



**Student Handbook for Policies and  
Procedures**

***Student Accessibility Resources  
(SAR)***

Updated June 2024

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# Section I: Introduction to Gulf Coast State College Student Accessibility Resources

## Mission Statement

The mission of Student Accessibility Resources (SAR) at Gulf Coast State College is to help create a fair and inclusive learning environment through specific educational accommodations and support services guided by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. As set by the standards of the GCSC mission, we want to assist our students in their educational, career, and personal achievements/goals with equal access to all programs using both on-campus and off-campus resources. In addition, we advocate for our students in order to lift educational barriers while empowering and embracing their differences by exploring new awareness campaigns and trainings for the GCSC population.

## Office Hours

Monday through Friday 8:00am – 4:00pm

## Location

Student Union East, Ground Floor, Room 27

## Contact Information

E-Mail: [SAR@gulfcoast.edu](mailto:SAR@gulfcoast.edu)

Phone: 850-747-3243

Fax: 850-767-8034

Please review the [SAR Website](#) for more information on Community Resources and Advocacy Tips.

## Methods of Contact

Communication between students and SAR is important during the semester so as to keep students up-to-date on current events, new policies and procedures, or questions/concerns with accommodations. SAR uses the following methods in communicating with students:

1. **Email:** SAR's main form of communication is through students Gulf Coast email ([xxxx@my.gulfcoast.edu](mailto:xxxx@my.gulfcoast.edu)) which can be accessed through their Canvas Dashboard. Students should be checking their Gulf Coast email periodically to ensure they are receiving information in a timely manner.
2. **Phone:** SAR may contact students via the phone number provided on their application or any updated number provided to SAR.
3. **In Person Appointments:** Students are highly encouraged to make appointments with staff members if they are inquiring about services, finding difficulties with accommodative

services, or any in-person communication. Please contact SAR via phone at 850-747-3243 or [EMAIL](#) to schedule an appointment.

## Rights and Responsibilities

### Registration with Student Accessibility Resources

Registration with Student Accessibility Resources is a separate process from applying for admission to Gulf Coast State College. Interested students should contact Student Accessibility Resources by phone at 850-747-3243 or [EMAIL](#). In order to qualify and receive accommodations, it is necessary for students with disabilities to self-identify with SAR to determine eligibility for services based on their documentation and the intake interview. We advise that you **do not** submit disability documentation directly to the Admissions Office. Services and accommodations **cannot** be provided until the student has completed the SAR electronic application and provided the appropriate documentation through the application.

### Student Accessibility Resources (SAR) Rights and Responsibilities

Student Accessibility Resources is the central contact point for students with disabilities. Services for students with disabilities focus on providing individualized accommodations while promoting student responsibility and self-advocacy. SAR views the provision of reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities as a collaborative effort, requiring the cooperation of the faculty and staff as well as students.

Students who choose to not self-identify when they enter Gulf Coast State College do not forfeit their right to identify themselves and to receive accommodations at a later date. However, the College is not obligated to provide accommodations or services for students with disabilities until students are registered with SAR and have made known their need for accommodations **each academic term/semester**.

#### Student Accessibility Resources has the right to:

- Request and receive current disability documentation that supports requests for accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services;
- Deny a request for accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services if the documentation demonstrates that the request is not warranted or the student fails to provide appropriate documentation;
- Select among equally effective accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services;
- Refuse accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services that impose a fundamental alteration of a College program or activity.

#### Student Accessibility Resources has the responsibility to:

- Provide information to students with disabilities in accessible formats upon request;
- Ensure that courses, programs, services, activities, and facilities are available and usable in the most integrated and appropriate settings;
- Review the Student Accessibility Resources application, submitted by the student, to determine eligibility for services and nature of accommodations;

- Provide or arrange reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and auxiliary aids and services;
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality of records and communication, and to disclose such information only when permitted by law;
- Serve as a liaison between students and faculty;
- Serve as a resource on disability issues for the Gulf Coast State College campus community.

