**Students with Disabilities**

Disabilities can be defined as a physical and/or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities according to the American Disabilities Act. Also, in order to be defined as a disability, the individual has to have a history or record of such impairment. Disabilities and impairments can be a wide variety of different diagnosis.

Students have legal protected privacy/confidentiality rights.

The student's school has certain responsibilities and requirements to abide by when working with a student with a disability. Here is a list of requirements:

1. The school is only required to report disability issues if it is believed they will pose a safety risk to the patients or staff.
2. The school is not allowed to report without the student's consent if the only risk is that the student will fail the fieldwork placement.
3. Schools can report impairments, not diagnosis, and request *reasonable accommodations.*

Reasonable Accommodations is defined as any change in the work environment or in the way things are customarily done that enables an individual with a disability to enjoy equal employment opportunities. Modifications to a job should not pose an "undue" hardship (financial or administrative) on the employer and does not take away the responsibility to be creative about accessing problems.

1. Schools are not required to make any accommodations that will alter the "essential nature/functions" of the curriculum.
	* Essential Functions: specific required skills, experience, education, and tasks that are fundamentally and necessary for the position. It also includes quality of performance and productivity. Quality of performance includes the safety, complexity, consistency, and efficiency of skills. Each work and clinical site should have an essential functions description for their job.
2. A student is only allowed accommodations by the clinical site if they can document disability and they need to request them. Performance standards are not allowed to be decreased.
3. You may not ask a student directly if they have a disability.
4. You may not tell a student that they will not be able to become a PT/OT because of their disability.

**The goal is to level (not tilt) the playing field. It is to allow the student to perform at entry-level competence with the appropriate academic adjustments.**

# Possible Classroom and/or Clinic Disabilities

1. Poor written production

1. Grammar, punctuation, spelling
2. Narrative disorganization
3. May struggle with medical terminology
4. May read slowly
5. Writing notes may take longer
6. May take longer to respond to verbal requests or questions
7. May take longer to give directions
8. May have trouble obtaining information from charts, lectures, textbooks
9. May do better with demonstration or hands on
10. May have a greater knowledge in lab/lecture but do poorly on exams or written papers
11. Often do very well with the right technology and supports

Possible Non Verbal Problems

# Social skills: communication problems

1. Cannot put the parts together
2. Difficulty categorizing and analyzing
3. Motor planning difficulty
4. Procedural memory
5. Difficulty developing or evaluating alternative solutions

Possible Attention/Organizational Disorders

1. Unable to concentrate, focus, and pay attention
2. Overwhelmed, unable to cope
3. Sad, angry, irritable, helpless, restless, fatigue
4. Poor problem solving and making decisions
5. Lacks initiative and motivation

 Possible Anxiety and Depression

1. Unable to concentrate, focus, and pay attention
2. Overwhelmed, unable to cope
3. Sad, angry, irritable, helpless, restless, fatigue
4. Poor problem solving and making decisions
5. Lacks initiative and motivation

*References:*

*Nancy Sharby, PT, MS, DPT and Susan E. Roush, PhD, PT: Working with Students with Disabilities Course at Oakland University 2010*

*Nancy V. Milligan, PhD, OTRL, FAOTA; Andrea Weid, MPA, OTRL; and Susan Owens, MS, OTRL: MOTEC Fieldwork Educator Day 2015 at Wayne State University*