

Accessibility Services Handbook

Policies, Procedures and Guidelines



Accessibility Services

**Rockingham Community College
Advising & Counseling Center
Whitcomb Student Center
PO Box 38
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Welcome to Rockingham Community College

Welcome to Rockingham Community College (RCC). We are glad you have chosen us as your learning community. We understand that education is a lifelong process. The first step is the most important: taking responsibility for your own learning.

Everything we do at the college is designed to assist your efforts as a student. The RCC staff is committed to continuous improvement in services and resources for students. We are committed to assisting you in achieving your goals and providing an academic environment that is challenging and accessible to all students. This guide has been created for students with diagnosed disabilities.

Our Commitment

Rockingham Community College was chartered in 1963 as a comprehensive, public community college with an open-door admissions policy. Our purpose is to provide individuals with high quality, economical, and convenient educational opportunities consistent with student and community needs.

- We believe that each person is important.
- We appreciate the diversity in the students we serve.
- We are committed to giving students individual assistance and support.
- We provide an educational environment that encourages all individuals to progress to their maximum potential.
- We believe that the programs and services of the college should be equally available and accessible to all.

Purpose of this Handbook

Generally speaking it is illegal for an institution to inquire about a student's disability prior to admission. Therefore, in postsecondary education, **it is the responsibility of the student to identify him/herself to the college should he/she need any kind of accommodation.**

This guide includes policies and procedures on how and where to declare a disability, what documentation to submit, and how to request reasonable accommodations as a Rockingham Community College student. Students are responsible for knowing and abiding by the procedures and timelines stated in this guide. **Readers should note that this document will continue to evolve as RCC and Accessibility Services identifies and addresses changing needs.**

The Accessibility Services Office is here to help you along your academic journey at RCC. The Accessibility Services Office is located in the **Whitcomb Student Center Suite 208D**. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact the Accessibility Counselor.

Accessibility Services

Legal Mandates

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 states that “no otherwise qualified handicapped individual in the United States, as defined in section 706(6) of this title, 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.” The definition of “handicapped individual” is anyone with a physical or mental impairment that substantially impairs or restricts one or more major life activities, such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working.

On July 26, 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) expanded the civil rights protections to a wide range of entities, including educational institutions.

North Carolina Senate Bill 866 guarantees the right to persons with disabilities in accessing electronic information, including web sites and computers. This bill requires compliance by community colleges.

The implications of Section 504 and ADA are that those who qualify for admissions have a right to be in higher education. In addition, once admitted, students have a right to access academic and nonacademic programs. Qualified students are eligible to receive reasonable accommodations that relate to their disabilities. The definition of a disability and criteria for establishing eligibility for accommodations under 504 and ADA for post-secondary institutions may be different from the definitions and criteria implemented in the public schools, rehabilitation programs, social security, Veterans Administration, or as covered under insurance policies. Rockingham Community has, and will continue to comply with these laws.

Confidentiality

In accordance with the law and with ethical counseling and educational practices, specific information regarding a student’s particular disability will not be shared with a third party, including faculty, without the student’s express permission. Students have a right to confidentiality of all disability related information. Thus, it is the student’s right to disclose or not disclose specific information regarding his/her disability to his/her instructors. Counseling staff encourage self-advocacy and will assist the student with this when appropriate.

Am I Eligible to Receive Accessibility Accommodations for a Disability at RCC?

Accommodations are not provided to a student to improve the chance of success, but rather to assure equal **access** to the opportunity; thus, allowing the student to demonstrate whether he/she

can be successful. The use of accommodations allows a student to prove their mastery of a subject. Accommodations are believed to “level the playing field” for students with disabilities. It is our belief that appropriate, reasonable accommodations help students with disabilities gain accessibility.

