Student Handbook

DISABILITY SERVICES & RESOURCES

Gadsden State Community College
WWW.GADSDENSTATE.EDU/ADA

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Vision

A campus community in which students with disabilities are equal members without barriers.

Mission

The Gadsden State Disability Services and Resources Office interacts and collaborates with administration, faculty, staff, and students to achieve an equitable learning and work environment and campus experience for students, employees and visitors with disabilities.

Guiding Principles

Disability Services and Resources exercises these principles to promote an environment where disability is seen as a valued aspect of the College community:

Access – Accessibility is achieved when all students can fully participate in the educational opportunities, activities, and services offered by GSCC.

Collaboration – Individuals from across campus come together to meet the needs of GSCC's community of learners.

Excellence – We strive to establish best practices through leadership in addressing barriers to access and furthering the global conversation on disability in higher education.

Awareness and Outreach

The Disability Services and Resources Office is available to students, faculty, staff and administration to assist, advise or consult concerning any disability related issue. The office aims to increase awareness through education and outreach.

Legal Background

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) is the civil rights guarantee for persons with disabilities in the United States. It provides protection from discrimination for individuals on the basis of disability. The ADA extends civil rights protection for people with disabilities to employment in the private sector, transportation, public accommodations, services provided by state and local government, and telecommunication relay services. Consistent with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act (ADA-AA) of 2008, it is the policy of Gadsden State Community College that no qualified person with a disability shall be subjected to discrimination because of that disability under any program or activity conducted or sponsored by the College.

Legal Requirements

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Title II and Section 504 prohibit discrimination because of disability in education and public accommodations.
- There must be equal access to all facilities, programs, services, and activities of the college.
- The college is NOT covered under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which applies to K-12 institutions.

Definition of Disability under the ADA

The ADA defines a person with a disability as:

- A person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. (According to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a major life activity is defined as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working.)
- A person with a record of an impairment even if he or she does not currently have a disability and,
- A person who does not have a disability, but is regarded by others as having a disability.

Temporary conditions that cause disability for a short time — such as broken bones, illness, trauma or surgery — are not considered disabilities as defined under the ADA unless they are expected to continue over a long period of time.

Alabama Community College System (ACCS) Guidelines

1. ACCS institutions are not subject to IDEA. Community colleges comply with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), and the American Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA).
2. ACCS institutions are not required to seek out and identify disabled students needing reasonable accommodations. **STUDENTS MUST SELF-IDENTIFY AND REQUEST ASSISTANCE.**
3. Students must furnish adequate documentation of disabilities from medical or other appropriate professionals. Documentation is confidential and will not be released without permission.
4. It is recommended that students who need accommodations provide documentation and requests for accommodation one to two months in advance of the first term of enrollment.
5. Accommodations provided will depend upon (1) the nature and type of disability, (2) requirements of course or activity, and (3) skills and functional limitations of the student.

Alabama Community College System institutions will not fundamentally alter or modify course or program requirements. The student must discuss accommodations with each instructor.

Confidentiality of Information

Gadsden State Community College has an obligation to maintain confidentiality of evaluation information and does not release disability documentation. Strict confidentiality is maintained in all verbal communications with Gadsden State faculty and staff unless a student grants written permission or the College is required to do so by law or court order.

Goals for Providing Services to Students with Disabilities

The ultimate goal of the Disability Services and Resources Office at Gadsden State is to provide individuals with disabilities reasonable accommodations and services that will offer access and integration into college and college related activities. The ADA Coordinator works with students, faculty, and staff to ensure not only equal opportunity to all programs but also to ensure the academic integrity of the College is preserved.

- DSR will work individually with qualified students to provide reasonable accommodations, which will allow the student to demonstrate his or her academic capability at Gadsden State.
- DSR will assist qualified students through the transition process from high school to Gadsden State.
- DSR will work collaboratively with other areas of the College, including faculty, to ensure equal access for all students.
- Gadsden State Community College does not perform disability evaluations that determine or diagnose disabilities, nor does Gadsden State pay for such testing. Testing is the responsibility of the student.

