



# Determining Effective Accommodations for Students with Mental Health Conditions

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Michelle G. Mullen, MS, CRC, CPRP,  
University of Massachusetts & The Jed Foundation  
Brittany Stone, MS, CRC, CPRP, Rutgers University  
Amy Banko, MS, CPRP, Rutgers University



*The Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research*

# Acknowledgements



The mission of the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research is to promote the full participation in socially valued roles of transition-age youth and young adults (ages 14-30) with serious mental health conditions. We use the tools of research and knowledge translation in partnership with this at risk population to achieve this mission.

Visit us at: <http://www.umassmed.edu/TransitionsACR>

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# Our Objectives:



- Describe the functional implications of common mental health conditions in the classroom;
- Identify the essential functions of a course;
- Articulate elements of the course that are able to be accommodated; and/or modified through assistive technology; and
- Describe common self-management strategies



# Who We Are



- Developed and implemented the first state- funded Supported Education programs in NJ specifically targeting college students with mental health programs
- Developed and trained 50+ programs on educational supports for college students
  - Comprehensive training programs for mental health organizations and colleges/universities
- Used our practice and program development to apply for federal funding to evaluate effective interventions
- Created two manualized interventions to help practitioners be more intentional in their services....
  - Come to our table if you are interested in learning more



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# College Supports



- Often under-educated in how to support students with mental health conditions
- Services are marketed to students with *disabilities*
- Young adults with mental health conditions do not consider themselves “disabled”
  - That’s a good thing for their personal identity
- Accommodations are not typically developed to match their specific needs
  - General accommodations are provided that may not be helpful
- This population has a speculated dropout rate of 86%; highest of any other group (e.g. freshman, other disability groups)



# Our Studies with Students with MHC



**2008**

A Randomized, Controlled, Multisite Trial of the “Effectiveness of Supported Education for Postsecondary Students with Psychiatric Disabilities.” NIDILRR #H133B100037 (Gill, Salzer, Mullen; Temple): *Referred to as Multi-site SEd*

**2011**

“Developing Executive Functioning through Cognitive Remediation for College Students with Psychiatric Disabilities” NIDILRR #H133G110239 (Mullen; Rutgers) *Referred to as FAST*

“A Study of Age-Associated Need, Services, and Outcomes of Participants enrolled in Supported Education” NIDILRR #H133B090018. (Gill, Davis, Salzer, Mullen; UMASS)

**2012**

“Manual and Training Program to Promote Career Development among Transition Age Youth and Young Adults with Psychiatric Conditions” NIDILRR #H133A120152 (Mullen; Rutgers) *Referred to as HYPE*



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# Trying to Better Understand College Students with Mental Health Conditions



- The Multi-site SEd study recruited any student that believed they needed help because of their condition (n=198)
- The FAST study recruited *only* students who had difficulty with one or more area of cognition as measured by the Matric Consensus Cognitive Battery (MCCB; n=78)
  - Significant impairment on at least one of the following areas of cognition: verbal learning, visual learning, speed of processing, attention/vigilance, working memory, reasoning/problem solving





# Interesting Points of Data

## Surprising Barriers

Over **70%** of respondents:

- Concentration (85%),
- Time management (77%),
- Stamina (75%),
- Organization (71%),
- Prioritizing tasks (70%)

Over **50%** of respondents:

- Difficulty memorizing information
- Managing psychiatric symptoms
- Studying for exams
- Taking exams
- Preparing for class
- Writing papers
- Taking notes
- Researching information
- Meeting deadlines

**Executive functioning skills were most commonly endorsed barriers.**







# Interesting Points of Data

- Relatively high GPAs at baseline
  - Multi-site sample: **3.1 GPA**
  - FAST sample: **2.7 GPA**
- Low enrollment in disability services
  - less than 25% of students were enrolled at baseline
- Difficulty maintaining enrollment
  - Academic persistence
  - Incompletes & withdrawals
  - Frequent academic breaks



# Our “AHA” Moment...



Students with mental health conditions...

