



Learning Disabilities (LD) Assessment

The CRC Disability Support Programs and Services (DSPS) office can do a limited number of assessments each year to see if individual students have a learning disability. The assessment will help determine whether they have a learning disability, what course accommodations are appropriate for the student to receive equal access to the information and instruction offered in their courses, their learning strengths and weaknesses, and recommendations for learning strategies the student should use given their learning disability.

“Learning disability is defined as a persistent condition of presumed neurological dysfunction which may exist with other disabling conditions. This dysfunction continues despite instruction in standard classroom situations. To be categorized as learning disabled a student must exhibit:

- a. Average to above-average intellectual ability;
- b. Severe processing deficit(s);
- c. Severe aptitude-achievement discrepancy(ies); and
- d. Measured achievement in an instructional or employment setting.”

California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Section 56036.

Reasons to refer someone for LD assessment:

- The student studies 2-3 hours per every hour they spend in the classroom, but the evaluations of their learning (tests, papers, etc.) do not reflect this amount of study.
- Significant discrepancies between any of the following: the student’s test scores, homework, written work, verbally expressed understanding of course concepts, or any other evaluative process.
- Significant discrepancy in achievement from one type of course to another, such as receiving passing grades in math and sciences while receiving failing grades in English and social sciences.

Reasons NOT to refer someone for LD assessment, but instead to make a general DSPS appointment:

- The student says they have been identified in high school as having a disability (had a “504 plan”), or were in special education (had an “IEP”).
- The student relates that they have some other disability, such as attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, a brain injury, psychological/emotional disorder, anxiety disorder, etc.

The LD Assessment Process/Timeline

The entire assessment process averages between 8 and 10 hours, spread over 4 or 5 sessions, often taking 6-8 weeks to complete.

1. Make and appointment - The student makes an appointment to see the Learning Disability Specialist by coming to the DSPS office, or calling 916-691-7275.
2. Initial screening - In an initial ½ hour session, the student is screened to see if there are other obvious causes of their learning difficulties or whether further assessment is warranted. If the student has other disabilities that are already being accommodated, and if LD identification will make no addition to those accommodations, generally the full assessment is not undertaken. If assessment will continue, the student is given a consent form and a questionnaire asking about the student's developmental and health history, family history, and educational history. When they have completed answering the questions, they need to call/visit to make a second appointment.
3. LD intake appointment – The questionnaire is reviewed, going into further detail of other possible causes of the learning difficulties, and to better identify the specific learning difficulties experienced by the student. If other explanations and/or disabilities are identified, the LD assessment will usually end.
4. Testing appointments – If assessment will continue, approximately 20 various achievement and cognitive tests will be spread over 3-4 sessions lasting 1 ½ to 2 hours each. Some of the tests assess achievement in standard academic or “learned” information such as reading, writing, math, and more. Other tests assess the processing of different types of information and the speed at which the information is processed. None of the tests can be “passed” or “failed”, but are simply measurements against grade or age norms.
5. Eligibility appointment – Once all the testing that is deemed necessary for that individual student is completed, the results are explained to the student. Besides confirming whether or not a learning disability has been identified, the emphasis is on relating the learning strengths and weaknesses shown by both the scores and observations from the testing sessions. Based on these strengths and weaknesses, learning strategies are discussed and recommended to the student. Finally, those students who have met the criteria to be served as “Learning Disabled” under the California Community Colleges Learning Disability Eligibility Model are approved for accommodations and complete the various paperwork needed by the DSPS program.

If you have any question about the process, or whether an initial LD assessment screening is warranted, email or call Scott Hamilton, Learning Disability Specialist/DSPS Counselor, at hamilts@crc.losrios.edu or 916-691-7446.

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