Requesting Accommodations

The ADA Coordinator or Campus ADA Contact will work interactively with the student to arrange reasonable accommodations.

Process for Receiving Accommodations:

1. The student should contact the Disability Services and Resources office (online, email, phone or in person) to self-identify, complete the **DSR Enrollment form**, provide appropriate **documentation of disability**, and officially request accommodations. (These forms can be found at www.GadsdenState.edu/ADA.)

2. The ADA Coordinator reviews the completed enrollment form and all documentation provided by the student to support their request. If necessary, faculty is consulted concerning specific accommodations.
3. The DSR office makes a decision of the validity of the request for accommodations and opens a file for each qualified student.
4. The DSR Office completes an Academic Accommodations form, which outlines the proposed allowable accommodations. The form is emailed to the student's instructors and the student is copied on the email.
5. Once the email is distributed, the student should contact each instructor to discuss the accommodations and ensure that they are mutually understood.
6. If the student or faculty member encounters a problem or issue, contact the ADA Coordinator as soon as possible. If the issue is not resolved, the student may complete an ADA Appeal Form.

It should be noted that the Disability Services and Resources Office does not provide financial aid, attendant (personal) care, transportation services, mental health counseling or tutoring.

Examples of Accommodations and Services

Providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a process that requires an individual assessment of need. Specific accommodations depend upon the nature and requirements of a particular course or activity and the skills and functional abilities of a particular student. Appropriate accommodations may include but are not limited to the listings below.

General Accommodations:

- **Accessibility –** The DSR Office partners with Facilities Services and the Residence Hall to facilitate access to buildings, the dormitory, parking lots and other locations on campus. Students with disabilities who experience physical barriers should contact DSR for assistance.
- **Early Registration** – When applicable, a student with a disability may register during early registration through Disability Services or Student Support Services. The student is still responsible for obtaining advisement with college advisors.
- **Service Animals** - In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), service animals are permitted on the college campus and in its facilities. Service animals are animals that have been trained to perform tasks that assist people with disabilities. To be permitted on campus, a service animal must be specifically trained to perform a service function. The service animal should wear a harness, cape, identification tag, or other gear that readily identifies its working

status. The person using the service animal is responsible for controlling the animal's behavior, caring for the animal, and cleaning up after the animal. A service animal whose behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others may be excluded regardless of training or certification. (Complete Service Animal Policy, Procedures and Forms can be found on the DSR Website.)

- **Accessible Parking -** Accessible parking is available for individuals near the front of each building on campus. The College recognizes permits issued by the state for the use of these areas and may authorize temporary parking passes for students with temporary medical conditions. For more information, contact the ADA Coordinator.

Testing Accommodations:

- **Extended Time -** Testing accommodations may include extended time
- **Isolated Testing Area / Reduced- distraction testing environment**
- **Recorded or Orally administered tests** (including reading and/or software)

Students should discuss testing accommodations with their instructors at the beginning of each semester. Testing accommodations procedures vary from campus to campus. The procedures are discussed in the intake meeting. Any student with questions about testing accommodations should contact the ADA Coordinator.

As long as the student's required accommodations can be met (e.g. extended time, reduced-distraction environment), the preferred method is for the student to be accommodated by the instructor or at least within the department. The DSR Office acts as an extension of the academic area by proctoring tests when neither the instructor nor the department is able to provide the accommodations. It is the student's responsibility to make arrangements with the instructor and DSR (if applicable) prior to the exam date. DSR will determine the alternate testing sites. These sites may include: the DSR testing room, Student Support Services (TRIO), or the Teaching and Learning Center / Library Services.

Specific details are worked out between the student and his or her test proctor. The test proctor will communicate with the instructor in order to ensure that the accommodations are provided efficiently and in accordance with the teacher's requirements for test administration.

