

# ADA Services Student Guidebook



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## **Welcome To Highland Community College ADA Services Office**

In the spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, HCC provides support services to students who may need reasonable accommodation or adjustment in order to achieve academic success. Our mission is to assist students in discovering and developing their full potential.

HCC uses an interactive and dynamic process with the student in determining what accommodation/modification would be most effective for the student. The Coordinator of ADA Services acts as a liaison with faculty, staff, and outside agencies to assist in that process.

### **Title II of the ADA Provides**

“No qualified individual with a disability...shall be excluded from participation in or be denied benefits of the services, programs or activities of a public entity...” 42 U.S.C. § 12132 (Supp. V). The ADA protects people with disabilities from being discriminated against based solely on their disability.

To be eligible for protection under the ADA, a person must meet the definition of an individual with a disability. The ADA defines disability “As a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such impairment.” Examples of major life activities may include performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning and working. The definition also includes those with “invisible” disabilities such as psychological problems, learning disabilities, or chronic health impairment, such as epilepsy, diabetes, arthritis, cancer, cardiac problems, HIV/AIDS and others.

A “qualified individual” with a disability must have documentation of an actual disability from a certifying professional stating that the disability substantially limits at least one major life activity. The person with the disability must also be able to fulfill the essential functions or requirements of the program either with or without accommodation.

### **Eligibility for Disability Services**

To be eligible to receive and accommodation from ADA Services a student must be enrolled at HCC, registered with our department, and have a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. The disability must be verified by appropriate documentation. That means that a professional in the area of the disability must document the nature and severity of the disability. Professionals may include medical doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, and learning specialists. A *Welcome Session* must then be made with the coordinator of ADA Services in order to determine what accommodations are necessary to request services and accommodations.

## What is an Accommodation?

An accommodation is an adjustment in the work or academic environment that enables a **qualified** person with a disability to apply for a job, perform the essential functions of a job, or **meet the technical standards of an educational program**. The college must provide the aids unless it would be unduly costly or fundamentally alter the nature of the course or program. Some examples of accommodations are:

- Sign Language Interpreters
- Readers, taped texts, or alternate formats such as large print or Braille versions of materials
- Acquisition or modification of equipment or devices
- Extended time for testing and in-class assignments
- Oral testing
- Tape recording of class lectures
- Spelling aids, and/or calculators
- Assistive technology, e.g. software
- Making facilities accessible to students with physical disabilities

Accommodations ensure access to programs and services. This means that no person with a disability can be excluded from a program or service simply because he or she has a disability. It does not mean that standards are lowered. Accommodations are not meant to make your classes “easier,” nor does it guarantee that you will pass your classes. That’s up to you! Students with disabilities are required to meet the **same course requirements** as any other student. It is the way in which the student with a disability meets the standards that might be different. For example, a student with distinctive speech impairment might be excused from giving an oral presentation. However, the student could be required to do a research paper or some other activity that would satisfy the requirement. A blind or visually impaired student could be excused from in-class writing to go to a computer equipped with screen reader or voice recognition software. **A student is always required to meet the essential requirements of a course.**

Accommodations are granted on a case-by-case basis according to the individual student’s disability and the need for an accommodation. Accommodations are free to the student; however the college is not required to pay for accommodations during a student’s personal time or those that are strictly personal in nature, such as a personal attendant. Also, tutoring is not an accommodation. If a student needs one-on-one tutoring, other than through the college’s tutoring centers, it is the student’s responsibility to find and pay for a tutor. There are community resources for students who qualify for Veteran’s and State Vocational Rehabilitation. The Coordinator of ADA Services will be happy to make the appropriate referrals.

## **The “Reasonable Accommodation” Process**

Students need to meet with the Coordinator of ADA Services and present verification of a disability. Together they will discuss which accommodations would work best for the student. Consideration is given to the student’s preference; however the Coordinator of ADA Services does evaluate what accommodations are recommended by the documentation. Students will be given a letter to take to all their instructors stating what accommodations they have been granted.

## **When an Accommodation is “Unreasonable”**

- When the standards of the course, program or service would be fundamentally altered,
- If a student is not “otherwise qualified” (with or without accommodations) to meet the academic standards required for admission or participation in a n educational program, course, service, or activity,
- When the effects of the disability cannot be overcome with an accommodation,
- An undue (excessive) financial hardship would be caused for the College,
- If the student would pose a direct threat to the health and safety of others.