- more commonly endorsed issues associated with executive functioning tasks than “classic” MH symptoms
- receive relatively good grades when completing classes
- have deficits related to executive functioning skills
- do not access specialized supports on campus, **specifically accommodations that match their needs**
- expend a tremendous amount of **personal effort** to perform

*Do not struggle with performance, per say, but with persistence due to lack of specialized supports & skills.*



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# Our Conclusion



- Executive function issues are condition-related academic barriers that need to be accommodated and developed
- Develop compensatory skills & strategies to enhance academic persistence and real-world performance.
- Students need tailored accommodations matching executive functioning deficits and other related academic implications
- Practitioners need to be trained in the functional implications of MHC and matching accommodations
- Schools need to better refine services for college students with mental health conditions to enhance retention.
  - Enhance marketing, services, & supports for this population



# Determining Accommodations Worksheet



MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION	SYMPTOMS	ACADEMIC IMPLICATION	POSSIBLE ACCOMMODATION	ACADEMIC RESOURCES OR SUPPORTS	SKILL DEVELOPMENT AREAS (FOR ENHANCED SELF-REGULATION/MANAGEMENT)
Bipolar with Psychotic Features					





# THE BASICS

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What are accommodations, essential functions, and academic implications???



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## Knowledge Check:

- Who decides on the accommodations?
- What does ODS know about accommodations for students with mental health conditions?
- What are typical accommodations that are granted to students with mental health conditions?





## Knowledge Check:

- Who decides on the accommodations?
  - Qualified Mental Health Professional: typically never trained in accommodations or essential functions,
- What does ODS know about accommodations for students with mental health conditions?
  - ODS, largely, do not know how to support those with mental health conditions
- What are typical accommodations that are granted to students with mental health conditions?
  - Time and a half, distraction-free testing room



# What Are Accommodations?



- Modifications or adjustments to the tasks &/or environment
- Enable people with disabilities to have an equal opportunity to participate in an academic program or a job
- Include changes to the application process to ensure equal opportunity to apply
- Changes that enable a student with a disability to perform the essential functions of the academic program
- Changes that enable a student with a disability to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of the program
- Should be determined by looking at how symptoms interfere with performing the critical skills needed (essential functions) in the environment.





# What are Essential Functions?



- They are the tasks/ duties that must be completed
- Essential functions cannot be modified
- The ADA does not relieve an employee from the obligation to perform the essential functions of their work (including school).
- The ADA is intended to enable persons with a disability to compete in the workplace based on the same performance standards/requirements that employers expect of persons who do not have a disability.

Accommodations *cannot* modify the “what”

Accommodations *can* modify the “how”



# Essential Functions/Technical Standards



- Usually taken from syllabus
- Typically listed in the “course objectives” or “goals of the course”
- Clarity & quality of syllabi differ
- Look for clues: compose, discuss, utilize...

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:** By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify the basic categories of evaluation instruments frequently used in rehabilitation counseling and develop plans for their use in the counseling process.
2. Understand psychometric aspects of assessment such as reliability, validity and standardization and their use in selecting specific assessment instruments.
3. Utilize and synthesize a variety of assessment strategies such as objective, behavioral and clinical data in service planning.
4. Develop assessment strategies based on the characteristics, needs and preferences of clients including addressing multi-cultural and gender issues.
5. Discuss ethical and legal issues in evaluation and assessment.
6. Write an evaluation report based on test results including making recommendations.
7. Present evaluation results to clients and use the results with the client in rehabilitation planning.
8. Consult with other professionals regarding evaluation and assessment issues.



# What is an Academic Implication?



- The academic implication of a mental health condition is how the related symptoms affects the student:
  - in the classroom,
  - outside of the classroom (e.g. internship), and
  - in completing the tasks of the course (e.g. homework, group work)
- Can/will vary by environment
- Can/will vary by teaching style
- Can/will vary by nature of the condition





