Teaching Students With Disabilities

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Letter from President O’Donnell
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Dear Colleague:

I am writing to encourage you to support the work of the Disability Support Services (DSS) office.

In order to assist you in providing the best education to those students with disabilities, DSS has prepared this handbook. It helps explain your responsibilities and how you can enhance the teaching of students with disabilities. It will be beneficial for you to read Section I now and to keep the handbook available to review specifics when needed. Here are a couple of important points:

• **Use a syllabus statement.** Every syllabus should include a statement inviting students with disabilities to meet privately with you to arrange for accommodations. See “Eight Points to Guide Instructors” (page 4) for a sample statement.

• **Work with DSS to provide an accessible learning environment for your students.** For example, DSS may contact you about the books, reading assignments, and other print materials being used in your classroom. It is important that you respond to their requests quickly so they can convert your material into an alternate format like Braille, audiotapes, or computer disks—a process that can take weeks. Working together, you and DSS can ensure that students with disabilities have access to all course materials at the same time as their peers.

It is crucial that we are aware of our responsibilities in educating students with disabilities and making our campus a welcoming and supportive environment. As evidenced by the work of the Disability Support Service office, Stark State College is firm in its commitment to providing students equal access to quality education. This handbook will be a useful guide to you in your efforts to support that commitment.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. John O’Donnell
President
Introduction from the Director

Dear Instructor:

Welcome to a new Instructor Handbook for Teaching Students with Disabilities. It is filled with valuable information that will support you as you prepare for and teach students with disabilities. It includes a wide range of topics such as:

- Information on the roles and responsibilities of instructors, students, and the office for Disability Support Services (DSS)
- Resources available to support instructors as well as students with disabilities
- Important teaching practices that support accessibility
- Teaching strategies for students with specific disabilities
- Federal mandates for Stark State College

In addition to this handbook, DSS staff is available to provide presentations and in-services to your department or group. If you have any questions, we are just a phone call away.

On behalf of the DSS staff, I look forward to hearing from you and hope you find this handbook a significant and supportive guide. We welcome your suggestions on how the handbook and our office can best serve you.

Sincerely,

Kathy Bernstein
Director
Section I: What to Know Before You Teach

Eight Points to Guide Instructors

1. The Office of Disability Support Services (DSS) is the designated office to determine appropriate accommodations and auxiliary aids for students with disabilities. The determination is based on the disability documentation provided by the student and the functional limitations presented by the disability. Students must provide DSS this documentation before services are initiated. The person who documents a disability must be a qualified professional. The purpose of the accommodations and auxiliary aids is to give the student an equal opportunity to participate in the academic environment.

2. Students with disabilities have a right to meet with you privately regarding disability matters, and their confidentiality must be maintained. Treat all disability-related information as confidential medical information. Conduct disability-related meetings in a private location. Provide plenty of opportunities for students to meet with you to describe their disability-related needs, to arrange test accommodations, to ask for clarification about what was presented in class, to get help with in-class note taking, etc.

3. Students with disabilities need access to course materials and information presented in your classroom at the same time as all other students. As an instructor, you play a vital role in ensuring that materials are available in alternative format in a timely manner. Converting print materials to alternate formats—whether to Braille, audio tapes, electronic format, or enlargements—is both labor and time intensive. Therefore, it is critical that you inform DDS about the textbooks you plan to use and all other print materials as soon as you are requested to do so either by a student or DSS.

4. Students have the responsibility for making their disability-related accommodation needs known to you—your syllabus statement welcomes students to do so. Students with disabilities are encouraged to make their accommodation needs known to you in a timely fashion so that the appropriate arrangements can be made (they are not, however, required to discuss their disability). You can facilitate this process by including a statement on your syllabus that invites students with disabilities to meet with you to discuss their needs. Here is an example of a syllabus statement:

“The Disability Support Services (DSS) Office offers a variety of services and accommodations to students with disabilities based on appropriate documentation, nature of the disability, and academic need. In order to initiate services, students should meet with the DSS Coordinator early in the semester to discuss their needs. The DSS coordinator determines
specific accommodations and services. If a student with a disability does not request accommodations through the DSS Coordinator, the instructor is under no obligation to provide accommodations. You may contact the DSS Coordinator at 330-966-5450, ext. 4423 or schedule an appointment in the Admissions Office, 3rd floor, Student Services Center.”