## **Documentation (Verification) of a disability**

- Documentation of a disability is written proof that a disability exists. It provides justification for appropriate accommodations,
- Documentation must be from a person who is qualified to interpret testing or assess a physical or mental condition. The person should be a physician, psychologist, psychiatrist or learning specialist,
- Documentation should clearly identify the need for a specific accommodation.

## **Where to Get Documentation**

- Private physicians and psychologists,
- State and Veteran’s Vocational Rehabilitation Office,
- High School Special Education programs.

## **Does Documentation Ever Expire?**

As a rule, documentation should be no older than five years prior to requesting an accommodation from Coordinator of ADA Services. However, there are exceptions depending on the type of disability or the age of the student at last testing.

## **Confidentiality**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) controls access to student education records. HCC will make a reasonable effort to extend to students and their parents the rights granted by the act.

Disclosure of a disability is a confidential matter. The Coordinator of ADA Services is the only person who has access to official documentation. However, a student may sign a release form giving the Coordinator of ADA Services permission to speak with others about their disability. The only time information would be released without a student's permission would be if there is a threat to harm another person or themselves. A situation such as this would supersede a student's right to confidentiality.

Also, when students request certain accommodations such as special equipment, furniture, or sign language interpreters, etc., other students will be aware that an accommodation is being granted.

Those situations are unavoidable in identifying a person as having a disability. Great care is taken to keep a disability confidential, but may not always be possible.

## **Instructor Notification of Accommodations**

Upon completion of the reasonable accommodation process, the student will be given accommodation letters to be signed by the Coordinator of ADA Services and the student. These accommodations letters will state exactly what accommodations the student will be granted. The letter(s) will **not** state the nature of the disability to be accommodated. Copies need to be given to your instructors and be sure to keep a copy for yourself.

## **Student Responsibilities When Requesting an Accommodation**

- Schedule an appointment with the Coordinator of ADA Services at least 2 weeks prior to the beginning of classes for each semester,
- Provide documentation of disability,
- Please arrange for services such as sign language interpreters, alternative formatted text books, etc. well in advance of the start of classes as these accommodations may take several weeks to arrange,
- Students requesting note takers, or sign language interpreters, please **attend class regularly**. Note takers will not be allowed to take notes for an unexcused absence from class. Sign language interpreters are only required to wait for you 10 minutes per hour of class (90 minute class=15 minute wait, 3 hour class=30 minute wait, etc.) After that time, the interpreter will leave. If you don't call in, this will be counted as a No-Show,

- Students are responsible for any equipment that is loaned to them during the semester. Students who do not return equipment by the due date will have a **hold placed in their registration and/or grades until said equipment is returned or replaced,**
- Notify the Coordinator of ADA Services if you have dropped or added classes so that we can discuss the ramifications of your change in course load,
- **It is the student's responsibility to pick up their accommodation letters from ADA Services and deliver them to their instructor(s).** It is preferable that this be done before, or soon after, the start of classes so that accommodations are available when needed. **Accommodations are not retroactive!**

## **Grievance Procedure**

Ensuring Equal Opportunities, Resources and Reasonable Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities at Highland Community College

Highland Community College is committed to providing a working and learning environment that is free from discrimination, harassment and retaliation. HCC is committed to equal opportunity in education and employment, affirmative action, diversity, and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The college prohibits discrimination in admissions, employment and access to college programs, activities and services on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, marital status, familial relationship, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, age, disability, religion, expunged juvenile record, or veterans' status. This commitment is made by the college in accordance with federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

## **ADA Related Complaints**

Students shall express concerns initially with the faculty member or the Coordinator of ADA Services, Caley Marten, within seven (7) school days of that occurrence that gives rise to the complaint.

If the complaint is not resolved to the student's satisfaction, the student may request a review of the complaint by the Director, Learning Services, Carolyn Petsche. The request must be in writing and must be received by the Director, Learning Services, within five (5) school days after the initiated attempt at resolution. The Director, Learning Services, will discuss the complaint with the persons involved before deciding the appeal. The Director, Learning Services, shall issue a written response covering the outcome of the review within seven (7) school days after receipt of the request.

If the result of the Director, Learning Services review is unsatisfactory to the student, the student may appeal in writing to the Associate Vice President, Student Services/Title IX Coordinator, Liz Gerber, within five (5) school days after receipt of the Director,

Learning Services response. The Title IX Coordinator shall review the complaint fully and issue a reply in writing within ten (10) school days of receipt of written student appeal.