## **Faculty Rights and Responsibilities**

### **Faculty members have the right to:**

- Identify and establish standards for courses and academic programs;
- Verify through the Student Accessibility Resources the eligibility for and nature of accommodations before provision of accommodations occurs;
- Request assistance and resources from Student Accessibility Resources.

### **Faculty members are responsible for:**

- Evaluating students solely on the basis of their academic performance;
- Working with the student and Student Accessibility Resources to ensure the provision of reasonable accommodations;
- Fostering an accessible learning environment to all learners;
- Addressing concerns about disability accommodations with Student Accessibility Resources.
- Maintaining a signed copy of the Semester Form (SF).

## **Students Rights and Responsibilities**

### **Students with documented disabilities at GCSC have the right to:**

- Equal access to educational and co-curricular programs, services, and activities facilitated by GCSC.
- Equal opportunity to learn and receive reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids and services as supported by their documentation, which do not represent a fundamental alteration of the essential educational components of the academic programs.
- Confidential treatment of disability-related records that is housed at Student Accessibility Resources. Only persons working at, or in collaboration with SAR have access to these records. Some level of disclosure to faculty may be necessary to coordinate requested accommodation(s). Disability documentation that is submitted to SAR are not a part of the student's permanent academic record.

### **Students with documented disabilities at GCSC are responsible for:**

- Meeting qualifications and maintaining academic, technical, and institutional standards for courses, programs, services, activities, and facilities.

- Providing current and appropriate disability documentation in accordance with established GCSC guidelines.
- Initiating and following established procedure for obtaining reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services in a timely manner.
- Renewing their accommodations and completing their portion of the Semester Form at the beginning of each new semester:
  - Reviewing and electronically signing and submitting their Semester Form (SF). This allows for each professor to be electronically notified of the student's accommodations, which in turn allows for each instructor to electronically sign the SF and electronically return to the SAR office.
- **Students are advised to:**
  - Meet with each of their professors to discuss the testing and academic accommodations that he/she anticipates needing for each class;
  - Self-disclose their disability status to faculty and staff *when appropriate*;
  - Exercise self-advocacy to meet their disability related needs.

## Relevant Guiding Legislation

### The Rehabilitation Act of 1973-Section 504:

Provides a 'right of access' statute to individuals with disabilities. Section 504 provides persons with disabilities the right of access into, or to derive benefits from, any program or activity receiving federal financial funding.

### The Americans with Disabilities Act:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADAAA) of 1990 is civil rights legislation that affects approximately 54 million Americans with Disabilities. This federal law provides a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities. The ADA is regarded as the most sweeping civil rights legislation since The Civil Rights Act of 1964. The ADA protects the civil rights of individuals with disabilities by ensuring equal access to employment, state and local government agencies, transportation, public and private facilities, and telecommunications.

### Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 states in part that . . .

"No otherwise qualified handicapped individual...shall, solely by reason of his handicap, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

### Disabled Individual Definition

Both the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 define a "disabled individual" as anyone who:

1. has a mental or physical impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, such as seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, or working, or
2. has a record of such impairment; or
3. is regarded as having such an impairment.

# Section II: Everything You Need to Know About Reasonable Accommodations

## Defining Reasonable Accommodations

- Reasonable accommodations are appropriate adjustments to programs, policy, and practice that make aspects of the college experience accessible and provide equal opportunities to Gulf Coast State College students with disabilities. An equal opportunity means a chance to attain the same level of performance or to enjoy equal benefits and privileges as are available to a similarly situated student without disabilities.
- Students are not charged for the cost incurred in providing reasonable accommodations, including auxiliary aids and services (e.g., sign language interpreters, note-taking support, text conversion to alternative accessible formats, etc.)
- To determine reasonable accommodations, SAR may seek information from appropriate college personnel regarding essential standards for courses, programs, services, activities, and facilities. The Coordinator makes the final determinations of reasonable accommodations in collaboration with the student and faculty as warranted.
- Reasonable accommodations are determined by examining:
  1. Environmental barriers limiting curricular, facility, or programmatic access.
  2. Whether or not the student has access to the course, program, service, activity, or facility without an accommodation;
  3. The range of possible accommodations that might remove the barriers;
  4. Whether or not essential elements of the course, program, service, activity, or facility are compromised by the accommodations.

