Request for sign language interpreters for regular classes should be made at least **four weeks in advance**. Requests should be directed to the ODS. If a student, who is utilizing an interpreter, needs to make a schedule change, that change should be reported immediately to the ODS.

Tutoring Sessions

Request for interpreters for sign language interpreters for tutoring must be made at least **one week in advance**. Requests should be directed to the ODS.

Special Events and Meeting

Request for interpreters for special events or meetings should be made at **least two weeks in advance**. Requests should be directed to the ODS.

No-Show Policy

If communication facilitation services (CFS) have been requested, and a student knows he or she will not be able to attend class, it is the responsibility of the student to provide ODS with at least 24 hours advance notice so that CFS can be informed. In some

situations, students may not be able to provide a 24-hour notice; however, any advance notice is considered sufficient. Failure to provide any notice is considered a no-show.

Two no-shows within a semester will result in services being automatically suspended and a letter sent to the student informing the student of the policy and appropriate procedures. Services will remain suspended until the student makes an appointment with the Disability Counselor to reinstate accommodation(s).

Service Animals

Pets are restricted on campus property. However, under federal law, Service Animals are not excluded from university property or activities if they meet the guidelines set forth in this policy. A person with a disability using a Service Animal is called a Partner. A person without a disability with a Service Animal is called a Handler. Service Animals are defined as animals that are individually trained to perform tasks for individuals with disabilities such as:

- Guiding people who are blind
- Alerting people who are deaf
- Pulling wheelchairs for those with limited mobility
- Alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure
- Performing other special tasks

Service Animals are working animals, not pets.

Service Animals must be trained to perform one or more specific functions or activities of daily living for the individual they accompany.

Service animals may enter any class or other activity with the person with the disability. The student with the service animal takes full responsibility for the care and behavior of the animal. Animals should be taken outside to relieve themselves, out of the way of vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Animal waste must be picked up and disposed of properly.

Management of Service Animal

- The Service Animal must be vaccinated and licensed as required by state law and/or local ordinance.
- Service Animals must be accompanied by the Partner.
- The Partner must remain in close proximity to the Service Animal.
- The Service Animal must be restrained on a leash at all times.
- The Service Animal should be responsive to voice commands at all times and be under the full control of their Partner.

- To the extent possible, the Service Animal should be unobtrusive to other students and learning environments.

The Partner(student) may request that others avoid: petting or addressing his/her Service Animal as it may distract it from the task at hand, feeding the Service Animal, deliberately startling the Service Animal, and separating or attempting to separate the Partner from his/her Service Animal. Students may inquire if the Partner needs assistance if there seems to be confusion.

To the extent possible, the Service Animal should not:

- Sniff people, dining facilities tables, or the personal belonging of others
- Display any behaviors or noises that are disruptive to others unless it is part of the service being provided for the Partner
- Engage in personal grooming in public settings
- Block an aisle or passageway for fire and/or emergency vehicles

Poor Health

Service Animals that are ill or in poor health should not be taken into public areas. A Partner with an ill Service Animal may be required to remove the animal from campus.

Maintenance

It is the responsibility of the Partner to arrange any cleaning necessary due to the presence of the Service Animal. Feces must be cleaned immediately and disposed of properly. This includes campus common areas and exterior property such as courtyards, walkways, etc.

Removal of Service Animal

If a Service Animal becomes aggressive and poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others, the Partner will be required immediately to remove the Service Animal from campus. This behavior includes excessive barking, running around without a leash, or growling/biting others. The Partner of a Service Animal is then expected to report such incidents to the ODS within 24 hours of the occurrence.

A disruptive animal in a classroom can also hinder the learning of other students. If the Service Animal exhibits this behavior, the Partner will be required to remove the Service Animal from campus until the appropriate behavior can be brought under control.

An excessively unclean or unkempt Service Animal may be asked to leave campus until the problem is resolved. Failure to uphold and abide by these policies described here could result in a Partner not being permitted to keep his/her Service Animal on campus.

Emergency Procedures

In order to ensure your safety, develop an emergency plan or a strategy in advance. How you respond to an emergency depends on:

- The type of emergency
- Your specific disability
- The location of your classes

Students with mobility impairments

Elevators provide access for students with mobility impairments to classrooms in McGeorge Hall. However, during an emergency such as a fire or tornado, elevators can be very dangerous and often cease working. Furthermore, elevators have been known to break down at times leaving people with mobility impairments stranded on upper floors. As a result, it is unlikely that a student with mobility impairments will be able to evacuate without the assistance of others. There is an evacuation chair that fits the railing of the stairs to assist students with mobility impairments down the stairs. Plan and inform others of your plan.

Students with seizure disorders

Students with a seizure disorder that is not controlled by medication and experience seizures often should alert the instructor(s) of their condition and how to respond. Inform the instructor(s) what to expect if a seizure occurs during class and under what circumstances it would be necessary to call for an ambulance.

Important: For any emergency and for students with any type of disability, the first step is to contact 911. When reporting the emergency, it is important to indicate your specific evacuation needs (e.g., use of a wheelchair or a respirator or have breathing or stamina difficulties).

Contact Information

Mailing Address	Campus Location
SEARK College Attn: Office of Disability Services 1900 Hazel Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71603	Student Services Building Rm #160 Retention and Advising Center Rm #161
Phone/Fax: 870-850-2183	Email: tbutler@seark.edu