5. If a student with a disability does not request accommodations, you are under no obligation to provide academic assistance. In other words, you are not asked to guess or predetermine what a student may need. Students may choose not to use accommodations.

6. Accommodations should not be provided to a student who has not provided appropriate documentation to DSS. DSS is the only office designated to review documentation of a disability and determine eligibility for specific accommodations.

7. Individual accommodation needs vary from student to student because a disability, even the same disability, may result in different functional limitations. Compensation skills and strategies vary from one student to another, just as instructional methods vary from one instructor to another. Therefore, it is necessary for you and the student to discuss specific accommodations that address the particular needs of that student.

8. DSS provides reasonable accommodations, auxiliary aids, and support services that are individualized and based upon disability documentation, functional limitations, and a collaborative assessment of the student’s needs. However, if you chose to provide accommodations without making arrangements through DSS, it is important that appropriate accommodations are made. Students with documented disabilities have a right to certain aids and accommodations. Contact DSS if you are uncertain about what is appropriate.

Academic accommodations are legally mandated services, such as, but not limited to:

- extended time on exams and quizzes (generally time and a half, although some students may have double time)
- distraction-reduced test space
- reader and/or scribe for tests
- computer for essay examinations
- access to class notes
Auxiliary aids are services, equipment, and procedures that give students with disabilities access to learning and activities in the classroom environment, such as, but not limited to:

• sign language interpreting
• assistive listening devices, which amplify sound
• real-time captioning of lectures
• videotext displays, which allow a deaf student to read auditory portions of a video
• materials in alternative formats (e.g., text scanned onto disks, taped textbooks, Braille, or enlarged print)
• adaptive technology
• a lab assistant

How DSS Assists Instructors

DSS staff members assist instructors in a variety of ways so that students with disabilities have equal access to instruction. Staff can:

• Meet with instructors and students to discuss possible teaching strategies and accommodations
• Assist in converting class materials into accessible format or advise other types of auxiliary aids
• Assist in arranging for students to take exams with accommodations
• Assist in making web sites or distance education classes accessible to print-impaired students
• Consult with academic departments on issues such as adaptive technology, appropriate accommodations, and classroom instruction for students with disabilities; conduct in-service training; and provide literature about particular disabilities

Strategies for Teaching Students with Disabilities

There are often special considerations when instructing students with disabilities. Generally, these instructional considerations involve good teaching practices and may benefit other students in the class.

General Guidelines for Teaching Students with Disabilities

Universal Design for Learning: “Universal design is an approach to designing course instruction, materials, and content to benefit people of all learning styles
without adaptation or retrofitting.” (See www.osu.edu/grants/dpg/fastfact/undesign for more information.) By using a universal design for instruction and designing instruction that allows students with disabilities access to the classroom, you may also be designing instruction that works better for everyone in the class. Classes designed with this concept in mind offer a variety of methods of content presentation, flexible teaching strategies, and options for demonstrating mastery of course content.

**Expectations:** Although many students with disabilities need accommodations, expect these students to perform at a level commensurate with their peers. Do not have a special grading scale or other criteria for them.

**Collaboration:** Don’t hesitate to call DSS to arrange for a three-way meeting between you, the student’s assigned disability counselor, and the student to work out any issues and to collaborate on the best instructional strategies for the student.

**Guided Notes on the Web:** Providing students with guided notes that they can access through the Web prior to class assists them with focusing on the appropriate material. It will help them to learn more effectively in the classroom as well as take better notes.

**Comprehensive Syllabus:** A comprehensive syllabus with clearly delineated statements about expectations is helpful to students who need help with structure and organization.

**Inappropriate Behavior:** Students with disabilities are subject to the same code of conduct required of any student at Stark State College. If there are incidences of inappropriate behavior, meet privately to discuss issues of behavior and encourage students to seek help. Give concise and honest feedback about behaviors that are inappropriate. If the student is so disruptive that he/she prevents you from effectively teaching your class, or if there are situations involving threats or abusive behavior, call campus security. You are always welcome to consult with DSS. These situations are not likely to occur, but it is wise to have a plan.

**Remember…**

It’s your responsibility to support Stark State College’s commitment to equal access to education. The information throughout Section I will assist you when you have students with disabilities in your class; staff at the Disability Support Services office are also available to help you. Some key elements to take away from Section I are:

- **Alternative Format:** Many students need print materials in alternative format (scanned to disks, audio tapes, Braille, or enlarged). Work quickly with DSS and the student to make sure students get materials converted in a timely fashion.
• **Verification of a Disability:** If you would like verification that a student has a disability, ask the student to provide you with a letter. DSS produces these letters only for students who are registered with this office and for whom documentation of the disability is on file.