## Procedure for Requesting Accommodations

Students must follow procedures for requesting accommodations:

1. Be enrolled and registered for classes at GCSC.
2. Apply to receive Accommodations with the Student Accessibility Resources (SAR) Department. **DUAL ENROLLED students must apply through GCSC for accommodations. IEP/504 accommodations DO NOT automatically transfer.**
3. Provide any and all documentation/paperwork regarding your disability to the SAR Department.
4. Schedule an appointment with the SAR Department (850.747.3243) to review and agree to all terms of accommodation plan.
5. Self-Identify to each Professor(s) for each course of your approved accommodations.

*The SAR department encourages students to set up a time to speak with professors about accommodations.*

**\*\*Each semester, SAR students are required to renew their accommodations with the Student Accessibility Resource Department.**



## Changes in Accommodations Needs

Students are entitled to request additional accommodations or academic adjustments during the course of the semester, or at any time during their tenure at Gulf Coast State College. Students are also entitled to request modifications to the nature of the accommodations. Students must work with Student Accessibility Resources to determine the appropriate changes to accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services. The office should be contacted at earliest indication of emerging accommodation needs. Students must allow up to two weeks for the coordination and provision of new accommodations or modifications to existing accommodations.

## Semester Forms

Students must notify professor(s) for each course electronically if expecting to receive accommodations. This must be done each semester per the SAR process.

## Examples of Reasonable Accommodations

Examples of some of the most frequently requested accommodations include:

- Extended time for quizzes and exams
- Distraction-reduced environment for exams
- Note-taking support (i.e. record lectures, copy of instructor notes/power points if available, peer note taker)
- Classroom materials and textbooks in alternative formats

## When are accommodation requests denied?

The College provides accommodations unless they fall under one of the following four categories:

- *Fundamental Alteration*
- *Accommodation Request is Not Supported*
- *Undue Hardship*
- *Personal Service*

**Fundamental Alteration:** If an accommodation reduces the academic standards of the College, its schools, departments, or courses, the College denies the accommodation because it is unreasonable. Academic standards are essential for every student. It is unreasonable to alter these fundamental standards with an accommodation.

**Accommodation Request is Not Supported:** An accommodation must be designed to both provide access to the College's programs and minimize the impact of the disability. In some cases, the requested accommodation cannot be substantiated as 'minimizing the impact of the disability' based upon a review of the submitted documentation and/or the subjective experience of the student. The accommodation is denied in these cases since the removal of a barrier is not warranted or necessary when compared to the limitations imposed by the disability.

**Undue Hardship:** If an accommodation costs too much or is impossible to administer, the College denies the accommodation because it is unreasonable. An unjustifiable financial burden will have an adverse effect on the entire College system. An undue administrative burden occurs when the College does not have the time or ability to respond to a request.

**Personal Service:** If a request for an accommodation falls under the definition of a personal service, the College denies the request because it is unreasonable. Personal services are those that a person with a disability must use regardless of attendance at the College. In addition, personal services are those for which no correlation between the disability's functional limitation and program access can be established.

### **Notification of Denial for Accommodations**

If a student is found to be ineligible for one or more requested accommodations, a SAR staff member will meet with the student to discuss denial, find alternatives, and advise on the appropriate appeals process.

