

Accessibility Services

Student Guidebook

The purpose of the accommodation process is to ensure equal access to programs and services for students with disabilities at West Georgia Technical College. Accessibility Services meet with students to gather information about their academic experiences and how the accommodations they are requesting are necessary for removing barriers to programs or services. We attempt to meet with students within seven days of their inquiry about services so the process is brief. However, it may require several meetings to determine reasonable and equitable accommodations. Reviewing the information in this guidebook can help students better understand the accommodation process, help them understand their rights as a student with a disability and make the process simpler.

To apply for accommodations, individuals should complete the [Apply for Accommodations](#) form.

To make informed decisions about accommodations, we rely on the following information:

- ❖ Student report/history
- ❖ Third-party documentation from a qualified licensed professional such as a medical doctor, counselor or other health professional
- ❖ Information from other campus community members

Third- party documentation is requested for two primary reasons:

- ❖ To establish that a student has a disability.
- ❖ To provide information that will assist our office in understanding how and why an accommodation is reasonable, logical, and necessary for ensuring nondiscrimination and equality of access relative to the disability.

Documentation

- ❖ Documentation can be provided by a licensed professional and submitted on professional letterhead if the student does not already have documentation of their disability. The letter should include the professional address, telephone number, signature and licensed number. A Verification Form can be completed in lieu of the professional letter.
- ❖ Documentation should include the student's diagnosis and an explanation of how the disability impacts their daily activities specifically in the academic environment.
- ❖ Documentation should detail how the academic environment can create eliminate barriers in the academic environment such as in note-taking, test-taking, group participation, reading, writing, etc.

While third-party documentation may be sufficient to establish the presence of a disability, documentation alone does not determine whether accommodations are

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reasonable.

Accommodations are not approved if they

- ❖ Alter the nature of the program or course
- ❖ Lower the academic standard (e.g. if the accommodation may give the student an unfair advantage over the other students). Students with disabilities are expected to meet the same academic standards as other their peers.
- ❖ Pose a health or safety risk to the student with a disability or others at the college.
- ❖ Can be managed with the assistance from other academic resources such as academic coaching or tutoring services.

Accommodations/Academic Adjustment

- ❖ Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), colleges must provide – at no cost to the student — “reasonable accommodations” to make their programs accessible to students with disabilities. Section 504 and the ADA use the term “auxiliary aids and services” to refer to devices and services that make programs and materials available to people with disabilities.
- ❖ Most accommodations are determined according to the student’s submitted documentation.
- ❖ Students may have been allowed an accommodation in secondary school, but the accommodation may be deemed not reasonable in college.
- ❖ A documented or recommended accommodation can be disapproved if the college deems it as unreasonable.
- ❖ All returning students are allowed to register on the first day of registration each semester. Thus, Early Registration is not normally an accommodation granted.
- ❖ It is recommended that students request accommodations at the beginning of the semester as accommodations are not retroactive.

Assistive Devices/Aids

- ❖ Accessibility Services has assistive technology available for students to use if needed. However, a student will be responsible for replacing the device if lost, damaged, or stolen while in the student’s possession.
- ❖ All borrowed equipment, devices and/or textbooks should be returned in the condition in which it was received by the due date, usually last day of the

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semester borrowed, to avoid a “HOLD” being placed on their record.

- ❖ WGTC has the right to request additional documentation when an assistive device or service is requested by student.
- ❖ Types of Assistive Technology
 - Laptops
 - Reading Pens
 - Textbooks
 - Recorders
 - Live Scribe Pens – note recording pens
 - Magnifier

Confidentiality

- ❖ An electronic file is maintained on each student registered with the office and the student’s actual disability is private and confidential.
- ❖ A student can request a copy of their file at any time by completing a Release of Information Form and returning it to the Accessibility Services office with a copy of their photo ID.
- ❖ Instructors will only receive a Student Accommodation Letter (SAL), and will not know the student’s actual disability, unless the student shares that information.

Discipline- “Disability never excuses misconduct.”

- ❖ **All** Students enrolled at WGTC must adhere to the policies and procedures which are outlined in the Student Catalog. The Student Catalog is located at <https://westgatech.smartcatalogiq.com/en/2023-2024/student-catalog/>.

Disclosure of Disability

- ❖ West Georgia Technical College faculty and staff are prohibited from asking a **prospective** student if a disability exist.
- ❖ Students, not parents, are responsible for initiating and presenting the appropriate documentation for services.
- ❖ Students have the right to decline assistance, even if their parent(s) or others insist on them receiving services.
- ❖ Prospective students desiring accommodations on the admissions placement exam, must disclose prior to taking the exam.

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- ❖ Individuals who are accepted to the college will have the opportunity to disclose disability during the orientation by completing the New Student Orientation Survey. Students are contacted either by phone and/or email about services after New Student Orientation.
- ❖ Students can disclose a disability and request accommodations any time during their studies here at West Georgia Technical College.
- ❖ Students should only submit documentation verifying disability to the Accessibility Services office and are discouraged from sharing what their disability is with others at the college.