Classroom Accommodations:

- **Classroom Accessibility -** Students with mobility or physical impairments that hinder their ability to navigate to class will receive assistance in order to coordinate their classroom locations to accessible spaces.

- **Alternate Formats for Assignments** - In many cases, assignments may be submitted in formats other than those stated in course requirements (i.e., recorded rather than written or typed, and typed rather than handwritten).
- **Extended Time on Assignments** - Some students with disabilities may be approved for an accommodation of modified attendance and/or deadlines due to a disability-related need, which may require the development of a Modified Attendance & Deadline Agreement for a student in a specific course. Generally, these students have disabilities, which are chronic or episodic in nature which may cause difficulties with regular class attendance and completing work. This might include, but is not limited to, students with diabetes, epilepsy, cancer, mental health disabilities, migraines and conditions requiring on-going or specialized medical treatment.
- **Recorders / Note takers** - Students may be permitted to record class lectures or be assigned a peer note taker as a reasonable accommodation. The peer note taker is normally a volunteer that is identified by the instructor. The note taker delivers the notes to a predetermined office for the student to pick up. The identity of the student is confidential.
- **Sign Language Interpreters / CART Captionists -** Gadsden State will provide qualified sign language interpreters and CART captionists for deaf or hard of hearing students.
- **Amplified Stethoscope** - Available for students with hearing impairments who can't hear standard stethoscopes.

Please note that accommodations that require additional lead-time (such as interpreters, captionists and adaptive technology) require advance notice to the DSR office.

Disability Accommodations: Student FAQs

Do I have to tell the College about my disability to receive accommodations?

Yes. A public college can only provide accommodations after you tell the school about your disability and request support through the disability services process. Colleges are not allowed to guess or assume that a student has a disability. Once you contact disability services, the college will work with you to figure out appropriate accommodations. At Gadsden State, you can visit the Office of Disability Services and Resources or fill out the DSR enrollment form at www.GadsdenState.edu/ADA.

Do I need to provide documentation of my disability?

The Colleges asks for documentation to understand how your disability affects you and what accommodations may help. We are focused on your functional needs, not just medical labels, and work with you through an interactive process.

What happens if I choose not to request accommodations?

If you do not request accommodations or complete the accommodation process, the College is not required to provide disability-related services. You can request accommodations later, but they are not retroactive for past coursework or exams.

Will my disability affect my admission to Gadsden State?

No. Your disability will not be used against you in the admissions process.

What kinds of accommodations can I receive in class?

The College provides reasonable accommodations so students with disabilities can access classes and course materials. This may include things like extra time on exams, note-taking assistance, testing in a reduced-distraction environment, or alternate format materials.

Will the college change or lower academic standards for me?

No. Colleges are not required to lower academic standards or remove essential course requirements. However, they may need to adjust how requirements are met so that students with disabilities are not unfairly excluded, as long as those changes do not fundamentally alter the course or program.

Will the College provide personal items or services for me?

No. Public colleges are not required to provide personal services or devices, such as personal care attendants, wheelchairs, hearing aids, glasses, or other individually prescribed items. These are considered personal responsibilities.

Need help?

If you think you may need accommodations or have questions about the process, contact The Office of Disability Services and Resources as early as possible. We are here to help you access your education on an equal basis!

Campus ADA Contacts

- **Gadsden Campuses** (East Broad, Valley Street, Wallace Drive)
  - Laura Catoe, ADA Coordinator
  - lcatoe@gadsdenstate.edu, 256-549-8462
  - Joe Ford Center, East Broad Campus, Suite 102
- **Ayers Campus** (Anniston)
  - Cindy Haynes, ADA Contact
  - chaynes@gadsdenstate.edu, 256-835-5411
  - Ayers Campus One Stop Center
- **Gadsden State Cherokee** (Centre)
  - Randi Wright, ADA Contact
  - lhayes@gadsdenstate.edu, 256-927-1805
  - Academic Building

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