# Section III: Documentation

## General Guidelines for Disability Documentation

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, as well as the Americans with Disabilities Restoration Act, allows colleges and universities to require disability documentation to verify the need for accommodations. What constitutes acceptable documentation is often an area of uncertainty for those preparing students for higher education. Because of this, Student Accessibility Resources (SAR) at Gulf Coast State College, has adopted the following guidelines to serve as a resource to potential students, Guidance Counselors, Child Study Teams and other interested parties as they prepare students with disabilities for the transition to higher education. These guidelines focus on identifying the components of disability documentation that are particularly useful in developing appropriate accommodation plans. The major components of quality documentation are:

### Documentation should be up-to-date

- Documentation should be **recent** in order to assess the current impact on academic functioning. The level of currency required for disability documentation varies dependent on condition (please see specific criteria), but in most cases should be less than 3 years old and consist of adult-normed evaluations.
- While relatively recent documentation is recommended in most circumstances, common sense and discretion in accepting older documentation of conditions that are permanent or non-varying is exercised. Likewise, changing conditions and/or changes in how the condition impacts the individual brought on by growth and development may warrant more frequent updates in order to provide an accurate picture. It is important to remember that documentation is not time-bound; the need for recent documentation depends on the facts and circumstances of the individual's condition.

### The credentials of the evaluator(s)

- The best quality documentation is provided by a licensed or otherwise properly credentialed professional who has undergone appropriate and comprehensive training, has relevant experience and has no personal relationship with the individual being evaluated. It is expected that the credentials of the person making the diagnosis correlate to the condition being reported (e.g., an orthopedic limitation might be documented by a physician, but not a licensed psychologist).

### A diagnostic statement identifying the disability

- Quality documentation includes a clear diagnostic statement that describes how the condition was diagnosed, provides information on the functional impact, and details the typical progression or prognosis of the condition. While diagnostic codes from the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM) or the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF) of the World Health Organization are helpful in providing this information, a full clinical description will also convey the necessary information.

### A description of the diagnostic methodology used

- Quality documentation includes a description of the diagnostic criteria, evaluation methods, procedures, tests and dates of administration, as well as a clinical narrative, observation, and specific results. Where appropriate to the nature of the disability,

having both summary data and specific test scores (with the norming population identified) within the report is recommended.

- Diagnostic methods that are congruent with the particular disability and current professional practices in the field are recommended. Methods may include formal instruments, medical examinations, structured interview protocols, performance observations and unstructured interviews. If results from informal, non-standardized or less common methods of evaluation are reported, an explanation of their role and significance in the diagnostic process will strengthen their value in providing useful information.

### **A description of the current functional limitations**

- Information on how the disabling condition(s) currently impacts the individual provides useful information for both establishing a disability and identifying possible accommodations. A combination of the results of formal evaluation procedures, clinical narrative, and the individual's self-report is the most comprehensive approach to fully documenting impact. The best quality documentation is thorough enough to demonstrate whether and how a major life activity is substantially limited by providing a clear sense of the severity, frequency, and pervasiveness of the condition(s).

### **A description of the expected progression or stability of the disability**

- Information on how the disabling condition(s) currently impacts the individual provides useful information for both establishing a disability and identifying possible accommodations. A combination of the results of formal evaluation procedures, clinical narrative, and the individual's self-report is the most comprehensive approach to fully documenting impact. The best quality documentation is thorough enough to demonstrate whether and how a major life activity is substantially limited by providing a clear sense of the severity, frequency, and pervasiveness of the condition(s).

### **A description of current and past accommodations, services and/or medications**

- The most comprehensive documentation will include a description of both current and past medications, auxiliary aids, assistive devices, support services, and accommodations, including their effectiveness in enhancing functional impacts of the disability. A discussion of any significant side effects from current medications or services that may impact physical, perceptual, behavioral or cognitive performance is helpful when included in the report. While accommodations provided in another setting are not binding on the current institution, they may provide insight in making current decisions.

