



# Helping Secondary School Students with ADHD Documentation and Access to Accommodations as College Students

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**\*Presentation adapted from: "The Attention Deficit: Can  
Prospective and Current College Students Comprehend ADHD  
Documentation Guidelines"**



# Framing the Issue

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Recent studies = adolescents diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are less likely to graduate high school and attend college than peers (Green & Rabiner, 2012; Harrison, 2010; Lindstrom et al., 2015).

Results of multiple longitudinal research studies proved that 50 to 70% of adolescents diagnosed with ADHD carry the condition into adulthood and their postsecondary years (Adamis et al., 2022).

## **Students with ADHD are attending college in higher numbers than ever before:**

---5.6% of all college students have ADHD (Hotez et al., 2022).

---ADHD now comprises 30% of all disorders documented in U.S. universities, representing the largest disorder or disability type on college campuses (Hotez et al., 2022).



# Self-Determinism

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**Self-determinism** = a combination of attitudes and abilities that lead people to set goals for themselves, and to take the initiative to reach these goals (PACER, 2023).

## **Section 504, IDEA, ADA, and FERPA**

---Lots of support at the secondary level to document student conditions and collaborate/advocate for accommodations and additional student support services.

---In college, students are largely on their own.

--Higher self-determination, higher postsecondary success (Shogren et al., 2023).



# Self-Determinism, Reading, and Access to College

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The "search" process is critical for pre-college students, requires substantial reading and research to explore institutions and support services (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987).

Students with ADHD often struggle with reading – perhaps the most critical academic skill (Martinussen, 2015; Martinussen & Mackenzie, 2015).

Foundational work exists regarding the postsecondary ADHD documentation process (Harrison, 2010; Lindstrom, Nelson, & Foels, 2015), but no work on the currency and readability of ADHD documentation processes.

Segue to the current study...



# Research Questions and Methods

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RQ: Are ADHD documentation guidelines current and readable by pre-college students of average reading comprehension abilities, equating to the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade levels?"

## **Data Collection:**

Sampling through IPEDS: 2,386 institutions, simple random sampling technique, assigned 335 institutions to achieve a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error; reviewed institutional websites; located ADHD documentation guidelines; copied/pasted text into .txt file for analysis.

## **Data Analysis:**

Applied four common readability measures employed by studies in higher education readability (cite)

Automated Readability Index, Gunning-Fog Index, Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Test, and SMOG



# Results as of 2018\*

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Table 1

***Online Publication Dates of ADHD Documentation Guidelines of 335 Randomly Selected, Four-Year, Public and Non-Profit Private Institutions in the United States***

<b>Year</b>	<b># of institutions</b>
2012	5
2013	3
2014	0
2015	56
2016	130
No date	141
Total	335



Table 2

***Readability Levels of ADHD Documentation Guidelines of 335 Randomly Selected, Four-Year, Public and Non-Profit Private Institutions in the United States***

	<b>Readability level (by grade)</b>
Average readability	16.8
Public institutions ( <i>n</i> = 116)	17
Private institutions ( <i>n</i> = 219)	16.7
Average ARI	16.9
Average FK	17.1
Average GFI	15.8
Average SMOG	17.4
High readability level, low readability level Range	high = 19, low = 10.9 8.1 grades
% of ADHD documentation guidelines written:	
at or below 12th grade reading level	2.1%
at or below 13th (1st yr. undergraduate) reading level	5.9%
at or below 14th (2nd yr. undergraduate) reading level	7.8%
at or below 15th (3rd yr. undergraduate) reading level	15.5%
at or below 16th (4th yr. undergraduate) reading level	31.3%
at or below 17th (1st yr. graduate) reading level	43.9%
at or below 18th (2nd yr. graduate) reading level	72.2%
at or below 19th (1st yr. doctoral) reading level	100%

Results as of 2018\*



## For Example:

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For instance, consider this sentence taken from one institution in the sample:

Students requesting accommodations on the basis of attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) must provide documentation by a professional who has undergone comprehensive training and has relevant experience in differential diagnosis of a full range of psychiatric disorders (licensed clinical psychologist, neuropsychologist, psychiatrist or another relevantly trained medical doctor), and who has expertise in evaluating the impact of ADHD on an individual's educational performance.

