

Welcome to the Disability Support Services Department, your connection to information regarding services for students with disabilities.

## **What is Disability Support Services?**

The collegiate experience at Middlesex, on the campus and in the classroom, is open to students of varying abilities and levels of adaptive skills. Supportive faculty and staff as well as fellow students encourage all students to participate in extracurricular and class activities. The DSS office provides services and resources to empower each student to attain his/her highest level of academic success and learning independence.

Many motivated students are able to overcome obstacles, to become independent learners and academic achievers. Middlesex Community College has designed support services specifically for students who have physical, psychiatric, and/or learning disabilities. Services are coordinated through the Disability Support Services (DSS) Office. This manual contains useful information for students seeking assistance from Disability Support Services at Middlesex Community College.

## **DSS Mission Statement**

The mission of Disability Support Services is to ensure the following:

- Provide comparable access to programs and services which are accessible to persons without disabilities.
- Prevent discrimination of a qualified student.
- Maintain the students' rights to privacy and confidentiality.

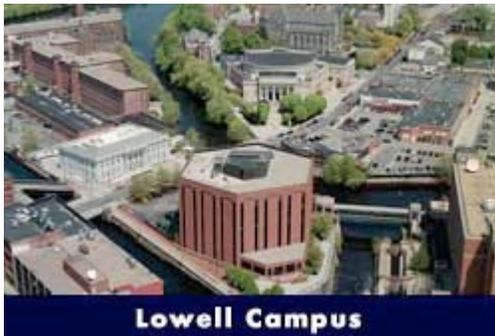


## Where is Disability Support Services located?

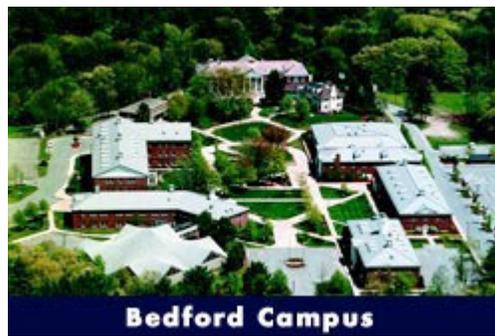
- In Bedford DSS is located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Enrollment Center, Building #9
- In Lowell DSS is located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Cowan Center Building in Room #314.

## How can I contact DSS?

Disability Support Services  
Middlesex Community College  
College 33 Kearney Square  
Lowell, MA 01852  
978-656-3258



Disability Support Services  
Middlesex Community  
591 Springs Rd.  
Bedford, MA 01730  
781-280-3630



## What services are provided?

Disability Support Services provides the following services for students:

- Assessment of your disability accommodation needs, using the information gathered from your documentation and intake interview
- Approval and coordination of accommodations
- Communication with college staff, faculty, and community agencies on behalf of DSS students
- Facilitation of referrals for support services on and off campus
- Assistance with problem-solving concerning educational barriers you may be facing
- Advocacy for medical withdrawal or a grade of "incomplete" if you are absent or unable to complete class work because of disability issues

## What are the general accommodations and services available?

- Assistive technology and training
- Alternate forms of testing (Braille, enlarged print, scribe assistance)
- Modified examination conditions
- Note-taking
- Scribes
- Interpreters

- Readers
- Books on tape
- Enlarged print
- Faculty liaison
- Mediation
- Information and referral
- Individual support
- Self-advocacy training
- Tutoring
- Workshops
- Advising
- Registration assistance

### **Other types of assistance**

- Accessible facilities  
Alternative testing (including extended- time and extended-time in non-distracting environment)
- Volunteer note-takers
- Adjustable furniture (chairs and tables)
- Sign language interpreters and real-time captioning translation

### **Services we do NOT provide**

- Personal-care attendants
- Equipment and software for off-campus use
- Learning Disability Testing
- Transportation
- Financial assistance
- Escorts to and from class
- Modified Coursework

### **Who is Eligible?**

Any full or part-time, day or evening student with a documented disability is eligible for services and/or accommodations. The accommodations are designed for the student's specific disability and needs. Students seeking accommodations through Disability Support Services office are required to submit documentation to verify eligibility under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Protection under these civil rights statutes is determined on a case-by-case basis and is based upon documentation of a current disability that substantially limits a major life activity.