If you think you have a disability that may require accommodations ask yourself these questions:

- *Are there documents on file at my school, or with a psychologist, or at the office of my medical doctor that indicate I have a disability?*
- *In the past, did I receive accommodations such as extra time on testing, or alternative textbooks?*
- *Do I have a disability that limits my ability to learn and successfully participate in college programs or activities?*

Accommodation Procedures

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, students must disclose disabilities to the Accessibility Counselor in order for RCC to provide reasonable accommodations.

- The student discloses the type of disability, the related limitations, and the current impact of the disability to the Office of Accessibility Services and complete the required forms. It is recommended that accommodations be requested at least two weeks in advance to allow time for implementation.
- The student provides proof of the disability from a physician, mental health professional or other appropriate specialist stating the nature of the disability and recommendations for needed accommodations. The documentation must reflect the current impact of the disability and be no older than five years. **IEP’s and 504 documents can provide historical information about past accommodation, but are not sufficient alone to receive an accommodation.**
- The student engages in an interview with the Accessibility Counselor. If eligible for accommodations, the student and counselor discuss which accommodation(s) will best meet the student’s needs based upon the documentation. The Accessibility Counselor at Rockingham Community College will determine if the accommodation is reasonable based upon verification that the accommodation supports the identified disability and that the accommodation does not fundamentally alter the structure of a course or program.
- Upon finalizing the accommodations with the student, the Accessibility Counselor will send an electronic copy to the instructor. The student is encouraged to discuss the accommodations with the instructor.
- Prior to the start of a new semester, the student meets with the Accessibility Counselor to review the accommodations if they are desired for the new semester.

Depending upon the circumstances presented by each student, the Office of Accessibility Services may utilize flexibility and discretion in determining how recent the required document must be.

All documentation is confidential and should be submitted to:

**Rockingham Community College
Accessibility Services Office
PO Box 38
Wentworth, NC 27375
Phone: 336-342-4261 ext. 2243
FAX: (336) 342-1809**

Rights and Responsibilities

College Rights and Responsibilities

Rockingham Community College has the right to:

- identify and establish essential functions, abilities, skills, knowledge, and standards for courses, programs, services, jobs, and activities, and to evaluate on this basis;
- request and receive current documentation from a qualified professional that supports the request for academic accommodations;
- deny a request for academic accommodations, if the documentation does not demonstrate that the request is warranted, or if the individual fails to provide appropriate documentation;
- select among equally effective academic accommodations;
- refuse to provide an academic accommodation that imposes a fundamental alteration on a program or activity of the college.

Rockingham Community College has the responsibility to:

- accommodate the known limitations of an of an individual or otherwise qualified student with a disability;
- ensure that courses, programs, services, and activities, when viewed in their entirety, are available and usable in the most integrated and appropriate settings;

- provide or arrange academic accommodations for students with disabilities in courses, programs, services and activities;
- maintain appropriate confidentiality of records and communication, except where permitted or required by law;
- maintain academic standards by providing accommodations without compromising the content quality, or level of instruction.

Rights and Responsibilities of Faculty

Faculty/instructional personnel are encouraged to include a statement on their course syllabi inviting students with disabilities to meet with them outside class. This statement communicates to students that faculty members recognize there may be students with disabilities in the class, and provides an opportunity to discuss their learning needs and to make necessary referrals.

The following is an example of an appropriate statement to include in a course syllabus: *“To determine eligibility, the Accessibility Counselor can be contacted at ext. 2243 for further questions or inquiries. Students with disabilities are encouraged to make an appointment with me, as your instructor, to discuss any unique educational needs or situations.”*

Rights include:

- Faculty has a right to request a written agreement before allowing a student to tape record a class.
- Faculty can assume that all students must adhere to the behavior/conduct policy of the college.
- Faculty has the right to question an accommodation that jeopardizes the academic standards or integrity of the course.
-

Responsibilities include:

- Faculty must provide reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities as provided on the *Student Accessibility Accommodation* form.
- Faculty should **not** provide accommodations without communication from Accessibility Services.
- College employees should not make any statement or implications that the student with a disability is any different from the general student population.

