

Disability Services

Aspen University's Office of Disability Services will work to uphold the mission of the University by providing reasonable accommodations to all students with disabilities in order to help them achieve their academic goals. Aspen University complies and adheres to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

Policy

Accommodations are determined on a case by case, course by course basis through the use of an interactive process between the student, Disability Services, and other university partners as needed to make an accommodation determination.

Aspen University's policy and practice is to provide students with disabilities full and equal use of services, facilities, and privileges. Aspen University does not discriminate in its admission, recruitment, academics, research, financial aid, counseling, or employment assistance processes. The University promotes an environment of respect and support for individuals with disabilities.

Students are responsible for disclosing disability information and requesting accommodations, in accordance with university requirements. Students who need assistance, even on a temporary basis, are encouraged to utilize the services available through the Office of Disability Services (ODS). For more information, please contact disabilityservices@aspen.edu.

Definitions

A person with a disability is one who (a) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of such person's major life activities, (b) has a record of such impairment, or (c) is regarded as having such impairment. "Physical or mental impairment" means (a) any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, respiratory (including speech organs), cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genito-urinary, hemic and lymphatic, skin and endocrine; or (b) any mental or psychological disorder, such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities.¹

Temporary disability – A short-term illness or injury that impacts or limits one or more of the student's major life functions (i.e., concussion)

Substantially limits- means being unable to perform a major life activity or significantly restricted as to the condition, manner, or duration under which a major life activity can be performed, in comparison to the average person or to most people. "Major life activities" mean functions that an average person can perform with little or no difficulty. (i.e., caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, reading, speaking, breathing, and working)¹

¹ Definitions are taken from Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and from the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. These definitions are provided for informational purposes only. These definitions are not meant to alter the existing local or federal disability laws and regulations.

A qualified person with a disability- as applied to students means a person who meets the academic and technical standards requisite to admission or participation in the university's educational program or activity, with or without reasonable accommodation.¹

Reasonable accommodation- the provision of certain necessary and effective adjustments to the known physical and mental limitations of an otherwise qualified individual with a disability, unless the accommodation would impose an undue burden or hardship on the university or would produce a fundamental alteration of the university's programs or services.¹

Who Is Eligible?

- Students with physical disabilities
- Students with chronic illnesses
- Students with learning disabilities
- Students with mental health issues
- Students with emotional disabilities
- Students with temporary disabilities
 - i.e. pregnancy, major surgery, major injury, concussion, etc.

Student Responsibilities

Aspen University provides reasonable accommodations or modifications in adherence with local, state, and federal law. To receive accommodations through Aspen University, you must self-elect to disclose your disability to the Office of Disability Services and follow the steps to receive accommodations. Accommodations are not retroactive. Approved accommodation requests submitted after courses have begun will be effective as of the date your completed request was received by the ODS.

Students must submit all documents at least two weeks (10 working days) prior to the start of the course to allow adequate processing time. Please note, submitting documentation the day before a start or after a start may impact the effective date of your accommodations.

Students must notify the ODS of any changes, difficulties, or problems that occur at any point during their Program. Students must notify the ODS directly (not through an academic advisor or faculty) if the accommodations in place are not meeting their needs at any point in your Program.

If you take a leave of absence or if you take a break in continuous enrollment, contact the ODS upon your return to re-establish accommodations.

Students are expected to meet the academic performance standards for the class after an accommodation is provided.

Aspen University cannot provide reasonable accommodations if a student does not request accommodations through the formal process, including providing the required documentation.

Disability Services Responsibilities

Disability Services stores records of students with disabilities, including their documentation and accommodations.

Disability Services provides the verification of the disability and the approved accommodation to the instructor and works together with the student and faculty members to make the activities involved successful.

Disability Services will refer to other University Departments, Deans, or Program Directors for additional assistance of accommodations that may require additional consideration or approval.

Disability Services performs awareness training annually for faculty, staff, and administration.