• **Class Notes:** Some students with disabilities have difficulty taking notes. They may need your assistance in getting a volunteer note taker, or you may provide them a copy of your notes and/or copies of overheads and other class materials.

• **Cover Sheets:** This facilitates the administration of your tests with accommodations at DSS. It is essential for you to fill the form out *completely and quickly* so that arrangements can be made for exam accommodations.
Section II: Specific Teaching Considerations

Students with Learning Disabilities

Description

Students with learning disabilities often learn differently than their peers. Although they have average or above average intelligence, there is frequently a discrepancy between their ability and their achievement in specific areas. Learning disabilities are presumably due to a central nervous system dysfunction. These are a permanent disorder that interferes with integrating, acquiring, and/or demonstrating verbal or nonverbal abilities and skills. There are generally some processing or memory deficits.

Each student with a learning disability has his/her own set of characteristics; one is not necessarily like another. These individuals, however, are often characterized by difficulty in the following areas:

- Reading comprehension
- Written expression
- Mathematics

Keep in mind that one individual does not have difficulty with all of the above-mentioned areas, just generally a couple of those areas. Also, it is not unusual for a person with a learning disability to be gifted in some areas.

Suggestions

Exam Accommodations: Assist these students in arranging for appropriate exam accommodations whether you arrange these accommodations yourself or coordinate them with DSS.

Multi-Modality Instruction: A multi-modality approach to instruction assists these students in finding a modality that is consistent with their learning strength. Providing important information and assignments in both oral and written formats helps avoid confusion.

Alternative Format: Some of these students need print material in alternative format. When you are contacted by DSS or a student, it is important that you immediately provide information about the required textbook(s) and readings you will be using as well as any other reading expectations. It takes a considerable amount of time to convert materials into alternative format.

Study Aids: Study questions, study guides, opportunities for questions and answers, and review sessions help the student who needs a lot of repetition.
**Exam Aids:** Permit these students to use simple calculators, portable spell-checkers, and scratch paper during exams.

**Flexible Exam Format:** Students who have language-based and/or writing disabilities may need more time on essay exams. Others may want to tape record answers, use a scribe or use a computer. Be open to a flexible exam format as long as the student is able to demonstrate his/her knowledge.

**Students Who Are Visually Impaired**

**Description**

Students with visual impairments are constantly challenged by classroom instructional strategies. Although they can easily hear lectures and discussions, it can be difficult for them to access class syllabi, textbooks, overhead projector transparencies, PowerPoint presentations, the chalkboard, maps, videos, written exams, demonstrations, library materials, and films. A large part of traditional learning is visual; fortunately, many students with visual disabilities have developed strategies to compensate.

These students vary considerably. For example, some have no vision; others are able to see large forms; others can see print if magnified; and still others have tunnel vision with no peripheral vision or the reverse. Furthermore, some students with visual impairments use Braille, and some have little or no knowledge of Braille. They use a variety of accommodations, equipment, and compensatory strategies based upon their widely varying needs. Many make use of adaptive technology, especially print to voice conversion using a scanner and voice production software. Textbooks are often converted and put on disks for later use. Others use taped textbooks or equipment to enlarge print (closed circuit television [CCTV]) or actual enlargements.

**Suggestions**

**Preferential Seating:** Students with visual impairments may need preferential seating since they depend upon listening. Since they may want the same anonymity as other students, it is important that you avoid pointing out the student or the alternative arrangements to others in the class.

**Exam Accommodations:** Exam accommodations—which may include adaptive technology, a reader/scribe, extra time, a computer, closed circuit TV (CCTV), Braille, enlargements, tapes, and/or image enhanced materials—may be needed. Coordinate these arrangements with DSS.

**Arranging for Accommodations:** A meeting with the student is essential to facilitate the arrangements of accommodations and auxiliary aids which may
include, in addition to exam accommodations, access to class notes and/or the taping of lectures; print material in alternative format; a script with verbal descriptions of videos or slides, charts, and graphs, or other such visual depictions converted to tactile representations.

**Orientation to Classroom:** You may also ask the student if he/she would like an orientation to the physical layout of the room identifying the locations of steps, furniture, lecture position, low-hanging objects, or any other obstacles.

