

Accommodations Policies

Requesting and Receiving Accommodations

If a student has a diagnosed learning difficulty that hinders his or her ability to access information or demonstrate knowledge, then we strive to find the appropriate accommodation that provides space and opportunity for that student to learn and grow academically. At the same time, inappropriate accommodations can hinder a student's academic and personal growth while creating an unfair opportunity for some. As a general rule, accommodations may not alter what the test or assignment is trying to measure. For all of these reasons, we take accommodations seriously and evaluate each student carefully. Please allow plenty of time to complete the process, since it is not something that can be done last minute.

Please keep in mind, accommodations are not a silver bullet but rather one tool that we use to enhance student learning. It is important that students develop self-awareness and advocacy while improving school navigation and learning skills. In order to deliver the best services to students, many factors are taken into consideration, including: teacher input, grades and GPA, classroom observations, a student's engagement in class and his or her involvement in his or her own academic career. Families are encouraged to exhaust all other avenues of support (meeting with teachers, tutoring, Write Place, math lab, academic coaching) before requesting accommodations.

Procedures for Requesting and Receiving Accommodations

1. Parent and/or student contacts the accommodations coordinator to request accommodations.
2. The accommodations coordinator gathers information from parents, students, and teachers regarding academic performance, classroom behavior, grades, strengths, and weaknesses.
3. The accommodations coordinator reviews information gathered and contacts parents to recommend next steps. In some cases, next steps may include taking advantage of academic support services such as tutoring, teacher meetings, and academic coaching before beginning the accommodations process.
4. If accommodations are recommended, families submit diagnostic testing from a qualified professional (educational psychologist or school psychologist) to the accommodations coordinator. Documentation must be within the last 3 years and must include a diagnosis with a specific learning disability. Families may choose a private evaluator or choose to be evaluated by the public school. If a student lives in the Douglas County School District and wishes to be evaluated by the public school, parents should contact their neighborhood public high school. Families who live outside of Dougco should contact Miss Munderloh when seeking an evaluation by the public school.
5. The Accommodations Committee reviews diagnostic testing; student grades, and teacher input and determines appropriate course of action. The committee meets once a month.
6. The accommodations coordinator, parent, student, and in some cases, some members of the Accommodations Committee, meet to establish an accommodations plan.
7. The agreed upon accommodations plan will be put in place. Teachers are provided a copy of this plan.
8. After two months, teachers submit feedback on how the student is using his or her accommodations and whether or not the accommodations are helping the student succeed academically; the accommodations coordinator, parent, and student discuss any concerns.
9. Accommodations plans are evaluated on a yearly basis. Students should be reevaluated every three years, and plans will be updated accordingly. Families living in the Douglas County School District who receive an Individual Service Plan from the public school should stay in contact with their neighborhood school and attend annual reviews of their student's ISP. Families outside of the Douglas County School District will be contacted by Highlands Ranch High School or Miss Munderloh for annual reviews.

Private Evaluations Versus Public School Evaluations

Private Evaluation:

Pros:

- You get to choose the evaluator
- The evaluation and end report are often much more extensive
- The process often goes much faster than public school evaluations
- The setting is private and confidential
- You will receive a diagnosis for a specific learning disability

Cons:

- Testing can be expensive
- Testing is often time consuming

Public School Evaluation:

Pros:

- Testing is free
- The public school will set up a meeting to go over results with you, your child, and a representative from Valor

Cons:

- The process can often take much longer because public schools usually service their own students before testing students in private schools
- The public school has a limit to how many private school students it's allowed to test in a school year, and once that number is reached, they will not approve testing until the following school year
- The goal is to see if a student meets the requirements for special education services, but does not provide the diagnosis for a specific learning disability
- The public school may approve the student for a 504 but not an IEP; Valor typically does not honor a 504, especially if a student is not diagnosed with a specific learning disability or medical condition that would substantiate accommodations

Documentation Details

Documentation must be from a qualified professional and be conducted in the last three years.

The evaluation must include:

- Professional credentials
- A specific disability or disorder
- Educational, developmental, and medical history
- A list of techniques and methods used in testing*
- Results and subtest scores
- Description of limitations resulting from disability or disorder
- Description of specific recommendations for accommodations with rationale

*Students with learning disorders or ADHD requesting accommodations should provide cognitive and academic achievement testing. In most cases a medical diagnosis of ADHD is not sufficient.

Physician/Psychologist/Psychiatrist Letters: Stating a Diagnosis

Letters from professionals stating a diagnosis and recommended classroom accommodations can be submitted for a temporary intervention plan, lasting no longer than one semester. Students and families who wish to receive accommodations for longer than a semester must complete a full psychoeducational evaluation and submit a full report that includes the credentials of the examiner and a clear diagnosis from the DSM.