### **Recommendations for accommodations, adaptive devices, assistive services, compensatory strategies, and/or collateral support services**

- Recommendations from professionals with a history of working with the individual provide valuable information for review and the planning process. It is most helpful when recommended accommodations and strategies are logically related to functional limitations; if connections are not obvious, a clear explanation of their relationship can be useful in decision-making. While the post-secondary institution has no obligation to provide or adopt recommendations made by outside entities, those that are congruent with the programs, services, and benefits offered by the college or program may be appropriate. When recommendations go beyond equitable and inclusive services and benefits, they may still be useful in suggesting alternative accommodations and/or services.

### **In Summary:**

- Documentation should be comprehensive, contain a diagnostic statement identifying the disability, and establish clear evidence of a significant impact on academic functioning.
- Documentation should be relevant to requested accommodations.
- SAR can provide the student with a form for their practitioner to complete which, once completed by the practitioner, may serve as sufficient documentation for the student.

### **Incomplete Documentation**

If the original documentation is incomplete or inadequate to determine the extent of the disability or reasonable accommodation(s), Gulf Coast State College SAR has the discretion to require additional documentation. Gulf Coast State College SAR also reserves the right to grant or deny “provisional/interim accommodations” pending receipt of any incomplete documentation.

### **Maintenance of Documentation**

Gulf Coast State College Student Accessibility Resources Department maintains an electronic file containing all submitted documentation for an enrolled student throughout the student’s tenure at Gulf Coast State College. When a student separates from the college, the file will be placed in an electronic archive. After 5 years, the archived file will be destroyed.

Given limitations for storage of such files as well as the student’s potential need for the documentation in the future, it is preferable that separating students plan to pick up their documentation from SAR prior to separation from the College.

## Section IV: Accommodations and Student Accessibility Resources at GCSC

Accommodations at Gulf Coast State College are provided and/or coordinated through Student Accessibility Resources. In order to ensure that accommodations are provided in a timely and effective manner, specific procedures have been developed for the most common accommodative practices. Students should adhere to these procedures in order to request and utilize their accommodations. Students should discuss the process for coordinating non-standard accommodations (those not specifically discussed in this section), with a member of the SAR Staff.

### Testing Accommodations

Accommodative testing allows the student to take his/her exam in an alternative environment, or in an alternative format. Accommodative testing does not alter the content of the exam. Students with disabilities are held to the course requirements and college's academic standards.

### Testing Procedures for Students

Register for quiz/test/examination through [RegisterBlast](#) **no later than 72 business hours prior to the examination date/time**. This generally should be the same day/time that the rest of the class is scheduled to take the exam unless a mitigating circumstance (such as a class immediately following the exam time which would preclude the student from the accommodation of extended time) occurs. In these situations, the student should collaborate with SAR staff and the professor to work out an appropriate alternative.

\*If a student is requesting to take his/her exam on a different date/time, the student must receive approval from his/her instructor. The instructor must [EMAIL SAR](#) and [Testing Center](#) with specific details of the alternative testing date and/or time.

### RegisterBlast – How to Register for Your Test

To schedule an exam appointment in [RegisterBlast](#), (Subject to Change)

- Read the web page and click **SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT**
- Read the web page and click **SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT** a second time
- Scroll down and click “Testing Center” tab on left side of screen.
- Complete the Exam Registration page completely
- SAR students will select either “SAR Testing Center” or “SAR with Reader/ScribeSemi-Private (approved accommodations only)”
- Agree to Guidelines and click **ADD TO CART**
- Once you have clicked “**COMPLETE REGISTRATION**,” your email confirmation receipt will appear. SAR recommends you print and/or save receipt for your records.

### Online Exam Accommodations

SAR recommends student send instructor courtesy email at least three days prior to quiz/test with reminder of approved extended time.

If the online test must be proctored, follow Register Blast instructions.

