

Services for Students with Accessibility Needs

The **Office of Accessibility Services** at Russell Sage College is committed to providing equal educational opportunity and full participation for students with disabilities, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act. A student seeking academic or housing accommodation must register and provide documentation by a licensed professional to Accessibility Services. Once the student has been determined to have a disability which supports the provision of accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Any student in need of classroom accommodations under the ADA must work with Accessibility Services to inform instructors of accommodations by first obtaining the necessary accommodation letters from Accessibility Services in order for reasonable accommodations to be provided. It is recommended that students do so at the onset of classes as reasonable prior notice needs to be given.

Any student in need of residential accommodations under the ADA must work with Accessibility Services by first obtaining the necessary accommodation letters from Accessibility Services in order for reasonable housing accommodations to be provided. It is recommended that students do so by June 1 for the following school year.

Contact

Cait York, Director of Accessibility Services and Section 504 Compliance Officer, accessibility_services@sage.edu

- Troy: Shea Learning Center, 65 First Street, Troy NY 12180 | (518) 244-6874
- Albany: Library, 140 New Scotland Avenue, Albany NY 12208 | (518) 292-8624

Section 504

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 states that: "No otherwise qualified person with a disability in the United States...shall, solely by reason of...disability, be denied the benefits of, be excluded from participation in, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

Colleges and universities receiving federal financial assistance must not discriminate in the recruitment, admission, or treatment of students. Students with documented disabilities may request modifications, accommodations, or auxiliary aids, which will enable them to participate in and benefit from all post-secondary educational programs and activities.

The Americans with Disabilities Amendment Act of 2008

The Americans with Disabilities Amendment Act of 2008 is the civil rights guarantee for persons with disabilities in the United States. It provides protection from discrimination for individuals on the basis of disability. The Americans with Disabilities Amendment Act of 2008 extends civil rights protections for people with disabilities to employment in the public and private sectors, transportation, public accommodations, services provided by state and local government and telecommunication relay services.

The Americans with Disabilities Amendment Act of 2008 upholds and extends the standards for compliance set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to employment practices, communications, and all policies, procedures, and practices that impact on the treatment of students with disabilities. Employment issues for all institutions are covered under Title I. For all activities, public institutions are covered under Title II; private institutions are covered under Title III.

The Accommodation Process

Any student with a documented disability is eligible to receive reasonable accommodations. The purpose of accommodations or modifications is to reduce or eliminate any disadvantages that may exist because of an individual's disability. The law does not require the College to waive specific courses or academic requirements considered essential to a particular program or degree. Rather, the College is mandated to modify existing requirements on a case by case basis in order to ensure that individuals are not discriminated against on the basis of their disability. Students wanting to access such services must identify themselves and provide appropriate verification of their disability to Accessibility Services. Eligibility for reasonable and appropriate accommodations will be determined on an individual basis.

Appropriate documentation will assist the student and the College in determining reasonable accommodations as stipulated under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Amendment Act of 2008, and other pertinent state and federal regulations.

Students requesting accommodations must meet with Accessibility Services and present appropriate documentation prior to receiving services. Documentation must be submitted by a qualified practitioner. This documentation must be a comprehensive assessment including recommendations for accommodations. Students must present evidence of a clinical interview by a qualified professional and evidence of a diagnosis that substantially limits one or more of the major life functions, and recommended reasonable accommodations.

It is the responsibility of the student requesting accommodations to do so and present documentation to Accessibility Services, ideally at the beginning of their tenure at Russell Sage College.

Accommodations

To access services:

1. Students must refer themselves to Accessibility Services and provide adequate documentation from a licensed professional to the Accessibility Services Office. Since the purpose of the documentation is to assist the student and the College in determining reasonable accommodations (e.g., extended test time, reduced distraction testing, audio recording, etc.), these guidelines must be followed to assure that the diagnostic evaluation report is appropriate for verifying accommodation needs. In order to assure all relevant material is provided to Accessibility Services, students are encouraged to use the Russell Sage College Accommodation Forms.
2. Students must meet with the Director of Accessibility Services with documentation from a licensed professional to request services. Accommodation letters will be developed at this time.
3. Students are encouraged to meet with their instructor and set a plan for the utilization of accommodations. Students and faculty can ask for support from Accessibility Services during this meeting. Please be advised that these accommodations may be subject to review and update if the disability or diagnosis changes. Information regarding the disability is confidential. Students are not required to disclose this information. Accessibility Services advocates for open communication and encourages students to have conversations regarding their specific needs with their professors. It is ideal for the student to speak with the instructor during the first week of classes to discuss the use of academic accommodations.
4. Students will then follow all Accessibility Services policies for utilization of services such as the testing center, renting of inclusive technology, and all services provided.

Accommodation Disagreements

If a disagreement arises concerning specific accommodation requests, a student should immediately inform the Director of Accessibility Services. If there is a conflict with the Director of Accessibility Services, then the Associate Vice President for Student Life may be notified to assist in the resolution process.

Procedures for Grievances Alleging Discrimination Based on Disability

Any member of the Russell Sage College community, including faculty, administrators, staff, and students, who has any grievance in relation to the law or any acts prohibited by the law may file a written complaint within 30 working days of the occurrence of the alleged action. The complaint should be filed with the 504 Compliance Officer as the person designated to coordinate the efforts of the College to comply with and carry out its responsibilities under the law. The written complaint should explain:

- who was discriminated against;
- in what way;
- by whom;
- when the discrimination took place;
- who can be contacted for further information;
- the name, address, and telephone number of the complainant; and
- as much background information as possible about the alleged discriminatory act.

These are suggestions, not requirements. Within five working days, the 504 Compliance Officer shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint by referring the complaint to the Director of Title IX & EEO Compliance. The individual investigating the complaint shall submit a written report to the 504 Compliance Officer with a copy to the complainant within 10 working days from the date assigned. The complainant shall have 10 working days from receipt of the investigation report to contact the 504 Compliance Officer to support or refute information contained in the investigation report. The 504 Compliance Officer will review the report and related material, and submit a written recommendation to the College President within five working days after the time period given the complainant to respond. A copy of this recommendation shall be sent to the complainant and the investigator. The President, as chief executive officer of the institution, shall make disposition of the complaint or refer it for the established grievance procedures of Russell Sage College.

Anyone who believes there has been an act of discrimination on the basis of disability in violation of Section 504 against any person or group in a program receiving financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Education, may file a written complaint with the Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services within 180 days of the alleged discrimination (unless the time for filing is extended for good cause by the regional civil rights director), and send it to the regional office that serves the state in which the discrimination allegedly occurred:

Office for Civil Rights, New York Office
U.S. Department of Education
75 Park Place, 14th Floor
New York, NY 10007-2146 (212) 637-6466 | FAX# (212) 264-3803; TDD (212) 637-0478