**Use of Language:** Although it is unnecessary to rewrite the entire course, you can help a visually impaired student by avoiding phrases such as “Look at this” and “Examine that,” while pointing to an overhead projection. Use descriptive language. Repeat aloud what is written on an overhead or chalkboard.

**Lab Assistance:** These students may need an assistant or lab partner in lab classes. Help the student find an assistant.

**Print Material in Alternative Format:** Have copies of the syllabus and reading assignments ready three to five weeks prior to the beginning of classes. Students with visual impairments will likely need all print material in alternative format which means that they need print material converted to audio tapes, scanned onto disks, Braille, enlarged or image enhanced. Conversion of materials takes time. It is important that they have access to class materials at the same time as others in your class. Coordinate alternative format with DSS.

**Guide Dogs:** Keep in mind that guide dogs are working animals. They must be allowed in all classes. Do not feed or pet a guide dog. Since they are working, they should not be distracted.

**Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing**

**Description**

Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing rely upon visual input rather than auditory input when communicating. Using visual aspects of communication (body language, gestures, and facial expression) often feels awkward to people who are accustomed to the auditory; however, it is essential that instructors learn to effectively communicate with students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Students who are deaf or hard of hearing do not all have the same characteristics. Some have a measure of usable residual hearing and use a device to amplify sounds (FM system). Some choose to speak; others use very little or no oral communication. Some students are extremely adept at speech reading, while others have very limited ability to “read lips.” For some, sign language and/or
finger spelling are the preferred means of communication; other communication choices include gestures and writing. Most students who are deaf or hard of hearing have experience communicating with the hearing population. Let them be the guide on how best to communicate.

Suggestions

Gaining Attention: Make sure you have a deaf student’s attention before speaking. A light touch on the shoulder, a wave, or other visual signals will help.

Preferential Seating: Offer the student preferential seating near the front of the classroom so that he/she can get as much from visual and auditory clues as possible or clearly see a sign language interpreter if one is used.

Effective Communication: Don’t talk with your back to the class (for example, when writing on the chalkboard). It destroys any chance of the student getting facial or speech reading cues. Your face and mouth need to be clearly visible at all times. Avoid sitting with your back to a window, chewing gum, biting on a pencil and other similar obstructions.

Videos and Slides: Provide videos and slides with captioning. If captioning is not available, supply an outline or summary of the materials covered. If an interpreter is in the classroom, make sure that he/she is visible.

Class Discussion: When students make comments in class or ask questions, repeat the questions before answering, or phrase your answers in such a way that the questions are obvious.

Class Notes: Students may need your assistance in getting class notes. When a student is using a sign language interpreter, captioning or lip-reading, it is difficult to take good notes simultaneously.

Sign Language or Captioning Services: When a student uses a sign language interpreter, discuss with both the student and interpreter(s) where the interpreter(s) should be located to provide the greatest benefit for the student without distracting other class members. When a student uses a captioning service, discuss with the student and captioner the appropriate location.

Role of the Interpreter: The interpreter is in the classroom only to facilitate communication. He/she should not be asked to run errands, proctor exams or discuss the student’s personal issues. He/she should not participate in the class in any way or express personal opinions.

Interpreter Classroom Etiquette: The interpreter is in the classroom to facilitate communication for both the student and the instructor. Speak directly to the student, even though it may be the interpreter who clarifies information for you. Likewise, the interpreter may request clarification from you to insure accuracy of the information conveyed.
English as a Second Language: For many deaf students, English is a second language. When grading written assignments and/or essay tests, look for accurate and comprehensive content rather than writing style. Students should be encouraged to go to the Writing Center for assistance if necessary.

Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Description

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is characterized by a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity that is more frequent and severe than is typically observed in individuals at a comparable level of development (DSM-IV). Students with ADHD or ADD (without hyperactivity) may have difficulty with one or more of the following areas:

Concentration
Distractibility
Organization
Completing tasks

Some students with ADHD take medication for their condition. This medication may be a stimulant, which actually calms them and helps them focus on tasks. Anti-depressants may also be used.

Suggestions

Assistance with Structure: A syllabus with clearly delineated expectations and due dates and frequent opportunities for feedback provide these students with assistance with organization and structure. Study guides and review sheets are also helpful in providing structure.

