Baylor College of Medicine's goal is to ensure that all community members are given every opportunity to fully participate in the academic environment and do their best work. Therefore, Baylor College of Medicine is committed to providing access to needed services for individuals with disabilities in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008. To gain access to services and accommodation, individuals covered under these laws must provide documentation verifying the diagnosed disability by a qualified medical professional.

Because the provision of services and accommodation is based upon assessment of the current impact of the diagnosed disability on academic and clinical performance as well as access to educational activities, it is in a student’s best interest to provide recent and appropriate documentation as soon as possible. Below are guidelines for the documentation required for student's seeking services and accommodation related to blindness and low vision.

1. Qualifications of the Evaluator

   Professionals conducting assessments and rendering diagnoses of deafness or hearing impairments must be qualified to make such diagnoses and recommendations for accommodations. Information indicating the professional's name, title, professional credentials and licensure/specialization must be included in the documentation. Use of diagnostic terminology indicating blindness or low vision by someone without training and experience in the specific field of impairment is not acceptable. Additionally, diagnosis by a family member even when the family member is qualified by virtue of training, licensure and/or certification will not be accepted.

2. Current Documentation and Comprehensive & Diagnostic Evaluation

   In general, documentation submitted regarding blindness and low vision should be no more than three (3) years old. Accommodations are based on the assessment of the current impacts of the impairment on academic functioning therefore; documentation must address a student’s current level of functioning and the need for accommodation. If documentation does not address the student’s current level of functioning and the need for accommodation(s), additional information may be requested.

   Examples of acceptable documentation are medical records, evaluations or reports that are based on a comprehensive diagnostic/clinical evaluation which include:
   a. a clear statement on the type of vision loss by a qualified medical provider,
   b. an ocular assessment or evaluation from an ophthalmologist,
   c. a low-vision evaluation of residual visual function (when appropriate),

Some information contained in this guideline is taken either directly or in part from Disability Documentation Guidelines from the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD), www.ahead.org Revised 2015
d. an interpretation/description of the substantial limitation(s) present,

e. whether the vision impairment is permanent, stable or progressive,

f. current prescribed medications with possible side effects and/or prescribed visual aids

Other tests/measurements may be submitted in support of the evaluation/report.

3. **Rationale for Recommended Accommodation(s)**

The medical records, evaluations or report should include specific recommendations for accommodations that are reasonable, with the understanding that Baylor College of Medicine has the sole authority for determining what is reasonable. Therefore, a detailed explanation should be provided as to why each accommodation is recommended and should be correlated with the specific substantial limitation(s) stated.

Please be aware that the provision of a past accommodation or auxiliary aid in another setting does not ensure that the requested accommodation will be implemented at this time or at Baylor College of Medicine. However, providing information regarding a previous accommodation or auxiliary aid is useful and will be considered when evaluating current accommodation requests.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) governs the use and dispersal of student educational records containing personally identifiable information, including students with disabilities. The U.S. Department of Education has ruled that evaluative information pertaining to a student, including medical and psychological reports authored by third parties, constitute “educational records” governed by FERPA. *University of North Alabama*, 104 LRP 58746 (FPCO 2004). In general, information contained in such records may not be released absent the written consent of the student. Please be aware that there are a number of important exceptions that permit disclosure without such consent, including when a health and safety emergency exists or when disclosure to a “school official” is justified for educational reasons. See 34 C.F.R. §§99.31(a)(1) and (10).

Documentation and questions should be directed to the attention of the Student Disability Coordinator in the Office of Student Services.