



Pacifica Graduate Institute Disability Services Policy

Office of Disability Services

I. Introduction and Policy Statement

Pacifica Graduate Institute is committed to ensuring equal access to all programs and activities for students with documented disabilities. Our Disability Services Office works collaboratively with students and the Institute to remove barriers and coordinate reasonable accommodations that empower students to achieve their full potential.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and other applicable laws, we are dedicated to fostering an inclusive educational environment that celebrates the contributions of all students. Students with documented disabilities are vital to a vibrant and diverse campus community.

For complete disability services information, visit pacifica.edu/disability-services.

II. Disability Services Office Contact Information

Disability Services Coordinator

- **Email:** disabilityservices@pacifica.edu
- **Phone:** 805-881-1550

Mission: To ensure equal access to all academic programs and activities for students with documented disabilities by coordinating reasonable accommodations, promoting independence and self-advocacy, and strengthening collaborations with faculty and staff.

III. Understanding Disability and Your Rights

What is a Disability?

A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. This includes having a record of such an impairment or being regarded as having such an impairment.

Major life activities include: caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working.

Major life activities also include major bodily functions such as immune system, sensory organs, skin, normal cell growth, digestive, genitourinary, bowel, bladder, neurological,

brain, respiratory, cardiovascular, endocrine, hemic, lymphatic, musculoskeletal, and reproductive functions.

Your Legal Protections

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 protect you from discrimination and ensure equal access to educational opportunities.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act states: "No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States...shall, solely by reason of his or her disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

Note: Disability-based harassment is also prohibited under Title IX. If you experience harassment based on your disability, you may file a complaint under either this policy or the Title IX policy, depending on the nature of the conduct.

IV. Accommodations - What You Need to Know

What are Accommodations?

An accommodation is:

- Modification of policies, practices, and procedures
- Provision of auxiliary aids and services
- Academic adjustments and modifications intended to remove barriers and equalize access to education

Reasonable Accommodations

Pacifica provides reasonable accommodations as required by law to students with documented disabilities. Recognizing that each student and disability is unique, accommodations are tailored individually. The Disability Services Office evaluates each request by considering your disability, history, and specific course or program requirements.

Important limitations: While Pacifica is committed to accommodating students with disabilities, we cannot guarantee that all requested accommodations will be reasonable or feasible, particularly if they would impose undue hardship or fundamentally alter the nature of a program or activity. The Disability Services Office cannot modify courses delivery or fundamentally alter curriculum requirements.

V. How to Request Accommodations

Your Responsibilities

You must inform the Disability Services Coordinator as early as possible. You are responsible for communicating your needs in a timely manner - do not assume Pacifica is aware of your needs from your admission application or informal communications.

Important: Accommodations are granted prospectively following eligibility verification - retroactive accommodations are not provided.

Documentation Requirements

To establish eligibility, the Disability Services office engages in an interactive process with you.

Documentation may include:

- Educational or medical records
- Reports from licensed healthcare providers
- Professional assessments
- A letter from a licensed healthcare provider confirming your disability and describing functional limitations

Timeline: Accommodations are implemented within 14 days of receiving appropriate documentation. For assignment extensions, notify the office at least 14 days prior to when you need the accommodation. We recommend contacting Disability Services Coordinator at the beginning of each term.

Note: Temporary impairments are generally not considered disabilities under this policy, except in rare cases where limitations are exceptionally severe.

VI. Admission and Academic Standards

Pacifica makes admission decisions based on criteria that do not consider your disability. We ensure that no admission or eligibility criteria unfairly screen out applicants based on disability, unless such criteria are essential to prevent fundamental alterations to the program.

You are required to meet the same standards as all other students to gain admission and remain in good standing, including meeting specific program requirements.

VII. Grievance and Appeal Process

When to Use This Process

Use this grievance process if you believe:

- Your accommodation request was improperly denied
- You faced discrimination based on your disability
- **Note:** For disability-based harassment, you may also file under the Title IX policy

Step 1: Informal Resolution

Try to resolve concerns informally first by discussing with the involved faculty or staff member. Alternatively, contact the Disability Services Coordinator, who can facilitate discussions or refer the matter to the Program Chair.

Step 2: Formal Grievance

If informal efforts fail, submit a written complaint to the Disability Services Coordinator within 30 days of the incident. If your grievance involves the Coordinator, file directly with the Provost.