Evaluations for ADHD

A proper evaluation does two things:

1. Determines whether or not the student has ADHD
2. Rules out or identifies other learning disabilities and problems that often coexist with ADHD

A proper evaluation should include:

1. ADHD Rating Scales (the BASC and the Connors are two of the most popular)
2. Intelligence Tests to detect learning disabilities common in people with ADHD
3. Broad-spectrum scales to screen for social, emotional, and psychiatric problems
4. Tests of specific abilities such as language development, vocabulary, memory recall, and motor skills

Acceptable Cognitive Ability Tests

- Weschler Adult Intelligence Scale or Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children
- Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Abilities
- Stanford Binet Intelligence Scales
- Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children
- Differential Ability Scales
- Reynolds Intellectual Assessment Scales

Acceptable Academic Achievement Tests

- Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement
- Scholastic Abilities Tests for adults
- Weschler Individual Achievement Test
- Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement

ACT and SAT Testing

A student must receive and use accommodations at school for at least 4 months before being considered for extra time on ACT and SAT tests. If the student has progressed to junior year without accommodations and does not currently receive accommodations in school, it's unlikely he or she will receive accommodations for standardized tests; therefore, Valor will only apply for standardized testing accommodations that students are currently receiving and using at school.

Accommodations Committee

In order to ensure the accommodations process at Valor Christian High School upholds the standards required of any public school, an accommodations committee has been established. This committee is made up of the accommodations coordinator, teachers, Valor staff, and volunteer doctors and psychologists. This committee meets once every month during the academic school year to review accommodations requests and review students who are currently receiving accommodations. This committee ensures that each student receives a fair and equitable review by qualified staff before an accommodations decision is made. All information discussed during monthly committee meetings is strictly confidential.

Accommodations Valor Offers

- Extended time for testing up to time and a half
- Alternative place for testing
- No penalty for spelling
- Use of a calculator
- No scantron
- Use of a laptop for in class writing assignments and note taking
- Use of audiobooks
- Help with note taking
- Preferential seating

Please note: Valor will only offer accommodations that are listed on a student's valid, psychoeducational report. If there are accommodations on a student's report that do not correspond to the nine accommodations listed above, they will not become part of the student's Valor plan.

Accommodations vs. Modifications

In order to maintain the academic standards of Valor Christian High School, only accommodations will be offered to students. Modifications will not be offered to students.

- Accommodations: Changes made to instruction and/or assessment intended to help students fully access the general education curriculum without changing the instructional content. Accommodations provide equitable instruction and assessment for students by reducing or eliminating the effects of a student's disability. They

do not change or reduce the learning expectations in regard to the goal being addressed or assessed. Generally, the resulting student product with accommodations is equal to the student product without accommodations.

- Examples
 - Providing more time to complete work
 - Allowing student to test in an alternate environment to reduce distractions
 - Allowing movement to increase physical comfort
 - Allowing use of recorder to tape lectures

- Modifications: Alterations made to instruction and/or assessment that change, lower, or reduce learning or assessment expectations. Modifications change or reduce the learning expectations in regard to the goal being addressed or assessed. More often than not, the resulting student product is not equal to the student product without modifications.

- Examples
 - Reducing the amount or complexity of content the student has to know
 - Rewording/explaining/paraphrasing test question
 - Shortening a spelling/vocabulary list
 - Using a different grading scale

***Please note: The major difference between accommodations and modifications is the resulting student product. When accommodations are offered, the resulting student product is equal to the student product without accommodations. When modifications are offered, the resulting student product is not equal to the student product without modifications.*

Information for Families Entering Valor with a Current Plan Already in Place

Accommodations on Entrance Exams

Valor prefers that all incoming students take the entrance exam under the same conditions and with the same amount of time. There are a couple of reasons for this. First of all, the entrance exams help us know what academic supports each student will need, and in order to get an accurate picture of this, students need to be tested in a similar manner. A second reason for this is that parts of the entrance exam simulate the classroom conditions at Valor, and we need to know how students will perform in a classroom setting. Although some students are allowed extra time on a test, extra time on classroom exercises is not possible. Entrance exam results give the academic support department an idea of which students need help improving various classroom skills. Our department is committed to working with students and helping them be successful at Valor, and we use the entrance exam results to do this more effectively.

- Families should still submit all documentation to the accommodations coordinator.
- The accommodations committee will review all documentation and render a decision.

- IEP's and ISP's that are approved by the committee will be transferred to the Valor Accommodations Plan document. The finalization of this document will take place in a parent and student meeting with the accommodations coordinator.
- A 504 Plan is broader than an IEP and ISP meaning a student does not have to have a diagnosed disability; he may receive a 504 because he is struggling academically. Valor treats 504 plans as temporary intervention plans and will administer the classroom accommodations approved by the accommodations committee for no longer than a semester. During this time, students and parents who would like to continue accommodations should pursue a full psychoeducational evaluation and submit a full report including the credentials of the examiner and a clear diagnosis from the DSM to be considered for a permanent accommodations plan.