## Mental health spectrum



<p><b>Stage 1</b></p> <p>Mild Symptoms and Warning Signs</p>	<p>At Stage 1, a person begins to show symptoms of a mental health condition, but is still able to maintain the ability to function at home, work or school—although perhaps not as easily as before they started to show symptoms. Often there is a sense that something is “not right.”</p>
<p><b>Stage 2</b></p> <p>Symptoms Increase in Frequency and Severity and Interfere with Life Activities and Roles</p>	<p>At Stage 2, it usually becomes obvious that something is wrong. A person’s symptoms may become stronger and last longer or new symptoms may start appearing on top of existing ones, creating something of a snowball effect. Performance at work or school will become more difficult, and a person may have trouble keeping up with family duties, social obligations or personal responsibilities.</p>
<p><b>Stage 3</b></p> <p>Symptoms Worsen with Relapsing and Recurring Episodes Accompanied by Serious Disruption in Life Activities and Roles</p>	<p>At Stage 3, symptoms have continued to increase in severity, and many symptoms are often taking place at the same time. A person may feel as though they are losing control of their life and the ability to fill their roles at home, work or school.</p>
<p><b>Stage 4</b></p> <p>Symptoms are Persistent and Severe and Have Jeopardized One's Life</p>	<p>By Stage 4, the combination of extreme, prolonged and persistent symptoms and impairment often results in development of other health conditions and has the potential to turn into a crisis event like unemployment, hospitalization, homelessness or even incarceration. In the worst cases, untreated mental illnesses can lead to loss of life an average of 25 years early.</p> <p>Mental Health America B4 Stage 4 <a href="http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/b4stage4-changing-way-we-think-about-mental-health">http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/b4stage4-changing-way-we-think-about-mental-health</a></p>



MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION	SYMPTOMS	ACADEMIC IMPLICATION	POSSIBLE ACCOMMODATION	ACADEMIC RESOURCES OR SUPPORTS	SKILL DEVELOPMENT AREAS (FOR ENHANCED SELF-REGULATION/MANAGEMENT)
Bipolar with Psychotic Features	Internal stimuli				
	Lack of symptom awareness				
	Tangential thinking				
	Memory deficits (EF)				





# ACCOMMODATIONS & ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

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# How to Assess the Academic Implications of MH Symptoms



- How is the student's daily functioning affected by the presence of the mental health condition?
- What barrier(s) does it cause?
- Does the medication/treatment for the condition have side effects?
- How do these limitations affect the student's ability to perform in the academic environment?





# Assessing the Need for an Accommodation



- Informal Interview:
  - Have your symptoms ever interfered with work/school?
  - Does your medication have side effects?
  - How have you overcome these barriers in the past?
- Student Checklist
- Resource Assessment
- Task Analysis
- Self Scoring Tools:
  - Assessing Barriers To Education (JIST)





# Types of Accommodations

1. Self
2. Informal
3. Formal





# Accommodations are not considered *reasonable* when...

- ✓ making the accommodation poses a direct threat to the health, safety, or learning environment of others
- ✓ making the accommodation means making a substantial change in an essential element of the curriculum or essential academic/technical requirements
- ✓ it poses an undue financial or administrative burden to the institution



# How Do We Develop Accommodations?



- Identify the academic implications
  - How does the presence of mental health issues affect a person's ability to perform in school?
  - Does it cause barriers? If so, what are they?
  - ❖ *Remember:* accommodations must be need based
    - ❖ If the student isn't having difficulty because of the condition, there is no need for formal accommodations.
- Identify essential functions/technical standards
  - How do we know what they are?
  - Where do we find them?



# What does it look like?



- Functional issue: Screening out external distractions
  - an inability to block out sounds, sights, or odors which interfere with focusing on tasks
- Barriers caused (trouble with...):
  - Student may not be able to concentrate on a lecture while sitting near a window overlooking an athletic field
  - While receiving tutoring in the cafeteria, a student may not be able to focus on working in such a high traffic area
  - When completing flashcards at the kitchen table while family is preparing dinner student keeps making mistakes



# Assistive Technology Defined



Assistive technology devices as identified in the IDEA (2004):

- Any item, piece of equipment or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of people with disabilities.





## Categories of Assistive Tech

- 1. Academic and Learning Aids**
- 2. Aids for Daily Living**
- 3. Assistive Listening Devices and Environmental Aids**
- 4. Augmentative Communication**
- 5. Computer Access and Instruction**
- 6. Environmental Control**
- 7. Mobility Aids**
- 8. Pre-vocational and Vocational Aids**
- 9. Recreation and Leisure Aids**
- 10. Seating and Positioning**
- 11. Visual Aids**

Adapted from the Assistive Technology Guidelines for Kentucky Schools, Kentucky Department of Education