To ensure accommodation in a timely manner, it is advised that students send documentation of an existing disability to Disability Support Services as early as possible.

For questions regarding eligibility or accommodations please contact us:

Bedford Campus  
781-280-3630

Lowell Campus  
978-656-3258

## **What are the Documentation Guidelines?**

1. Testing must be current. A student seeking accommodations must provide current documentation (no more than three years old) for a condition which can change over time or which responds to medication. A student seeking accommodation for a condition that does not change over time is encouraged to provide current documentation of his/her condition, however, re-testing may not be medically necessary to evaluate the student's disability. It is advised that students consult the with the Associate Dean of Student Support Services or one of our campus Coordinators of Disability Services for clarification. Because the provision of reasonable accommodations and services is based upon assessment of the current impact of the student's disabilities on his/her academic functioning, it is in a student's best interest to provide recent and appropriate documentation.
2. Testing should provide clear and specific evidence and identification of a disability.
3. Documentation should address the impact of the disability on an individual's functioning within the context of the academic and vocational environment. Comprehensive assessment should include consideration of the following (as relevant to the nature of the student's disability): physical capacity, neurological functioning, cognitive and psychological/emotional functioning. It is recognized that the type of documentation will differ depending upon the disability. Evaluation of psychological/emotional functioning must be in accordance with DSM-V criteria.

Specific areas of evaluation include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Endurance
  - Fine & Gross Motor Skills
  - Balance & Postural Control
  - Pain
  - Sensory Registration & Processing
  - Visual Perception
  - Use of Supports
  - Mood & Affect
  - Organizational Skills
  - Problem Solving
  - Coping Skills
  - Memory
4. Evaluation results and interpretation of results is required.

5. Documentation must be submitted by a qualified practitioner. Trained, certified and/or licensed physicians, psychologists, learning disabilities specialists, occupational, physical, or speech-language pathologists, and other professionals are representative of clinicians involved in the process of assessment. Diagnostic reports must include the names, titles, and professional credentials of the evaluators as well as the date(s) of testing.
6. Include specific recommendations for accommodations.

## What are the Physical Disabilities Documentation Guidelines?

**For students with visible disabilities** (e.g. students with mobility impairments), the student should provide documentation from a licensed medical professional (or interview with a Disability Services Provider depending upon the circumstances), which discloses:

- The nature of the individual's disability
- The functional limitations resulting from the disability
- Prognosis, when appropriate
- Recommended accommodations

**For students with non-visible physical disabilities**, the individual should provide current documentation from a licensed medical professional, which discloses:

- The nature of the disability
- The functional limitations resulting from the disability
- Prognosis, when appropriate
- Recommended accommodations

**For students with vision or hearing impairment**, the individual should provide current documentation from a qualified medical professional which indicates:

- The extent of the vision or hearing acuity
- The functional limitations resulting from the disability
- Prognosis, when appropriate
- Recommended accommodations

## Are there accommodations for Temporary Disabilities?

Although students with temporary disabilities or illnesses may not be considered disabled under federal law, they may sometimes need accommodations similar to those provided to students with permanent disabilities. To receive an accommodation, a student must present documentation of their temporary disability as soon as the disability is documented. Reasonable accommodations will be made on a prospective basis only, not on a retroactive basis.

## How do I get started?

- [Apply to the College](#)

Apply to the college through the Admissions office

- [Declare Disability](#)

Your acceptance packet will contain a gold colored “Voluntary Statement of Special Learning Need”. Complete the form, sign it and mail it to our office.

- [Forward Records](#)

Obtain copies of educational/medical records, which document your disability and forward them to our office. Please see below for appropriate documentation.

- [Take Placement Tests or Use Self-Placement Guidelines](#)

Go to the Student Assessment webpage to view your options for placement in courses. If you need to take the College Placement Test (CPT), call the testing office to schedule your placement test. These tests are untimed; however, contact our office if you anticipate needing other accommodations.