Services Available to Valor Families and Students Receiving Accommodations

- **One Semester Accommodations Support Class**
The Academic Support Accommodations class is designed for students who are new to classroom accommodations at Valor. The class will help students understand their disability and how accommodations can help them thrive in the classroom. During the course of the class, students will learn to communicate their learning strengths and weaknesses with others and self-advocate for what they need to be successful students.
- Parent and student access to the accommodations coordinator for help with self-advocacy skills, test-taking, study skills, resolving issues in classes, grammar, writing, reading, scheduling, applying for and receiving accommodations for ACT and SAT, college planning, finals, grade monitoring, homework monitoring.

Accommodations in College

Make sure you register with the Disability Services at your selected college. Colleges are not required to provide any accommodation or modification that would result in a fundamental alteration of a student's program. However, there are many accommodations colleges will offer. Accommodations that are fairly easy to receive at most colleges and universities include:

- Extended time for exams
- Breaks during exams
- Testing in an alternate location
- Use of a laptop
- Use of a calculator
- Help with note taking

A student seeking accommodations in college should:

- Prepare a list of accommodations he wants to request in college, explaining why each one is appropriate to his specific learning struggles.
- Ask for everything: The college may or may not approve it, but nothing is lost by asking.
- Register with the disability office immediately after college enrollment.
- The college may ask for a copy of your high school plan. Contact the Valor accommodations coordinator if you need a copy to send to your college.

Tips

- In your college selection process, it's important to identify Wants vs Needs.
- Everything is very student specific; ask, what does my student need?
- Testing needs to be current--no older than three years.
- Ask, "What will help my student the most?" Use this to narrow down the college search
- Tour colleges and make an appointment with learning services. Ask this person how accommodations work on campus. Ask about what paperwork they need. Talk to the person who runs learning services. Processes and practices can vary widely from college to college.

Learning Services and Support

Websites

Children and Adults with ADD and ADHD

<http://www.chadd.org/Support.aspx>

Website for lists of therapists in Denver:

http://therapists.psychologytoday.com/rms/prof_results.php?city=Denver&county=Denver&spec=6

<https://www.additudemag.com/>

<https://www.understood.org>

Support Groups

Denver Metro CHADD – visit website for details of meetings and locations

<http://www.chadd.net/template.cfm?affid=334&p=events>

Therapists and Doctors Who Have Worked with Valor Students

1. Chris Stanley – 720-515-5334; chris@drchrisstanley.com
2. Educational Counseling Services: Jana L. Waters and Betsy Kutrumbos-303-691-2020
3. David A. Baker-303-704-1128; drdavidbaker@gmail.com; www.drdavidabaker.com
4. Gary M. Eisenberg-303-808-4140
5. Daniel Hettleman-303-912-6632
6. Laura Hockman-303-777-2779
7. Mary Stall-303-916-1827
8. Riley S. Rhodes-303-991-7654
9. Mary Beth O’Hagan-303-918-9934
10. Kathleen Chabin, Psy.D – Licensed Clinical Psychologist – (303) 907-3381, Greenwood Village, CO
11. Margaret W. Riddle, Ph.D – Licensed Clinical Psychologist – (303) 378-0605, Cherry Creek District, CO
12. Alexandra McDermott, PsyD, (720) 485-4194 600 South Cherry Street, Suite 230 Denver, CO 80246 Alex@DenverTherapyAssessment.com
13. Rocky Mountain Center for Development, Dr. Colleen ODonnell and Dr. Kim Dwyer,720-440-3233
14. DU; 303-871-3626; 2450 S. Vine St. Denver, CO. Parent Contact: Sally Pistilli: sally.pistilli@comcast.net

Books

101 School Success Tools for Students with ADHD by Jacqueline S. Iseman, Stephan M. Silverman, and Sue Jeweler

ADD & ADHD Answer Book: Professional Answers to 275 of the Top Questions Parents Ask by Susan Ashley

The Brain that Changes Itself by Norman Doidge

College Success for Students with Learning Disabilities by Cynthia G. Simpson and Vicky G. Spencer

Grit by Angela Duckworth

Growth Mindset by Carol Dweck

The Owner's Manual for Driving Your Adolescent Brain by JoAnn Deak and Terrence Deak

Parenting the Whole Child by Scott M. Shannon

Raising Kids with Sensory Processing Disorders by Rondalyn V. Whitney and Varleisha D. Gibbs

Scattered: How Attention Deficit Disorder Originates and What You Can Do About It by Gabor Mate

The Sharp Brains Guide to Brain Fitness by Alvaro Fernandez and Elkhonon Goldberg

Spark by John J. Ratey

Take Control of Dyslexia and Other Reading Difficulties by Jennifer Engel Fisher and Janet Price

Please note: The list above provides information created and maintained by private organizations. Valor provides this list for informational and convenience only without endorsement or exhaustion of services available.
