

## **Criteria for Documentation Acquired Brain Injury (ABI)**

In order to establish disability status and eligibility for disability services, institutions of the University System of Georgia require documentation from a qualified evaluator that attests to the presence of a disabling condition as defined by the ADA and demonstrates substantial limitations impacting performance in the academic environment when compared to most people in the general population.

Brain injury can result from external trauma, such as a closed head or an object penetration injury, or internal trauma, such as a cerebral vascular accident or tumor. Additionally, individuals may acquire brain impairment as a result of neurological illnesses, such as epilepsy or multiple sclerosis. ABI can cause physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and vocational changes that can affect an individual for a short period of time or permanently. Depending on the location and extent of the injury, symptoms can vary widely. Understanding functional changes after an injury and resulting implications for education are more important than only knowing the cause or type of injury.

Specific documentation guidelines for ABI include the following:

- Evaluators must be licensed qualified professionals whose training and credentials are consistent with expertise in the disability for which they provide documentation.
- Evaluators may not be friends or family members of the student.
- A diagnostic statement based on the most current Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) and/or International Classification of Diseases (ICD) should be included.
- Evaluators should demonstrate how the assessment results meet diagnostic criteria.
- The progression of the condition should be detailed if its impact on the student's functioning is expected to change over time.
- The substantial limitation in a major life activity should be described.
- Evidence that the difficulties are substantially limiting to the student in the academic environment should be presented.
- Any accommodation recommendations made must be supported by a rationale that explains the necessity based on the student's measured impairments and current substantial limitations.
- Documentation of accommodations approved in the past is encouraged but does not guarantee approval at the postsecondary level.
- Identifying information includes the names, signatures, titles, identifying credentials (e.g., license numbers), and contact information of evaluating professionals.
- Impairments following an acquired brain injury may change rapidly in the weeks and months after the injury, and a more stable picture of residual weaknesses may not be apparent for 1-2 years after an injury. Therefore, timeframes for currency of documentation may vary substantially, and additional documentation may be necessary to adequately assess the student's current accommodation needs.
- Documentation of the date or period of time of occurrence and diagnosis.
- Documentation of the nature of the neurological illness or traumatic event that resulted in brain injury.
- Objective (quantitative and qualitative) evidence that symptoms are associated with significant functional impairment in the academic setting. The functional impact of the brain injury must be documented by appropriate, objective measures (e.g., cognitive and academic skills, psychosocial-emotional functioning, and/or motor/sensory abilities) relevant to the academic environment.

Adapted from USG Policy for Disability Documentation:

[https://www.usg.edu/academic\\_affairs\\_handbook/section3/handbook/C793/#pappendix\\_d\\_disability\\_documentation](https://www.usg.edu/academic_affairs_handbook/section3/handbook/C793/#pappendix_d_disability_documentation)