- [Schedule Intake Interview](#)

Call our office to make an appointment for an intake interview. You must meet with someone from our department if you wish to receive any type of accommodation.

- [Register for Classes](#)

Make an appointment through Enrollment Processing to register for classes. Prior to your registration, we can help you plan your courses if you wish, but actual registration must be done through Enrollment Processing.

- [Pick up Accommodation Sheet](#)

Make an appointment with the Disability Support Services office to pick up your Accommodation Sheet. This sheet will briefly list any accommodations you will need. If you will need any classroom accommodations, you must share this sheet with your instructor.

## Is the documentation confidential?

Information and records about any disability you may have and any accommodations made for you are treated as confidential information under applicable federal and state laws, as well as college policies, and are only provided to individuals on a need-to-know basis.

## What are the Testing Guidelines?

If you plan to use a test taking accommodation through Disability Support Services, you must follow these guidelines.

1. **Tests must be booked as soon as possible after assigned by the professor. We prefer that you book one week in advance.** We need time to reserve a room and/or computer, get the test from the professor, and make arrangements for a monitor. During mid-terms and final exams, you should book your test as early as possible. Many students will be testing, and space can be limited.
2. **Tests must be booked for the same time the professor is giving the test to the rest of the class.** For example, if the professor is giving the test at 9:00 am on Tuesday, you should make your appointment to take the test for 9:00 am on Tuesday. The only exception to this rule would be a schedule conflict due to another class. **You will not be allowed to leave the room once you begin the test, so please plan accordingly.**
3. **You must be punctual for your appointment.** When you book your test, you have reserved a block of time. If your test is from 9:00 am to 11:00 am and you show up for your test at 9:30, you will be affecting other students' schedules. We cannot guarantee availability of your testing room past the end of your block of time.
4. **You are scheduled to begin your test at the time you have booked it.** Studying should be done prior to your arrival to take your test. If you would like to study before the test, arrive a few minutes early for your appointment.
5. **Testing accommodations include Distraction Reduced and /or Extended Time Testing.** The appropriate accommodation for you has been determined based on the documentation that you provided. Distraction reduced testing means that you have a quiet place to take your test, with fewer distractions than in the regular classroom setting. There may be more than one student and/or a proctor in a distraction reduced setting. Extended time for testing is not unlimited time, it is typically 1.5 times the allotted time given to the class. For example, if you have a 50 minute class, you would have 75 minutes or one hour and 15 minutes to complete your test.
6. **All personal items, including cell phones, blackberries and other similar devices, book bags, back packs, jackets, notebooks, and purses must be left with Disability Support staff during test taking.** All items will be kept secure by staff during testing. The only items allowed for use are those indicated by the instructor on the green testing communication form.

7. **Window blinds must be left in an open position in the room where you are testing. Staff members must be able to monitor you at all times.**
8. **Testing conditions are the same as in the classroom. Once the test begins, you are not to leave the room. Tests will not be broken up into separate sections. The test is to be done in one session, unless specified by the Instructor and arranged prior to the test with Disability Support. **At the completion of testing, students must leave the entire examination with our office.****

### **What is the testing communication form?**

The purpose of the testing communication form is to provide DSS with pertinent information regarding the test you are taking. Students are responsible for picking up a form at the time they schedule their test and giving it to their teacher. The teacher will indicate any special instructions needed. DSS will make every effort to implement the special instructions if they fall within the realm of our policies.



## What are my rights?

- To not be denied access due to a disability
- To receive reasonable accommodations that provide equal opportunity
- To have access to auxiliary aids/assistive technology
- To not be counseled toward “more restrictive career objectives”
- To receive assistance from the Disability Support office in removing any physical, academic, and attitudinal barriers
- To not be discriminated against due to a disability, or receive any retaliatory discrimination

## What are my responsibilities?

- Identifying yourself to the disability office
- Providing documentation of a disability
- Initiating requests for accommodation by providing certification of disability letter to faculty within the first two weeks of the semester
- Providing a minimum of a two-week notice for all major accommodation requests (special accommodations of equipment may need more time).
- Providing your personal independent living needs or other personal disability-related needs.
- Arranging dates, and time with the Disabilities Support Services
- Providing adequate notice when a testing date is canceled or changed
- Arriving for testing on time
- Providing the teacher with a testing communication form
- Following the instructor’s and Disabilities Support Services’ policies for ensuring the integrity of the test
- Observing the College’s policies on academic integrity.

