

Disorders of Attention (ADD/ADHD)

Attention disorders include the following:

HYPERACTIVITY refers to an excessive amount of activity compared to peers.

DISTRACTABILITY refers to people who have poor attention spans and are usually not able to block out extraneous sights and sounds. In other words, they pay attention to everything.

IMPULSIVITY causes people to be anxious and distracted from the task at hand.

POOR ATTENTION SPANS / INABILITY TO FOCUS: describes a person who has little or no attention span and pays attention to nothing.

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) are the two most common terms used to describe disorders of attention. While ADHD and ADD are separate conditions, students with ADHD and ADD use some of the same accommodations and instructional strategies as those with learning disabilities.

ADHD is a persistent pattern of inattention or hyperactivity/impulsivity manifested in academic, employment or social situations. It is marked in school settings by careless mistakes and disorganized work. Students often have difficulty concentrating on and completing tasks, frequently shifting from one uncompleted activity to another. In social situations, inattention may be apparent by frequent shifts in conversation, poor listening comprehension and not following the details or rules of games and other activities. Symptoms of hyperactivity may take the form of restlessness and difficulty with quiet activities. ADHD arises during childhood and is attributed neither to gross neurological, sensory, language or motor impairment nor to mental retardation or severe emotional disturbance.

ADD is characterized by disturbances in the areas of attention, low alertness, distractibility, impulsivity, inconsistency and underactiveness. Students often daydream, have short attention spans, decreased concentration abilities, difficulty arriving on time, money management problems, problem solving difficulties, lack of prioritization skills and problems attending to task. ADD is considered to be a disorder of the central nervous system. However, rapid behavioral changes make a precise description of this disorder difficult.

Instructional Strategies

The following strategies are suggested to enhance the accessibility of course instruction, materials and activities. They are general strategies designed to support individualized reasonable accommodations

- Include a Disability Access Statement on the syllabus
- Keep instructions brief and as uncomplicated as possible.
- Assist the student with finding an effective note-taker or lab assistant from the class
- Allow the student to tape-record lectures.
- Clearly define course requirements, the dates of exams and when assignments are due; provide advance notice of any changes.
- Provide handouts and visual aids.
- Use more than one way to demonstrate or explain information.
- Provide students with a course syllabus and list of books they will need for the course 5-8 weeks prior to the beginning of class, so textbooks are available for taping.

- Break information into small steps when teaching many new tasks in one lesson (state objectives, review previous lesson, summarize periodically).
- Allow time for clarification of directions and essential information.
- Provide study guides or review sheets for exams.
- Provide alternative ways for the students to do tasks, such as dictations or oral presentations, when possible.
- Provide assistance with proofreading written work.
- Stress organization and ideas rather than mechanics when grading in-class writing assignments, when possible.
- Allow the use of spell-check and grammar-assistive devices.
- When in doubt about how to assist the student, ask him or her.
- Allow the student the same anonymity as other students (i.e., avoid pointing out the student or the alternative arrangements to the rest of the class).

Documentation for this disability, as with all disabilities, is required before services can be provided.