Timeline: A decision will be provided within 14 days, but no later than 30 days after filing.

Step 3: Appeal Process

If unsatisfied with the resolution, you may appeal by submitting a written request to the Provost within 21 days of receiving the decision. Include a summary of your grievance and all relevant documentation. The Provost will issue a final written decision within 21 days.

Special circumstances: If your grievance involves the Provost, direct it to the Office of the President.

VIII. Confidentiality and Privacy

Your disability-related information is protected by FERPA. The Disability Services Office maintains strict confidentiality of your disability-related information. Documentation is carefully guarded, and access within Pacifica is limited to individuals who need it to ensure appropriate accommodations.

Accommodation Letters specify approved accommodations without disclosing specific diagnoses or functional limitations. The Coordinator may share information about your disability and necessary accommodations with relevant campus personnel only after

consulting with you and only to the extent needed for housing, academic accommodations, or other matters.

External disclosure: Pacifica not cannot release disability-related records or personally identifying information outside the institution without your explicit written consent or a court order. To disclose information to external parties you must complete a Release of Information Form.

IX. Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals

Service Animals

A Service Animal is a dog that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for someone with disability. Service Animals are working animals, not pets.

Examples include: guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person having seizure or reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications.

Service Animals may accompany you throughout campus, including all buildings and classrooms, except where animals are specifically prohibited by law.

Emotional Support Animals (ESAs)

Emotional Support Animals are animals that provide emotional support that alleviates symptoms of a psychiatric or mental condition. Unlike Service Animals, ESAs do not assist with activities of daily living, and are not permitted in academic buildings, classrooms, libraries, or dining halls.

ESAs may be considered for campus housing only with prior approval from the Disability Services Office.

ESA Housing Request Process

To request an ESA in campus housing:

1. Submit an Accommodations Request Form
2. Provide documentation from a licensed mental health provider verifying your need and confirming you've been under their care for at least 30 days

Your Responsibilities as a Handler

For Service Animals:

- May travel freely throughout campus

For ESAs in housing:

- Must remain in your assigned residential area, except when transported in carrier or on leash
- Must be taken with you if you leave campus for extended period.

Financial responsibility: You are financially responsible for any damage caused by your animal, including furniture, carpet, walls, and cleaning costs beyond standard cleaning.

Notification: You must notify Disability Services in writing if your ESA is no longer needed. To replace an ESA you must file a new request.

Community Guidelines

Service Animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless this interferes with the animal's work .

All community members must:

- Allow Service Animals to accompany their handlers at all times
- Not touch or pet a Service Animals unless invited
- Not feed Service Animals
- Not deliberately startle Service Animals
- Not separate handlers from their Service Animals
- Not inquire about the handler's disability - this is private information
- Report safety concerns to Campus Safety and the Disability Services Office

Animal Removal

Service Animals may be removed only if:

- The dog is disruptive or out of control and you don't take effective action to control it
- The dog is not housebroken

ESAs may be removed if:

- The animal poses a direct threat to health or safety
- You don't comply with housing responsibilities
- The animal creates unmanageable disturbance

X. Frequently Asked Questions

Q: When should I contact Disability Services?

A: Contact us as early as possible, ideally at the beginning of each term when you need accommodations.

Q: Can I get retroactive accommodations?

A: No, accommodations are only provided prospectively after eligibility is verified.

Q: How long does the accommodation process take?

A: Generally, 14 days after we receive appropriate documentation.

Q: What if my accommodation request is denied?

A: You can use our grievance process, starting with informal discussion and escalating to formal complaint, if needed.

Q: Can I bring my emotional support animal to class?

A: No, ESAs are only permitted in campus housing, not in academic buildings or classrooms.

Q: Is my disability information confidential?

A: Yes, your information is protected by FERPA and shared only with those who need to know to provide accommodations.

XI. Quick Reference - Contact Information

Primary Contact:

- **Disability Services Coordinator:** disabilityservices@pacifica.edu

For Grievances:

- **Disability Services Coordinator** (first contact)
- **Provost** (appeals or if grievance involves Coordinator)
- **President's Office** (if grievance involves Provost)

Related Policies:



- **Title IX Policy:** For disability-based harassment complaints
- **Complete Service Animal Policy:** pacificagraduate.edu/disability-services

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