**Please note- Accommodations are not retroactive;** that is, they do not impact tests or work completed prior to the student’s submission of medical documentation and the College’s determination of any necessary accommodation.

## Can I have accommodations on the CPT placement test?

- A student who has presented the appropriate documentation is eligible for testing accommodations through DSS.
- DSS adheres to all CPT testing procedures.
- It is the policy of the college that writing samples cannot be retaken.
- DSS reserves the right to test a student without receiving documentation on an extenuating basis.
- Testing accommodations will be determined based on documentation.

## **What kind of assistive technology is available?**

### **Commonly-used software and equipment:**

- Zoom Text. Enlarges information on the computer screen for sight-impaired students.
- Jaws. Screen reader software that speaks to a student who cannot see the information.
- Naturally Speaking/Dragon Dictate. Speech recognition software that allows the student to dictate to the computer instead of typing.
- Kurtzweiler 300. Screen reader software that highlights text as it reads. Assists students who have language processing learning disabilities in reading.
- Ergonomic Keyboard
- One handed Keyboards
- Mice or Trackballs
- Adjustable Supportive Chair
- Adjustable Table
- Keyboard trays
- Monitor Risers
- CCTV
- Tape recorders
- Head sets
- Laptops

## **Is there an appeals process?**

Students have the right to appeal the College's decisions regarding requests for accommodations. We have both an informal and formal appeals process for students. We first recommend that you contact the Associate Dean of Student Support Services to discuss your concerns. Many of these situations can be resolved informally in this manner.

If you believe that this informal process is not successful, you may make a formal appeal to the college's Office of Affirmative Action. The Affirmative Action Officer will work jointly with our campus ADA Compliance Officer to try to resolve these matters in a timely fashion.

It is to the student's advantage to keep communication open with faculty, staff and peers, thus avoiding the necessity for appeals. If you are experiencing any kind of concerns in your classes in receiving your accommodations as determined by the Disabilities Support Services office, please contact us immediately so that we may better support you in your work. We often will communicate with faculty on a student's behalf to explain accommodations and help faculty understand the needs of a student. We never disclose the specific disability a student may have, only the accommodations they are eligible for in the course.

In the event a situation is not resolved, there are procedures for appeals in place that usually follow the chain of command as listed:

- Grades—Academic departments (faculty, chair, dean)
- Financial Aid—Financial Aid Office (advisor, director)
- General Complaints—Dean of Students
- Parking—chief of security
- Sexual Harassment—Affirmative Action Office

The coordinators of Disability Services or a disabilities staff member will support and assist in the process with the above procedures when it is a reasonable request.

### **Is there an incomplete grade policy if it's disability related?**

Due to extenuating disability-related circumstances (e.g., hospitalization), a student may be unable to complete coursework/examinations within the semester. Provided with adequate verification of circumstance, on occasion, a faculty member may grant the student an incomplete. Ultimately, the faculty member determines whether the amount of work to make-up is limited enough to warrant an incomplete. Disability support staff may facilitate contracts between the student and faculty member to determine what would be a "reasonable" time frame for completion. Once established, make-up schedules are non-negotiable.

## What is the policy on note taking?

Unless medical/ educational documentation deems a student incapable, eligible students with disabilities are still responsible for taking notes to the best of their ability. Note-taking services are supplemental to assist students in providing sufficient detail, weighing salient information, and/ or organizing information.

Students with disabilities are required to attend class in order to continue to receive notes. Unless there is a substantiated medical reason, instructors should notify Disability Support Services of repeated absences, and note-taking services may be suspended.

### **Student responsibilities:**

- Obtain Accommodation Form with “Copies of Class Notes,” from Disability Support Services (DSS) and notify instructor.
- Promptly notify DSS staff if instructor is having difficulty recruiting volunteers.
- Collect photocopies of class notes from DSS at least once per week.
- Notify instructor and/ or DSS staff if notes are illegible or inconsistently available.

