

Texas Christian University

Documentation Guidelines for TCU Students with Disabilities

Food-related Disability

Food-related disabilities due to a diagnosed physical/systemic illness or injury are considered to be in the medical domain and require the expertise of a medical physician for diagnosis and ongoing treatment. The diagnosing professional should be a medical specialist with training, clinical experience and expertise in the area for which accommodations are being requested (i.e. allergist, endocrinologist, gastroenterologist, immunologist, internal medicine specialist). Additionally, the medical specialist must be an impartial individual not related to the student or parents nor in a business partnership with the student or parents.

A disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act as Amended (ADAA) is a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, such as eating. Major life activities also include major bodily functions, such as the functions of the gastrointestinal system. Some individuals with food allergies have a disability as defined by the ADAAA, particularly those with more significant or severe responses to certain foods. This would include individuals with celiac disease and others who have autoimmune responses to certain foods, the symptoms of which may include difficulty swallowing or breathing, asthma, or anaphylactic shock.

The University requires comprehensive documentation of the student's disability to fully evaluate requests for accommodations and to determine eligibility for services. Documentation should be presented to the Student Disabilities Services office. Information concerning a student's disability is treated in a confidential manner in accordance with University policies as well as applicable state and federal laws. Appropriate University professionals who serve on the Disabilities Services Documentation Review Committee (DSDRC; the "Committee") shall review documentation to verify the existence of a disability and to determine appropriate accommodations. If accommodations are authorized, they are not retroactive. Student Disabilities Services will make the final determination as to whether appropriate and reasonable accommodations are warranted and can be provided to the individual.

Examples of a food-related disability may include, but are not limited to, the following: Celiac Disease, Eosinophilic Esophagitis, Ulcerative colitis, Crohn's Disease, Diabetes, severe food allergy (generally with anaphylaxis), food allergy-induced asthma, colostomy, dysphagia (swallowing problems with or without aspiration), eating disorders, structural abnormalities, pancreatic insufficiency due to cystic fibrosis, Phenylketonuria, malignancy, metabolic disorders, diagnosis requiring placement of a gastric feeding tube, gallbladder disease, complications of gastric bypass surgery and peptic ulcer disease.

Notes to medical specialist: The information must be in a typewritten report, on professional letterhead that bears your name, license number, professional credentials, business location, contact information, and your signature. Additionally, as the evaluator, your business card should be included/attached. Your medical office should send the documentation letter directly to Student Disability Services; TCU Box 297710, Fort Worth, TX 76129. It is not appropriate for medical specialists to write documentation for members of their family, relatives, or business partners.

Documentation must be current, **within the last 6-12 months**. Recommendations for currency will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Disabilities Services Documentation Review Committee (DSDRC). Housing and academic accommodations for a food-related disability require annual renewal and updated documentation.

Comprehensive documentation includes, but is not limited to, the following information.

1. **Diagnosis**—Clearly state the diagnosis and answer the following questions:
 - a. When was the original diagnosis made?
 - b. When did you first treat this student?
 - c. How long has the student been under your care as the treating medical specialist?
 - d. When was the student’s most recent appointment with you?
 - e. Does the student have regularly scheduled appointments with you? How frequently?
 - f. When is the next scheduled appointment?
 - g. Have you referred the student to another medical specialist for treatment of the disability?
2. **Assessment**—Explain/summarize the evaluation and assessment procedures used to make the [differential diagnosis](#), including detailed evaluation results. According to the [National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases](#), the following tests are unproven for diagnosing [food allergy](#): allergen-specific immunoglobulin G; applied kinesiology or muscle testing; basophil histamine release/activation; cytotoxic assays; electro-dermal test; endoscopic allergen provocation; facial thermography; gastric juice analysis; hair analysis; intradermal allergy testing; mediator release assay (LEAP [lifestyle, eating, and performance diet]) provocation neutralization.
3. **Symptoms**—Please describe present symptoms that meet the criteria for the differential diagnosis. Include all relevant body systems: cardiovascular; cutaneous; lower gastrointestinal; upper gastrointestinal to include oral, pharyngeal, laryngeal, esophageal phases; ocular; lower respiratory; upper respiratory; other body systems as applicable.
4. **Treatment**—Describe on-going medical treatment: for example, antigen/immunotherapy injections, or prescription medications for a severe food allergy-related disability. Include duration and frequency of treatment. Does the patient self-administer the injections?
5. **Medication**—Please include medication information relating to the student’s needs, including the impact of medication side effects on the student’s ability to meet the demands of the postsecondary environment.
6. **Accommodations**—To evaluate requests for classroom/learning environment accommodations we need statements of (1) the functional limitations of the disability on learning and other major life activities; and (2) the degree (mild, moderate, or severe) to which the food-related disability impacts on the individual in the learning context for which accommodations are requested.
7. **Co-existing conditions**—When appropriate, include a statement of whether (1) a co-existing physical/systemic illness or injury, (2) a specific learning disability, (3) a mental health disability, or (4) another disabling condition, requires an additional assessment by an appropriate specialist. Please indicate if you have referred the student for evaluation by another specialist.

(When co-occurring disabilities exist, the student and the Disabilities Specialist will collaboratively work with the DSDRC to assess whether additional accommodations are reasonable and appropriate. We consider all requests on an individualized, case-by-case basis.)
8. **Credentials and experience**—Please comment on your credentials, experience, and training in the diagnosis and treatment of a food-related medical disability.

Notes to student:

- **If you received food-disability related accommodations during high school based on a 504 plan or other accommodations document, we recommend that you contact your high school and request the accommodation records be sent to our office.**
- **If you attended another college or university and received food-related disability accommodations, please contact that school's office for student disabilities and request that a copy of your records be sent by mail to our office.**
- **For questions about currency of documentation, please call the DS office at 817-257-6567 and ask to schedule a phone appointment with a Disabilities Specialist.**