### **Change in Date/Time of Quiz/Test**

Students are required to take quiz/test(s) during the scheduled time of their class and cannot change the date/time without permissions from their professor. SAR and student(s) are not authorized to change the date/time of a scheduled test/quiz as this would violate testing and academic integrity. Professors and SAR understand that due to time allocations, there may be some scheduling issues and therefore, students must request permission from their Professor in order to reschedule and SAR staff must be able to verify this.

### **Day of Exam**

Students with accommodations to test with SAR will be held to the same standard as all students testing in GCSC's Testing Center. Please refer to "On the Day of your Exam" within [Testing Center's Policies and Procedures](#).

### **Testing and Academic Integrity**

Students registered with SAR are expected to uphold all of the college's academic integrity policies and abide by the student Academic Code of Conduct. SAR is committed to upholding these policies. If a student is found to be in violation of the academic code of conduct and/or the additional provisions, the exam will be stopped and returned to the professor with a note explaining the circumstances involved to necessitate the discontinuation of proctoring. The Dean of Student Life will also be notified of the incident.

Furthermore, students who engage in acts of academic dishonesty while receiving testing accommodations through SAR risk being subjected to special test scheduling criteria in order to ensure that a one-to-one proctor can be present.

In order to ensure the integrity of all exams and protect the reputations of students who utilize testing accommodations, the following activities may also be considered cheating:

- Possession and use of any non-approved material or device (course notes, cell phone, etc...)
- Leaving the testing location without approval
- Speaking with anyone who is not SAR Staff.

## Note-Taking Accommodations

### Policies and Procedures for Receiving Note-Taking Support

Note-Taking Accommodations are provided in formats that include but are not limited to; devices used to record lectures and copies of instructor notes and/or Power Points (if available) and in some limited cases a peer/personal note-taker. Services will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Students are **highly encouraged** to work with a SAR Learning Manager to learn how to improve their note-taking skills.

#### PEER/PERSONAL NOTE-TAKERS:

- Note-taking support via personal note-taker is provided as a means to accommodate students who, due to the impact of their disability, might otherwise miss recording important information in their notes. This service is usually reserved for students who are physically unable to write/type notes, but other disabilities may be considered. Other means of note taking support may be considered as well. Notes for individual classes are generally provided in electronic format and are sent to the individual student through the SAR department's e-mail account. **Provision of note-taking services is not a substitution for attending class and does not excuse a student from taking their own class notes when possible or otherwise actively participating in the class.**
- Students requesting note taking support must be enrolled in the course for which the notes are being requested.
- Students are expected to attend class on a regular basis and take notes to the best of their ability.
- Students must respond to all SAR email correspondence regarding note taking support requests. Failure to respond can delay services.
- Students are NOT permitted to duplicate and distribute notes for others.
- Students are NOT permitted to ask designated note taker for additional services such as tutoring.
- Students should notify SAR immediately if they:
  - Recruit his/her own note taker.
  - Determined that note taking support is not needed for a particular course or if he/she has withdrawn from a course for which notes were requested. Failure to notify SAR can result in suspension of note-taking support pending a meeting with SAR Coordinator.
  - Have not received notes in a reasonable amount of time.



## Audio Recording Policy

Students may record their class lectures consistent with GCSC policy located in the GCSC Student Handbook:

**Recording of Lectures:** Students may, without prior notice, record video or audio of a class lecture for a class in which the student is enrolled for their own personal educational use. A class lecture is defined as a formal or methodical oral presentation as part of a university course intended to present information or teach enrolled students about a particular subject. Recording class activities other than class lectures, including but not limited to lab sessions, student presentations (whether individually or part of a group), class discussion (except when incidental to and incorporated within a class lecture), clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving student participation, test or examination administrations, field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty member, and invited guest speakers is prohibited. Recordings may not be used as a substitute for class participation and class attendance and may not be published or shared without the written consent of the faculty member. Failure to adhere to these requirements may constitute a violation of the student code of conduct. For more details and FAQ for students, click the link: [Student Handbook](#)

Failure to abide by the audio recording of lectures policy may result in a charge of academic misconduct.