### **Faculty responsibilities:**

- Provide copies of faculty notes if available.
- If possible, specifically ask a student to volunteer who appears to have organized notes.
- Solicit a volunteer while protecting the student with a disability’s confidentiality.
- Provide student note-taker with the “Copies of Class Notes” hand out and direct him/her to the DSS office.

### **Student note-taker’s responsibilities:**

- Bring notes to DSS office to be copied at least once per week.

## What if I need a sign language interpreter?

The Disability Support Services Office will coordinate sign language interpreter services for students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. Any student requesting a sign language interpreter must do so in accordance with the following DSS policies:

- Prior to the beginning of the semester, the student must submit documentation of his or her deafness or hearing loss to the DSS office. Based on this documentation, DSS staff will determine eligibility for interpreter services.
- If an interpreter is needed for a class/classes, the student must make the request to the DSS office a minimum of 4 weeks prior to the beginning of the semester. Because of interpreter availability, it may be difficult to fulfill requests made less than 4 weeks in advance.
- If an interpreter is needed for an event, appointment, or meeting, the student should make the request to the DSS office as soon as possible, preferably at least 2 weeks prior to the event.
- The student must introduce himself to the interpreter on the first day of class.
- The student is required to notify the DSS office as soon as possible, preferably within 24 hours, if unable to attend a class or event.
- Interpreters are required to wait only 15 minutes after a class or event begins. If a student does not show up or notify the DSS office, the interpreter will leave and the student will be marked absent.
- If a student misses 3 classes and/or events, interpreting services will be terminated until the student meets with staff in the DSS office.

**DSS will do everything possible to arrange for sign language interpreting services for eligible students. Due to limited interpreter availability in Massachusetts, it may not always be possible to honor all requests.**

## What is the Service Animal Policy?

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) a service animal (sometimes called an assistance animal) is defined as, “any guide dog, or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability”. A service animal is specifically trained to perform tasks related to the person’s disability and is not considered a pet.

Both therapy animals and emotional support animals may be part of an individual’s therapy or treatment plan, but unless they have been specifically trained to do work or perform tasks related to an individual’s disability, they are not to be considered service animals and their use is not protected under the ADA.

The following policies apply to service dogs used on the Middlesex Community College campus:

- All service animals must be licensed in accordance with city and county regulations.
- All service animals must be current in their immunizations against diseases specific to the type of animal. Dogs must be vaccinated against rabies, distemper, and parvovirus and other animals must have the appropriate vaccinations that are required for that particular animal. A licensed veterinarian must certify that the animal has been vaccinated and is healthy and free of any communicable diseases.
- The service animal must be leashed and under control of its handler/partner at all times. The care and supervision of the service animal is solely the responsibility of its handler/partner.
- Any animal that is not in control and that poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others may be excluded from the MCC campus.
- When physically possible, a person with a disability is responsible for cleaning up after his/her service animal. Any individual who is physically unable to clean up should take his/her animal to designated toilet areas whenever possible.
- There may be some areas of the college where a service animal has restricted access. This is to be determined on a case by case basis.

## **What are the Guidelines for Personal Assistants and Coaches in the Classroom?**

The college recognizes that the role of the personal assistant/ coach is important to the success of the student. In an effort to ensure that the individuals who receive services from an outside support person will be recognized as a contributing member of the class, the following guidelines have been established.

The personal assistant/ coach is expected to follow these guidelines:

1. Attend to the personal needs for which he/ she has been hired; i.e., monitor equipment, retrieve books, redirect student to task without disrupting the class, etc.  
  
\*The college is responsible for proctoring, scribing, accommodating tests and providing access to adaptive technologies on campus.
2. Demonstrate appropriate classroom behavior. Any problems or concerns with the student's performance or attendance should be directed to the student.
3. Assistant should not carry on conversations with the student during class.
4. Assistant should not actively participate in the class or in conversations between the student and faculty, staff, or other students.
5. Assistant should abide by all college policies as described in the Student Handbook.