Exam Accommodations: Many students with ADHD use exam accommodations including extended time and a distraction-reduced exam space. Your assistance is needed to coordinate this with DSS.

Access to Class Notes: Some of these students have difficulty focusing and concentrating and for this reason may need access to classroom notes. Your assistance may be needed to ensure that they get notes.

Classroom Distractions: If a student appears extremely distracted, it may be appropriate to encourage the student to sit near the front of the class, away from doors, air conditioning units, windows, or any other possible sources of distraction.

Students with Mobility or Medical Impairments
Description

Mobility impairments are often due to conditions such as cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, or spinal cord injury. Students may use crutches, braces, or a wheelchair, and in a few instances, may be accompanied to class by a round-the-clock nurse. Medical impairments are often hidden disabilities, caused by such conditions as arthritis, asthma, cancer, orthopedic limitations, post surgery, chronic fatigue syndrome, or seizure disorder. The student may have limited energy; difficulty walking, standing, or sitting for a long time; or other disabling characteristics.

Functional limitations may be episodic for some students who may experience dizziness, disorientation, and difficulty breathing during a recurrence. For example, with asthma or a seizure disorder, a student may have periods when they function without any accommodations, but at other times their functional limitations are quite severe.

Even with the same disability, students with mobility or medical impairments may have a wide variety of characteristics. For example, persons who have experienced a spinal cord injury are likely to show differing degrees of limitation. They may require different types of class accommodations or may not need accommodations, depending upon functional limitations.

Suggestions

Exam Accommodations: Students who have upper body limitations and are unable to use their hands, will likely need exam accommodations which may include extended time, a scribe, or voice recognition software. Assist the student in coordinating these accommodations with DSS.

Access to Class Notes: Students who are unable to use their hands may need assistance in finding a note taker, or they may elect to tape record lectures.

Tardiness: Some students are unable to quickly get from one location to another due to architectural barriers or difficulty in using adaptive transportation. The transportation system is influenced by traffic, weather, and scheduling problems. For these reasons, a student may be late getting to class. Please be patient when this happens.

Seating Arrangements: In a few situations, a student may be unable to use the type of chair provided in a particular classroom. DSS will assist the student in making special seating arrangements.

Inaccessible Classroom: If your classroom is inaccessible and a student is unable to get into your classroom, your class location must be moved to an accessible
location. Call DSS immediately for assistance in getting your class location changed.

**Laboratory Courses:** Some students may need assistance for laboratory courses. These students may need to be paired with an able-bodied student or a teaching assistant. Consult DSS if you need assistance in making these arrangements. A student using a wheelchair may need a lower lab table to accommodate the wheelchair.

**Missed Exams or Classes:** Some students experience recurrence of a chronic condition requiring bed rest and/or hospitalization. These students need extra time to complete incomplete work and the opportunity to make up tests. Other arrangements may be necessary if a student misses a class excessively due to a disability and is unable to make up the essential requirements of the class. In either situation, it is essential not to penalize a student for his/her disability and at the same time maintain the integrity of the requirements of the class.

**Field Trips:** Make arrangements for field trips or other out-of-classroom experiences as soon as possible so that all students are able to experience all class teaming opportunities. Consult with DSS about arrangements if you need assistance.

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**Students with Psychiatric Disabilities**

**Description**

Students with psychiatric disabilities who use services at DSS exhibit a persistent psychological disorder that adversely affects their educational access, their academic performance, and daily functioning. They frequently require medication. Some of the types of psychiatric disorders include but are not limited to:

**Depression** is a major disorder that can begin at any age. Major depression may be characterized by a depressed mood most of each day, a lack of pleasure in most activities, thoughts of suicide, insomnia, and feelings of worthlessness or guilt.

**Bipolar disorder** causes a person to experience periods of mania and depression. In the manic phase, a person might experience inflated self-esteem and a decreased need to sleep; however, in the depressive phase, a person may experience lack of energy and less self-esteem and interest in family, friends, and school.

**Anxiety disorders** can disrupt a person’s ability to concentrate and cause hyperventilation, a racing heart, chest pains, dizziness, panic, and extreme fear.
Schizophrenia can cause a person to experience, at some point in the illness, delusions and hallucinations.