## Sign Language Interpreters

Sign language interpreters are professionals who facilitate communication between hearing individuals and people who are deaf through the use of sign language. The role of the interpreter is similar to that of a foreign language translator- to bridge the communication gap between two parties. Sign language interpreters translate spoken English into the visual-spatial languages of ASL and Signed English (SE).

## Student Responsibilities regarding Sign Language Interpreters

Interpreting service requests must be made through the Student Accessibility Resources office, not individual interpreters or agencies. If you coordinate your own interpreting services, SAR will not be responsible for cost of service. The student must register/renew for their interpreter accommodations each semester they are registered for classes at GCSC. The student should register/renew with SAR as soon as possible, but no later than 3 weeks prior to the beginning of the semester. Late SAR registration/renewals for interpreter services will be addressed as soon as possible, but the student should be aware that at times sign-language interpreters can be difficult to secure.

- The student (and the Interpreter) will review and sign the Student/Interpreters Service Agreement each semester.

## Adaptive or Assistive Technology

Assistive technology (AT) is any item, piece of equipment, or product system used to increase, maintain, or improve access for individuals with disabilities. Student Accessibility Resources has access to an ever-changing variety of software and hardware that is available to loan to eligible students to assist them in mitigating the impact of their disability.

Once specific AT components are identified that are believed to be potentially beneficial to minimizing the impact of the student's disability, the student should complete the Student Equipment Loan Agreement. Arrangements will be made to provide the student with established components in accordance with standard equipment loan procedures. The following general policies guide the loaning of SAR equipment to students:

- Use the borrowed materials for educational and accessibility purposes only
- Items may not be shared with others
- Immediately report any damage or loss of material to Student Accessibility Resources; whether or not you are responsible for the damage
- Loans are for a pre-determined time period and must be returned or renewed on or before the agreed upon date. Be advised that failure to return equipment in the same condition it was loaned may result in a replacement fee and a HOLD on the student's account.

Assistive technology is a rapidly evolving field, with innovative AT solutions constantly emerging. In the effort to provide students with the most effective AT solutions, Gulf Coast State College is committed to consistently upgrading its AT resources. GCSC is not required to provide the most sophisticated auxiliary aids/AT available; however, the aids/AT provided must effectively meet the needs of a student with a disability. Please periodically check with SAR to learn about its latest improvements to Gulf Coast State College's AT resources.

## Classroom Accommodations

Student Accessibility Resources arranges for students needing classroom accommodations (i.e. adaptive furniture, elevator needs, etc).

Students are required to:

- Notify SAR of classroom accessibility needs at time of intake/renewal appointment.
- Provide information regarding limitations with:
  - Desks
  - Seating
  - Stairs and/or elevators
  - Specific building on campus

GCSC provides the plan for Emergency Meeting Points for Mobility Impaired Individuals. The student may request a copy of the plan and a tour of the meeting points if needed.

## Service Animals Policy

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), service animals are permitted in college facilities. A service animal is a dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability. Examples of the functions of services animals include but are not limited to: guiding individuals with impaired vision, alerting individuals with impaired hearing, providing minimal rescue or protection work, pulling a wheelchair, or fetching dropped items. Support animals (therapy, emotional support animals, or companion animals) are not service animals and are not covered under legal protections of the ADA. To work on campus, a service animal must be specifically trained to perform a service function related to the disability. Furthermore, the animal may wear a harness, cape, identification tag or other gear that identifies its working status. This is not required, but recommended so that others know it is a working animal. Service animals whose behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others may be excluded regardless of training or certification. The animal must be under control of the handler at all times.