**Compliance inquiries about the ADA or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act may be directed to:**

Caley Marten, Coordinator of ADA Services and ADA/504 Compliance Officer for Students, (815)599-3605, M-104, [caley.marten@highland.edu](mailto:caley.marten@highland.edu).

Rose Ferguson, Chief Human Resources Officer and ADA/504 Compliance Officer for Employees and Community, (815)599-3402, H-232, [rose.ferguson@highland.edu](mailto:rose.ferguson@highland.edu)

**Compliance inquires about Title IX may be directed to:**

Liz Gerber, Associate Vice President, Student Services/Title IX Coordinator, (815)599-3551, M-101, [liz.gerber@highland.edu](mailto:liz.gerber@highland.edu)

To file a formal complaint, fill out the Americans with Disabilities Act(ADA) Complaint Form and submit it to the appropriate ADA compliance officer. It can be found at the Freeport Campus, 2998 West Pearl City Road, Freeport, IL 61032, 815-599-3605, ADA Services, Building M, M-104 or [www.highland.edu](http://www.highland.edu) under Future Student, Student Resources, Success Center, ADA Services

**Appeals**

While we make every attempt to reach an internal resolution, sometimes the complaint is not satisfied with final decision. Thus, they can contact US Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights.

- US Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights  
Chicago Office, Office for Civil Rights  
U.S. Department of Education  
Telephone: 312-730-1560  
Fax: 312-730-1576  
TDD: 877-521-2172  
Email: [OCR.Chicago@ed.gov](mailto:OCR.Chicago@ed.gov)
- Illinois Department of Human Rights  
Telephone: 312-814-6200  
Fax: 312-814-6251  
TDD: 312-263-1579



## Hints for Being a Successful HCC Student

### If you have accommodations and are still having problems:

- Inform the Coordinator of ADA Services that you are having problems immediately,
- Arrange for assistance by contacting the Success Center for it has many valuable campus resources,
- Instructors have regular office hours. Call for an appointment,
- Ask for help with study skills and time management,
- If tutoring and extra effort are still not working, consider dropping the class. If you are receiving financial aid, talk with a financial aid counselor before dropping the class,
- If possible, consider dropping down one level to a class that will help you get a better foundation in the subject. **Consult the course schedule for the last day to change levels,**
- Attend class! Many times problems can be attributed to poor attendance. When you attend class regularly, you have an opportunity to ask your instructor to clarify concepts that might be difficult to understand on your own. Tutoring helps, but is not a substitute for the classroom experience,
- Make sure all your assignments are turned in and tests taken,
- If your instructor allows you to rewrite a paper or retake an exam, do it! This is your opportunity to improve a grade.

## Test Anxiety

Remember!!! Not all anxiety is bad. Anxiety in small doses motivates us to do well. Research shows that the one thing that creates the most anxiety is not being prepared for the test! There are several things you can do to lessen anxiety.

- Make sure to take good notes in class and review them often,
- Know the difference between just reading the text and studying,
- Good writing and organization skills are as important as knowing the material. Make sure to take the classes needed to improve those skills,
- Highlight important facts in order to know what to emphasize while studying. Get tutoring help before the test,
- Many students underestimate the time needed to learn the material. A good rule is to spend 3 hours studying for every one hour in class,
- Make up a practice test from all the material,
- Quickly read over the whole test to get a feel for what kinds of questions are being asked,

- Answer easier questions first. If stuck on a question, skip it and come back to it later,
- If running out of time, go back and try to answer the questions that are worth the most points,
- If feeling anxious, stop, sit back and take a few slow deep breaths to calm yourself. Oxygen is food for the brain: it helps us think better,
- Take all the time allotted for the test. Sometimes an answer will come by taking a few extra minutes to think about it,
- Remember that it's just one test! There will be other opportunities to do better.

### **HCC Resources**

Freeport Campus	815-235-6121
ADA Services	815-599-3605
Admissions	815-599-3414
Advising	815-599-3573
Bookstore	815-599-3694
Career Services/Work Study	815-599-3536
Cashier's Office	815-599-3482
Counseling	815-599-3654
Financial Aid	815-599-3591
Library	815-599-3456
Project Succeed	815-599-3583
Testing center	815-599-3680
Tutoring	815-599-3428

### Receipt of ADA Services Student Guidebook

I, \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge that I have received a copy of Highland Community College's ADA Services Guidebook. I understand that it is my responsibility to take advantage of the resources this Guidebook offers me as a student. I also understand that it serves as a reference of guidelines and I will use it as such.

Student ID Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

ADA Services Coordinator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*\*Upon request, alternative formats of this handbook are available\*\*\***