(Source: University of Minnesota Disability Services web site: http://disserv3.stu.umn.edu/AG-S/3-5.html)

In most situations you will not be aware that you have a student with a psychiatric disability in your classroom. Because students do not show any outward signs of the disability doesn’t mean that their disability is any less disabling than a more visible disability. Many of these students are fearful of and have faced stigmatization because of their disability. Some do not need or request any accommodations, and some require a variety of accommodations. For some, the disability is temporary. With medication and/or therapy, they recover. On the other hand, some students face a constant or a recurring battle to keep their disability under control.

Suggestions

Exam Accommodations: Assist these students in arranging for exam accommodations when requested. The exam accommodations that they will most likely use are a distraction reduced exam space and extra time.

Make-up Work: During periods of serious psychiatric episodes, these students may miss class. Collaborate with students about arrangements to makeup tests and other assignments allowing them extra time.

Welcoming and Supportive Environment: Many students with psychiatric disabilities fear stigmatization because of their disability. If a student shares his/her disability with you, be supportive and welcoming when a student requests assistance in arranging for accommodations.

Section III: Resources and Other Information
Roles of DSS Staff Members

DSS employs staff who serve in a variety of functions that are designed to provide students, instructors, and the college community with specialized assistance. Counselors:

- Review documentation, determine a student’s eligibility for services, and train students in the use of academic accommodations. They collaborate with students on disability-related issues like academic accommodations, learning strategies, advocacy skills, transition issues, and career planning. Instructors may contact counselors with concerns about individual students, tips for instructing and making accommodations for students with disabilities in the classroom, and for general information about disabling conditions.

- Coordinate the provision of print materials in alternate format for students requiring books on tape, scanned materials, large print materials, or information in Braille. Also arranges for test assistants who read test questions or write (scribe) answers to questions for students needing that type of assistance during exams. The counselor contacts instructors to obtain the names of textbooks and other print materials being used for courses so that the conversion of these materials may start as soon as possible and so that students with disabilities have access to materials at the same time as other students.

- Assist students in learning about adaptive technology and how technology may assist them in compensating for their disabilities. This person also provides training in the awareness and use of adaptive technology for the university community.

- Coordinate the procurement, scheduling, and proctoring of exams when taken at DSS with accommodations. Counselors are also responsible for arranging specific exam accommodations and for sending letters to instructors who request verification of a student’s right to use testing accommodations. Instructors may directly interact with the coordinator when completing exam cover sheets, which are used to facilitate the scheduling of students with disabilities to take exams with accommodations.

- Arrange for sign language interpreters and real-time captioning services for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. This person also handles interpreting for university special events and extracurricular activities.
Adaptive Technology

What is adaptive technology?

Adaptive technology is hardware and software items designed or used to compensate for areas of disability or impairment. Adaptive technology allows individuals with disabilities the same access to information and production as their peers who are not disabled. One example of such technology is computer generated voice output of scanned printed material used by a student with a print impairment, such as dyslexia or blindness.

Why is it important?

The most important aspect of adaptive technology is the freedom that it offers students with disabilities. Without assistance, a student can have independence in reading, writing, and performance. Such independence increases work rate, employability, and self-esteem.

Adaptive technology does another important thing. It helps institutions meet the letter and spirit of disability law by allowing students with disabilities the same level of access to computing technology in support of instruction and programming on campus as their non-disabled peers.

ADA/Section 504 Questions and Answers

There are two legal mandates that protect Stark State College students from discrimination and ensure that they have equal access to all aspects of university life. These laws include the Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Section 504 states that:

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

Title II of the ADA states that:

“A public entity shall make reasonable modifications in policies or procedures when the modifications are necessary to avoid discrimination on the basis of disability, unless the public entity can demonstrate that making the modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program, or activity.”

Q: How are the ADA and Section 504 different?
A: Section 504 requires those entities that receive federal funding to make their programs and services accessible for individuals with disabilities. The ADA extends the scope of Section 504 to include the private sector. The purpose of the ADA is to provide civil rights protections to people with disabilities by guaranteeing equal access and opportunity in employment, public accommodations, transportation, state and local government, and telecommunication.

Q: **Who is considered to have a disability?**

A: Section 504 and the ADA specifies that persons are considered to have a disability if they meet any one of the following criteria:

- he/she has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities, or
- has a record of such an impairment, or
- is regarded as having such an impairment.

A major life activity is considered a basic human function, such as seeing, hearing, walking, breathing, speaking, caring for self, learning, performing manual tasks, and working.