Students and campus personnel should not prevent a Service Animal from accompanying its owner, except where specifically prohibited. Students and campus personnel should not attempt to pet, feed, or distract a Service Animal, as they are working animals providing a service to the person with a disability. GCSC requests that Handlers of Service Animals agree to the "Service Animas Owner responsibilities related to grooming, sanitation, health, and control of their animal from MOP 7.096" agreement. This form is located in the GCSC SAR Department or GCSC HR Department (asked Sherri to add 4-1-24). For more information, click the link [ADA Service Animals](#)

## Attending Campus Events

Accommodations for campus events are coordinated primarily by the department sponsoring the event with assistance provided by SAR. Students must notify the sponsoring department of accommodation needed to attend the event (examples: sign language interpreters for a theatrical production sponsored by Gulf Coast State College).

# Section V: Confidentiality, Appeals, and Grievance Procedures

## Policy on Confidentiality

### General Rule

The Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) regulates disclosure of disability documentation and records maintained by SAR. SAR requires prior written consent by the student before SAR may release disability documentation or records to any third party.

### Exception to the Rule

Under FERPA, SAR is permitted to release information to any school official who has a "legitimate educational interest."

### What does this mean?

Professors or other school officials, such as tutors, may request information about the impact of a student's disability on their ability to learn. SAR will only share information with other school officials when appropriate and will carefully balance a student's request for confidentiality and the request for additional, relevant information about the student. SAR seeks to preserve the student's wish to keep their disability information and status confidential.

### Other Student Rights under FERPA

FERPA also allows students to inspect and review their files maintained by SAR. Students have the right to challenge any information contained in the files that is incorrect or misleading and request an amendment to this misinformation.

## GCSC Appeals and Grievance Procedures

Timeliness in reporting incidents of discrimination is essential for the protection of individual rights. For this reason, such incidents should be reported as soon as possible, but within 60 days of the occurrence.

The Executive Director of Human Resources has been designated to coordinate compliance with non-discrimination requirements and handle all claims alleging discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct and serves as the college's equity officer. This includes complaints alleging any action prohibited by the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against on the basis of disability by Gulf Coast State College may file complaints pursuant to the following procedure. Inquiries may be made with the Executive Director of Human Resources at 850-872-3866, 5230 West U.S. Highway 98, Panama City, FL 32401.

## How to Report Alleged Discrimination

1. Students who believe they are victims of discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct may report the facts and circumstances to a college official or the Dean of Student Life, as a first report of an incident. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome, he or she may report the complaint to the Executive Director of Human Resources. A copy of the initial report will be hand-delivered to the president within 2 working days.
2. The initial report may be made either verbally or in writing. If verbal, the college official, other than the Dean, receiving the report will make a written record of the alleged incident. If the report is written, it must be signed. The college official, other than the Dean, who receives the student's initial report, will hand deliver the complaint to the Dean of Student Life, as a first report of the incident. The aim of the first report of an incident is to ensure that the alleged harassing and/or discriminatory conduct ceases and that the matter is resolved on an informal basis.
3. If the informal investigation of the facts and circumstances fails to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the student complainant, a formal written complaint setting forth the facts and circumstances of the alleged discrimination may be filed by the student with the Executive Director of Human Resources who will conduct a further formal investigation within 30 days of receipt of the complaint.
4. At the conclusion of the formal investigation, a written summary report, including appropriate recommendations, will be made to the president. When warranted, disciplinary action may be taken against any person who violates this policy; or other actions may be taken by the college to ensure non-discrimination in the future. The student will be informed in writing of the outcome of the investigation.

## Alternative Remedies

Should you disagree with the outcome of the grievance process, you may file a formal complaint with the Office for Civil Rights. To file a formal grievance with the Office for Civil Rights please contact:

Atlanta Office (*Florida's Local Office*) for Civil Rights

U.S. Department of Education

61 Forsyth St. SW, Suite 19T10

Atlanta, GA 30303-8927

**Phone:** .....404-974-9406

**Fax:** .....404-974-9471

**TDD:** .....800-877-8339

**Email:**.....OCR.Atlanta@ed.gov