

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 adjustments under the Americans with Disabilities Act must register and provide documentation by a licensed professional to the Director of Accessibility Services. Any student in need of classroom assistance or modification under the Americans with Disabilities Act must inform the instructor of the needed adjustment by first obtaining the necessary accommodation letters from the Director of 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.

The Director of Accessibility Services can be contacted in Troy (Shea Learning Center): 65 First Street Troy NY 12180, (518) 244-6874 or in Albany (Library): 140 New Scotland Avenue, Albany NY 12208, (518) 292-8624. Sage.edu: <https://www.sage.edu/student-life/accessibility-services/>.

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 postsecondary 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 the Director of 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 the Director of 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, their complete medical and educational history, 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 in a timely manner, suggested prior to the beginning of each academic semester.

Accommodations

To access services, students must refer themselves to the Director of 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 course load, auxiliary aids, etc.), these guidelines must be followed to assure that the diagnostic evaluation report is appropriate for verifying accommodation needs. Specific procedures need to be followed in order to obtain reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments and /or auxiliary aids, any deviation from the process may slow down the process or accommodations may not be granted.

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.

Students must meet with the faculty member to review the accommodation letters and discuss accommodations. It is best to do this review after class or to set up an appointment with the faculty member. The student decides whether to disclose his/her disability to the professor or whether to share any pertinent information with them. Students are not required to identify their disability, although this information is often helpful to the professor. The student may want to explain how his/her disability may affect coursework in general; again this is not required. After the review of the accommodation letter, the faculty member and student both sign the accommodation letter.

Students should then review the accommodations. For testing accommodations, it is important to check in again with the professor at least one week before the exam date as a reminder and to be sure both parties have the same understanding of what is to occur. Meeting with the professor throughout the semester is necessary to discuss your accommodation needs.

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.

Academic Adjustments

Academic requirements must be modified, on a case by case basis, to afford qualified students with accessibility needs and applicants an equal education opportunity. For example, modification may include changes in the length of time permitted for completion of degree requirements. However, academic requirements that the recipient can demonstrate are essential will not be regarded as discriminatory. A recipient may not impose upon qualified disability persons rules that have the effect of limiting their participation in the recipient's education program or activity; for example, prohibiting tape recorders in classrooms or guide dogs in campus buildings. Qualified disability persons with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills must be provided auxiliary aids, such as taped texts, interpreters, readers, and classroom equipment adapted for persons with manual impairments. Recipients can usually meet this obligation by assisting students to obtain auxiliary aids through existing resources, such as state vocation rehabilitation agencies and private charitable organizations. In those circumstances where the recipient institution must provide the educational auxiliary aid, the institution has flexibility in choosing the effective methods by which the aids will be supplied. So long as no disabled person is excluded from a program because of the lack of an appropriate aid, the recipient need not have all available aids on hand at all times.

Procedures for Requesting Academic Adjustments

A student who wishes to request academic adjustments under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 should do so by writing to the Director of Accessibility Services. Russell Sage College reserves the right to require medical, psychological, neurological, or psycho educational verification of the disability causing the student to seek adjustments of academic conditions. Notification of any request for academic accommodations should be sent to the Director of Accessibility Services immediately. The Director will notify the faculty member(s) of the request; discuss options, if any, to meet the request; agree on the acceptable adjustments; and notify the student seeking the accommodations within 10 working days. **If an agreement cannot be reached, the Dean of the College will be notified for a meeting with all parties.** The Director of Accessibility Services shall file a final report of the discussion and resolutions no later than five working days after the agreement with all parties has been reached.

Procedures for Grievances Alleging Discrimination Based on Disability

Any member of 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 Director of Accessibility Services 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 Director of Accessibility Services 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 Director 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 Director to support or refute information contained in the investigation report. The Director of Accessibility Services 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