

Office of Disability Services

Mission Statement

The Office of Disability Services (ODS) helps to create an accessible campus community where students with disabilities have equal opportunity to participate fully in their educational experience at Winthrop University.

Goals:

- To coordinate and provide reasonable accommodations and services
- To advocate for students with disabilities through the removal of physical, informational, and attitudinal barriers
- To empower students toward self-advocacy, independence, and personal responsibility
- To create learning opportunities to enhance an understanding of disability culture and applicable laws

Accommodations and Access

In accordance with our mission, ODS staff collaborates with all university departments to ensure that Winthrop's programs and facilities are accessible to every student. Students who can benefit from registering with ODS have all types of documented disabilities, including but not limited to:

- Learning Disabilities
- Psychological Disabilities
- ADHD
- Chronic Medical Illnesses
- Mobility Impairments
- Visual Impairments
- Hearing Impairments
- Speech Impairments

Students should be aware that while accommodations are intended to remove barriers to learning, they do not ensure success. All Winthrop students are responsible for meeting and maintaining the essential academic standards set forth by the university for its courses, programs, services, and activities. Advisers, department heads, and deans are available to assist students in understanding and meeting these requirements, but students are responsible for fulfilling them.

A Variety of Services

Accommodations are individualized adjustments to the classroom or campus that help ensure you have equal access to your education at Winthrop. Based on your documentation, you may be eligible for a variety of services and accommodations, including but not limited to:

- Professor Notification of Accommodations
- Assistive Technology
- Notetakers
- Braille and Large Print
- Test-Taking Accommodations
- Residence Hall Accommodations
- Accessible Desks and Tables
- Priority Registration
- Study Skills
- Textbooks in Alternative Media
- Sign-Language Interpreting

Student Responsibilities

Students are often surprised to learn the difference in the level of student responsibility between high school and college. Students with disabilities who request services and accommodations are responsible for:

- providing current, appropriate documentation of their disability to ODS professional staff
- meeting with ODS professional staff to review the documentation and establish appropriate accommodations
- asking ODS professional staff for needed services and accommodations each semester
- using agreed-upon academic accommodations

Disability Documentation

Students are responsible for providing current, appropriate documentation of their disability from a qualified health services provider (i.e., physician, licensed psychologist, etc.). High School IEPs and 504 Plans alone are not sufficient documentation of a disability at the college level, although they can be helpful. Students should understand that while medical or educational documentation can establish a diagnosis, not every diagnosis rises to the level of being a disability under the law. Documentation is essential in determining the current impact of the disability on a student's performance, and so it is important that disability documentation meet certain guidelines. What does that mean? While ODS may require additional information to further define needed accommodations, documentation should:

- be typed or printed on official letterhead, dated, and signed by an evaluator qualified to make the diagnosis
- include a clear diagnostic statement
- include a description of the methodology used and test scores that support the diagnosis
- be current – what is considered current will vary with disability, but some helpful guidelines are: within the last 3 years for learning disabilities, the last 3 years for ADHD, and the last year for psychiatric disabilities.
- address the current functional limitations (i.e. the current impact of the disability on the student) and prognosis of the condition
- include specific recommendations for accommodations that are related to the functional limitations

Notifying Professors about Accommodations

Students who request classroom accommodations are required to provide their professors with a formal notice from the Office of Disability Services. This formal notice will outline your specific, documented accommodation needs so that you can plan appropriately with your professors. If you need classroom accommodations, you should request these through ODS early in the semester. You should request accommodations each semester that you need them, which means meeting with ODS professional staff each semester that you plan to use accommodations. Students taking online classes may find that they still need accommodations. You should meet with ODS professional staff and notify your professor if you plan to use accommodations in an online class.

Confidentiality and Use of Records

The Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) regulates disclosure of disability documentation and records maintained by the Office of Disability Services. Information regarding your disability diagnosis is handled confidentially in accordance with state and federal laws. Under FERPA, ODS professional staff is permitted to release information to a school official who has a legitimate educational interest that is specified in his or her position description, that is related to a student's education, or that is related to the discipline of a student, or by student request. Disability documentation and related records will be retained by ODS for five (5) years from the last semester in which the student received services.

Common Concerns

Sometimes students who register for disability services worry that it will show up on their permanent record.

Your permanent record or transcript, which is maintained by Records and Registration, is completely separate from records maintained by the Office of Disability Services. Neither disability nor the use of accommodations is noted on your transcripts.

Sometimes students worry that they will appear different if they use accommodations.

While it is your choice whether or not to use accommodations, choosing not to use them may create unnecessary difficulties early in your college career. Asking for accommodations early in the semester is often a better choice than waiting.

Sometimes students worry about discussing disability accommodations with their professors.

Becoming comfortable talking about your disability needs is important, and ODS can help you with this process. Students receive formal notices outlining their accommodations from ODS professional staff to give to their professors. These notices are required when students request classroom accommodations, and they help begin the communication process between students and professors. Students can also seek advice from ODS on how to talk with their professors about their disability and accommodations.

Questions and Answers

Is there a fee for services?

No fee is charged for the services offered through Winthrop University's Office of Disability Services.

Are there separate offices for different disabilities at Winthrop?

No. All disabilities - physical, learning, psychological, ADHD, chronic medical, etc. - are served by ODS.

Should students assume their high school automatically forwards their disability documentation to their college?

No. Students should ask their high school disabilities coordinator what procedures the high school follows in order to have documentation of a disability sent to a college or university. Students should follow-up with ODS to ensure that their documentation arrived. School IEPs and 504 Plans alone are not appropriate documentation at the college level.

What if I need accommodations for campus housing?

Students needing housing accommodations must notify Residence Life of their disability needs by requesting accommodations on their housing application. The "Request for Housing Accommodations Form" must be completed and submitted to ODS by the appropriate deadline. Even with genuine and documented needs, there are limits to reasonable accommodations. All Residence Life applications and fees must be submitted to Residence Life by the appropriate deadlines. Contact ODS if you need additional information.

Office Location and Appointments:

Office of Disability Services
Health & Counseling Services
1st Floor Crawford Building
Rock Hill, SC 29733

Phone: (803) 323-3290 (V/TDD)

Fax: (803) 323-4585

Web: <http://www.winthrop.edu/hcs/DS.htm>

Call or visit ODS Crawford to schedule an appointment.

Office Hours:

Fall/Spring Semesters:

- Monday – Thursday, 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
- Friday, 9:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Call for information about summer hours.