The above sentence is 62 words in length, contains difficult diction such as “accommodations,” “diagnosis,” and “neuropsychologist,” and is written at the 25th-grade reading comprehension level according to the FK measure. A prospective postsecondary student—or an upper-level undergraduate—might have difficulty in reading this material, comprehending its meaning, and completing the process of documenting their ADHD in order to receive appropriate learning accommodations.





# Implications for Schools and Parents

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- Do not assume students with ADHD can navigate postsecondary documentation on their own.
- Can secondary schools work with institutions of higher education to simplify or standardize ADHD documentation guidelines?
- Can schools and parents work with institutions of higher education during their child's secondary enrollment to "get ahead" of the situation?
- Institutional websites are often not ADA compliant or translated beyond English
  - what about our students with disabilities and students from diverse language populations?
- After a student's first year at college, the process starts over...be ready!



# Implications for Institutions of Higher Education

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---Student services offices and disability services offices should linguistically audit their materials targeting prospective and current students.

---Interdepartmental information is one matter, but information meant for a younger, less educated audience should be written at appropriate levels.

---Institutions do not need to employ readability experts: a plethora of readability tools are freely available online that can help institutions compose their materials at appropriate levels.

---Student services professionals must ensure that their documentation guidelines comply with the latest best practices for delivering high quality, efficient, and effective supports for students with ADHD.

---Many featured ADHD documentation guidelines current as of 2016 (at least two years old), and the other institutions should strive for the same currency of information – update!!!



# Concluding Thoughts and Questions

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---Could ADHD documentation guidelines be standardized for all institutions of higher education? Why not?

---Could schools and parents help their child self-determine their postsecondary experience by documenting their ADHD after they are admitted to the institution? After they enroll in classes?

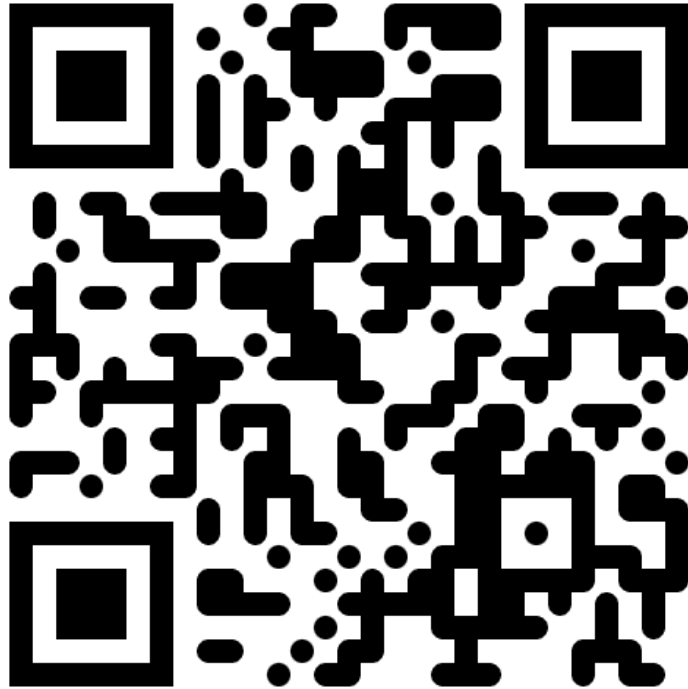
---Students with ADHD can take dual-enrollment classes—could students "get ahead" and document their ADHD at their dual-enrollment/credit institution to be prepared for an eventual transfer?

---What are college counselors doing?



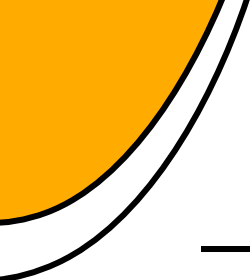
**THANK YOU!**

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**Refs upon request**





# CHELT

COLLEGE **ACCESS** IN ANY LANGUAGE.