Eligibility Determination

- ❖ Eligibility for services/accommodations is determined by an initial meeting with the student to discuss the student's access concerns. Documentation is usually requested to assist in the determination process.
- ❖ An IEP and or 504 Plan, are plans used in K-12 to outline the approved modifications/accommodations made for students with documented disabilities. An IEP or 504 Plan does not solely constitute eligibility for accommodations in college. It is suggested that students submit the medical report or psychological evaluation used by their K-12 institution for developing the IEP or 504 Plan.
- ❖ An IEP or 504 Plan can be used for services such as the ACCUPLACER entrance exam; and, in some cases a semester of classroom accommodations.
- ❖ WGTC is not responsible for arranging or paying for testing for the determination of a disability.

Grievance Procedure

Students are responsible for discussing matters relating to their accommodations with the instructor and if not satisfied with the outcome, they should follow the below steps in sequence:

1. Discuss the matter with the Accessibility Services Coordinator
2. Still not satisfied, contact Zelma Jones, Career Services and Student Support Services Manager in writing at zelma.jones@westgatech.edu
3. Still not satisfied, contact Dr. Tonya Whitlock, Vice President of Student

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Affairs, in writing at tonya.whitlock@westgatech.edu

Interpreting Services

- ❖ WGTC must provide interpretive services, and has the right to determine the type of services as long as it is an effective form of communication. This includes: sign language interpretive services, C-Print, or CART services, at no cost to the student. ***Sign Language interpretive services are delivered via remote interpreting.***
- ❖ WGTC has the discretion to determine which assistive device or aid is implemented, including those needed for interpretive services. However, the college must ensure that the aids are effective.

Personal Assistants

- ❖ West Georgia Technical College is not responsible for providing personal assistants or mentors. However, they are allowed if determined as a reasonable accommodation.
- ❖ Students are responsible for providing personal assistants - individuals who aid with the student's hygiene, eating, and other personal needs.
- ❖ Students are responsible for providing mentors, if desired – individuals who attend classes with the student to monitor the student's behavior. The mentor is not responsible for any instructional assistance, such as note-taking, proctoring exams, or reading course materials.

Service Animals

- ❖ Service animals are dogs trained to perform a task for individuals with a disability. Service animals are allowed in the classroom and other areas of the college but must be under the control of the handler at all times.

Student Records/Consent

- ❖ Adherence to [FERPA](#) requires that students are allowed to view their records upon request.
- ❖ Student can request a copy of their documentation by completing the Release of Information Form and emailing it to accessibilityservices@westgatech.edu. A copy of the student's photo ID (i.e. drivers licenses or student ID) must be attached for processing.
- ❖ Student's information is not released to a third party, including parents, unless a written consent of release is provided by the student.

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- ❖ Upon consent, information is only released, *if* requested by the third party. The Accessibility Services staff is not required to contact the third party, even if a matter arises concerning a student, except in the case of an emergency. Parents should not expect college staff to initiate calling, emailing, or writing to report on the student's progress or attendance.
- ❖ Consent provided to the Accessibility Services program does not automatically constitute consent to other departments of the college.
- ❖ Student records are destroyed 5 years after the student exits the college.
- ❖ Students must advocate for themselves, not parents, teachers, spouses, or guardian.
- ❖ The college also adheres to the HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act 1996 laws

Students' Responsibility

- ❖ Students have the responsibility of submitting complete and accurate information pertaining to their disability.
- ❖ Students have the responsibility of requesting accommodations each semester by completing the [Request for Student Accommodation Letter](#) located on the Accessibility Services website.
- ❖ Students have the responsibility of notifying Accessibility Services of any problems receiving approved accommodations. Accommodations are not retroactive. Therefore, it is important that you notify the Accessibility Services immediately about any concerns regarding accommodations.
- ❖ Students have the responsibility of learning, understanding and following the requirements of their accommodations. They also have the responsibility of asking questions if they do not understand or agree with their accommodations.
- ❖ Students have the responsibility of seeking tutoring services when needed and contacting Accessibility Services if assistance is needed.

Students' Rights

- ❖ Students have the right to access their records and request copies at any time. Please see Student Records/Consent for more information.
- ❖ Students have the right to privacy and confidentiality at all times. The accessibility services staff will inform you when and if private information about

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our disability is shared with individuals outside of the college.

- ❖ Student have the right to share with others at the college information about their disability. However, we encourage you to avoid sharing to prevent misconceptions and misunderstandings of some individuals.
- ❖ You have the right to **decline** services at any time.

Your signature confirms that an Accessibility Services staff has discussed the guidelines in the Accessibility Services Guidebook with me.

Accessibility Services staff is concerned about the academic progress of students. If you agree to communicate with Accessibility Services staff about your academic progress, please initial . Academic Coaching is available free to students who desire to enhance their academic performance.

Student ID#: _____

Student Name (Print): _____

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____