# Assistive Technology: Examples



Maybe the missing link for many academic struggles

- Note taking
  - Smart Pens
  - Notability
- Writing
  - Word Prediction: Typ-O HD Word Predictor Dictation Software: MacSpeech, eSpeaking, Dragon Dictate
- Studying
  - Quizlet, StudyBlue
- Wellness
  - BellyBio
  - PTSD Coach
- There are a ton more! Find apps for smartphones & tablets that help to remediate the issue
  - If you don't know about it, YouTube it







# CONNECTING ACADEMIC IMPLICATIONS & ACCOMMODATIONS

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Bipolar with Psychotic Features	Internal stimuli	Impaired concentration when studying			
		Difficulty focusing in lectures			
		Trouble with test taking			
	Lack of awareness	Talking out of turn			
		Interrupting professor			
		Strong emotional reactions within the classroom			
	Tangential thinking	Difficulty communicating ideas clearly			
		Trouble with structuring written assignments			
	Memory deficits (EF)	Committing what is read or seen to memory			
		Trouble remembering appointments/due dates			
		Difficulty recalling steps in a task			



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Bipolar with Psychotic Features	Internal stimuli	Impaired concentration when studying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increased frequency of tests/exams</li> </ul>		
		Difficulty focusing in lectures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Note taker or note taking software</li> <li>● <u>Smartpen</u></li> </ul>		
		Trouble with test taking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Extended time</li> <li>● Proctored Exams</li> <li>● Exams read aloud</li> <li>● Headphones with music for exams</li> </ul>		
	Lack of awareness	Talking out of turn			
		Interrupting professor			
		Strong emotional reactions within the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Classroom buddy</li> <li>● Ability to take breaks</li> </ul>		
	Tangential thinking	Difficulty communicating ideas clearly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use of scratch paper during exams</li> </ul>		
		Trouble with structuring written assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ability to submit early for feedback</li> <li>● Requesting model of assignment</li> </ul>		
	Memory deficits (EF)	Committing what is read or seen to memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increased frequency of exams</li> <li>● Alternate</li> </ul>		



# Moving Past Accommodations: HYPE's Approach to Service



- Assess areas for skill development
  - Focus on Executive Functioning Skills
- Connect to natural supports
  - How can friends be helpful?
- Community and campus based resources
  - Find resources and connect: promote real community inclusion
  - Do not duplicate a service: if it exists connect students
  - Writing labs, reading tutors, math centers



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Bipolar with Psychotic Features	Internal stimuli	Impaired concentration when studying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased frequency of tests/exams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Library/ Study Halls</li> <li>Tutoring</li> <li>Use of study apps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schedule study time based on energy level</li> <li>Shorter, more frequent study periods</li> <li>Try strategies from the Hearing Voices network</li> <li>Recite mantra/positive affirmations</li> </ul>	
		Difficulty focusing in lectures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Note taker or note taking software</li> <li><u>Smartpen</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Register for shorter sections (1.5 hrs, 2x per wk or 45m 4x)</li> </ul>		
		Trouble with test taking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extended time</li> <li>Proctored Exams</li> <li>Exams read aloud</li> <li>Headphones with music for exams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Testing center</li> </ul>		
	Lack of awareness	Talking out of turn				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social skills training</li> <li>Develop “class rules”</li> <li>Write questions/comments before asking</li> <li>Wellness planning (WRAP)</li> </ul>
		Interrupting professor			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Faculty office hours</li> </ul>	
		Strong emotional reactions within the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom buddy</li> <li>Ability to take breaks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Counseling Services</li> <li>Campus peer support</li> </ul>		
	Tangential thinking	Difficulty communicating ideas clearly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of scratch paper during exams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tutoring</li> <li>Office hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk through problems out loud</li> <li>Seek out feedback (natural supports)</li> <li>Develop brainstorming strategies</li> </ul>	
		Trouble with structuring written assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to submit early for feedback</li> <li>Requesting model of assignment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writing lab</li> <li>Office hours</li> </ul>		



# Questions Comments Thoughts?



Thank you for coming!!!

Come visit us at our table- take a look at the HYPE and FAST manuals!!

Contact us:

Michelle Mullen: [Michelle.Mullen@umassmed.edu](mailto:Michelle.Mullen@umassmed.edu)

Brittany Stone: [Stonebl@shp.rutgers.edu](mailto:Stonebl@shp.rutgers.edu)

Amy Banko: [Amy.Banko@rutgers.edu](mailto:Amy.Banko@rutgers.edu)



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# Thank You!



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