Faculty Responsibilities

Faculty and staff will receive notice from Disability Services on approved accommodations for the student.

Faculty and staff will facilitate reasonable accommodations as determined by Disability Services.

Faculty and staff should not ask the student about the nature of the disability – if questions exist, you can email disabilityservices@aspen.edu.

Faculty must maintain expectation of academic standards.

Request for Accommodations

Students must fill out a request form and send it back to the ODS. Students are required to provide documentation that demonstrates credible assurance of a disability issue. The documentation should directly support the student's request for accommodations. The documentation must be from a medical provider (such as a doctor, psychologist, psychiatrist, etc.) or from testing services (such as Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale and other tests). The documentation must state the specific disability and show the cause for why a student's disability significantly limits their ability to complete their educational goals. The documentation should include a summary of the student's functional limitations so that appropriate accommodations can be made.

The documentation should be typed with the appropriate official signature and contact information for the associated facility for verification purposes (on official letterhead is preferred). Handwritten documentation must be clear and legible with the appropriate official signature and contact information for the associated facility. Documentation cannot be altered and must be submitted in its entirety. Documentation can be submitted to the ODS by email to disabilityservices@aspen.edu.

If the documentation provided does not meet the University's requirements, the student will receive notice and will be asked to provide alternative supporting documentation. All documentation provided is kept on file in the ODS for verification purposes. Students requesting additional accommodations after their initial approval may be asked to provide additional documentation.

A student may request accommodations at any point in their program. Accommodations cannot be applied retroactively. Coursework that was already due cannot be covered by accommodations. For those assignments, we would encourage you to work with your instructor and follow the Late Work Policy found in the catalog.

Approved Accommodations

After reviewing the student's Accommodation Request form and subsequent documentation, Disability Services staff will determine reasonable accommodations for the student. An approved accommodations letter will be sent to the student outlining the details and the time length of the accommodation.

Documentation showing credible assurance of a permanent disability issue that has been approved by the Office of Disability Services is valid for the length of the student's academic program. It is the responsibility of the student to notify the ODS of any schedule changes that may occur during your program of study, including any extended break in classes, in order to ensure that your accommodations are applied or adjusted accordingly.

Aspen University strives to accommodate the needs of all our students. If a student requires accommodations, please email: disabilityservices@aspen.edu.

Religious Accommodations

As part of this commitment, the University will make good faith efforts to provide reasonable religious accommodations to faculty, staff, and students whose sincerely held religious practices or beliefs conflict with a University policy, procedure, or other academic or employment requirement unless such an accommodation would create an undue hardship.

Individuals may not be discriminated against because of their religious beliefs or practices, or because they lack religious beliefs or practices.

To request a religious accommodation, more information, or assistance, please contact disabilityservices@aspen.edu.

Confidentiality

Information and records about a student's disability and accommodations, if any, are treated as confidential information. All university employees are required to maintain the confidentiality of any disability-related information about a student. To that end, information is provided on a need-to-know basis solely to individuals who require such information as part of the accommodation process, or where permitted or required by law. To protect confidentiality, all disability-related information must be filed with the Office of Disability Services, and not with individual offices.

Concerns

The Office of Disability Services is committed to ensuring that Aspen University is accessible and inclusive to students with disabilities. If a student has concerns about ODS process, services, or believes that he or she has not received reasonable accommodation, the student is encouraged to first communicate directly with the Disability Coordinator.

If after engaging with the Disability Coordinator, the student still believes that he or she has not received accommodations, is unsatisfied with accommodations provided by Disability Services, or believes to have been subjected to discrimination on the basis of disability, the student should contact the ADA/504 Compliance Officer by emailing liz.fernandez@aspen.edu. The ADA/504 Compliance Officer will work with ODS staff and/or do an independent review of the situation to find a resolution.

If after taking these two steps, the student believes there is no resolution, the student must then follow the grievance procedure outlined in the [University Catalog](#).