DSS is the designated entity on campus that is responsible for determining whether a student has a disability as defined by both the ADA and Section 504. DSS also determines appropriate and reasonable accommodations for each student on a case-by-case basis. Appropriate accommodations are chosen based on the specific limitations imposed by the disability and from input from the student.

Q: **Who is a qualified individual?**

A: A qualified individual is a person who meets the essential requirements of the program to which they are applying. The person must be able to perform the essential functions of the program with or without reasonable accommodations. In this case, a qualified student is one who has met the Stark State College admission’s criteria and has the capability to meet the academic standards at this institution of higher education.

Q: **What is a reasonable accommodation?**

A: A reasonable accommodation is a modification or an adjustment to policies, procedures, practices, and facilities so that a qualified student can participate fully in the university environment. An accommodation or service is not mandated if it fundamentally alters the program or service or if it would impose an undue financial hardship for the institution.
Emergency Procedures

For students with disabilities, special considerations must be made for emergency situations such as fire or tornadoes. Ultimately, the person with a disability is responsible for his/her own safety in emergency situations. It is wise for the student to plan ahead for emergencies, which would include developing an evacuation plan and then discussing the specifics of such a plan with an instructor or staff member. Instructors and staff should also develop a plan of action when they have a student with a mobility, visual, or hearing impairment in their classroom.

Students with Mobility Impairments

Determine emergency exits and dedicated areas for rescue assistance. In the case of fire, individuals with mobility impairments should be directed to an area of refuge. This can include a stairway or a classroom adjacent to a stairway with a fire rated door and/or walls. Note the location of the stairwell or adjacent room. **NOTE: A stairway is only appropriate for an individual using a wheelchair if they are not blocking the landing, which can result in harm to the individual and others as people evacuate via the stairway.**

- The instructor should be designated to alert emergency personnel of the location and the need for evacuation of the person with a disability.
- Assist the student with the mobility impairment in accessing the area of refuge.
- In most instances, it is not wise to attempt to carry the person in the wheelchair. Most wheelchairs are not constructed for lifting—powered chairs can weigh in excess of 300 pounds.

Elevator Breakdowns

With such a large number of elevators on campus, elevator breakdowns are a relatively common occurrence and can be extremely inconvenient—or even life threatening—to a person who uses a wheelchair. When an elevator ceases to operate, contact the DSS office at 4754/4423 immediately. If the person using the wheelchair is also using a respirator to breathe, time is of the essence. Consult with the person in question to determine the amount of oxygen remaining in the respirator and assess their desire for emergency rescue.
Students with Visual Impairments

Students with visual impairments should already be familiar with their surroundings after mobility and orientation training. However, they may not be aware of emergency exits.

- In case of emergencies, alert student to the nature of the situation. Offer assistance to the student to guide him/her to the nearest emergency exit.
- Use the sighted guide technique by offering an elbow.
- As you walk, alert the student to where he/she is and inform him/her of any obstacles, debris, doorways, or narrow passages.
- Once guided to safety, orient the student to his/her surroundings and determine if further assistance is needed.

Students with Hearing Impairments

The student with a hearing impairment is not likely to hear the alarm or other audible warnings. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the instructor to inform the student that there is an emergency. There are two ways to get the person’s attention:

1. Write a note for the student alerting him/her to the emergency and instructing him/her where to go.
2. Turn the light switch on and off to gain his/her attention. Be sure to offer to assist the student during the evacuation.

For assistance in developing emergency plans or evaluating buildings for fire rated stairways or rooms, please contact Kathy Bernstein, DSS coordinator. She can be reached via phone at 4423 or e-mail at kbernstein@starkstate.edu

Seizures

It is likely that during your tenure at Stark State College you will have at least one student in your class with a seizure disorder. Many people are able to control their seizures through medication. However, medical management of a seizure disorder is not feasible for some people and as a result seizures may occur frequently. Ideally, the student with a known, active seizure disorder will alert you to the situation and direct you in responding to the seizure. However, when faced with an unexpected seizure, you should be aware of how to respond appropriately.
What to do during a seizure:

• Contact Campus Security or 911 immediately
• Keep objects away from the individual’s mouth
• Cushion head
• Turn individual on side
• Do not try to restrain the individual
• Look for medical ID
• Ask the person their name and if they know where they are

Instructors and staff should assess the situation and use their best judgment in determining the need for immediate medical intervention. Erring on the side of caution is usually the best course of action when a student is having a seizure.

(Adapted with permission from Ohio State)