

Working with Students Who Have a Psychological Disorder

Some students have been diagnosed with psychological disorders that will complicate many areas of life, including education, such as depression, bipolar disorder, or severe anxiety.

The best way to understand an individual's needs is to engage in a private conversation with them. **Question you might ask include:**

- What barriers do you experience in a classroom?
- What are the accommodations that help you access the content, the class, the environment?
- How can we create an accessible experience for these elements of the class? (addressing the different types of experiences in your class- groups, presentations, tests/quizzes, papers, etc.)

Accommodations may include, but are not limited to:

- Flexibility of attendance requirements (within the essential requirements of the course and conversation with the professor)
- Extended time for quizzes and tests
- Distraction reduced room for quizzes and tests
- Accommodations due to flare ups of symptoms

If you would like verification that a student has a disability, ask the student to provide you with a letter from the Disability Services Office (DSO). The DSO produces these letters only for students who are registered with the office and for whom documentation of the disability is on file. The DOS can send you this letter directly.

As a professor seeking to support a student with a psychological disorder, you are asked to:

- **Talk with the student** about implementing the accommodations in the accommodation letter.
- **Collaborate** with students about arrangements to make up tests and other assignments, allowing them extra time since these students may miss class during serious psychiatric episodes. It is particularly important to provide a detailed syllabus at the beginning of class that will list all assignments and due dates.
- Extend a supportive and welcoming environment if a student discloses knowledge of his/her disability with you, and requests assistance in arranging for accommodations.

- Understand that for disability-related reasons, these students may sometimes have to miss class, or even leave the room in the middle of a class. The students will be responsible for the content of any lectures missed, but they will appreciate your helping them to fill in the gaps.
- Periodically check in with the student *privately* to make sure that all class content is being accessed, and that expectations are clear.
- Don't hesitate to call the Disability Services Office (DSO) to arrange for a three-way meeting between you, a disability services personnel member, and the student to work out any issues and to collaborate on the best instructional strategies for the student.