Rights and Responsibilities of Students

Students with disabilities at Rockingham Community College have the right to:

- equal access to courses, programs, services, jobs, and activities offered by the college;

- equal opportunity to work, learn, and receive accommodations;
- confidentiality of information regarding their disability as applicable laws allow.

Students with disabilities at Rockingham Community College have the responsibility to:

- meet the College's qualifications and maintain essential instructional standards for programs, courses, services, and activities;
- self-identify disability status in a reasonable and timely manner if they are seeking academic adjustments, auxiliary aids and services;
- provide documentation which may include the medical verification form; psychological evaluation completed by a Licensed Psychologist including diagnosis; records from high school and any other colleges attended.

For students taking online classes and requesting accommodations, students are reminded to contact instructors to confirm accommodations and discuss any other particular arrangements once letters have been signed with the Accessibility Counselor. Contact can be either in person or via email as RCC email is considered official communication. It is strongly suggested that online students contact the instructor to inform them of the need for accommodations after they have received the approval of accommodations from the Accessibility Services Office.

Notification to the Faculty of a Student's Accommodations

Once a student is found to be eligible for accommodations, faculty will be emailed the accommodation form and that the student should meet with the instructor to discuss their accommodations. It is the responsibility of *the student* to communicate with each instructor to disclose how the disability affects their academic functioning. Faculty notification must be initiated by the student as follows:

After registering for each semester, the student, with assistance from the Accessibility Counselor, will develop a new *Student Accessibility Accommodation* form. The student will inform the Accessibility Counselor if he/she wants accommodations for all classes or for only select classes that the student is enrolled in during the academic semester.

Instructors will be notified via email by the Accessibility Counselor that a student will be approaching them to discuss accommodations. *This email will only be sent after the student has informed the accessibility counselor which classes will require accommodations for the semester.*

General Documentation Standards

Rockingham Community College, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, recognizes that certain disabilities result in impairments for which reasonable accommodations may be required. To qualify for accessibility services, students are required to provide diagnostic documentation from a licensed/clinical professional familiar with the history and functional implications of the impairments.

- All documentation must be submitted on the official letterhead of the professional describing the disability and should not be over five years old.
- The report should be dated and signed and include the name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator. Documentation prepared by providers other than those described under the specific disability categories will be considered on a case-by-case basis. It is not appropriate for professionals to evaluate members of their families.
- Disability documentation must be current and adequately verify the nature and extent of the disability in accordance with current professional standards and techniques, and it must clearly substantiate the need for any specific accommodation requested.

A school plan such as an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 Plan is **insufficient** documentation to support a student's eligibility, but may be included as part of a more comprehensive report. Prior history of accommodations, without documentation of current need, does not, in and of itself, warrant the provision of a like accommodation. The department reserves the right to consult with allied health professionals in reviewing and evaluating documentation.

In most cases, documentation consisting only of a diagnosis, chart notes, and/or prescription pad notations is insufficient to determine the impact of a medical condition or disability, to address the issue of substantial limitations, and to develop reasonable accommodations.

If a student leaves the college for any reason, upon readmission he or she may be asked to submit updated documentation prior to receiving accommodations and/or services.

Visual Impairment

- A diagnosis with best corrected visual acuity and degrees of visual field, nasally and temporally, in each eye independently must be provided by an ophthalmologist, optometrist, or other qualified, licensed eye care professional.
- Provide a written description that explains the impact the impairment has on the individual's visual ability and the functional limitations it may impose.

- If specific recommendations of accommodations are made, the rationale must relate each accommodation to the functional limitations imposed by the disability. The final determination of appropriate and reasonable accommodations rests with the Disability Services Coordinator.

Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing

- An audiogram indicating the severity of the hearing impairment must be provided by a licensed audiologist.
- If specific recommendations of accommodations are made, the rationale must relate each accommodation to the functional limitations imposed by the disability. The final determination of appropriate and reasonable accommodations rests with Accessibility Services.

Medical/Physical

- The student's attending physician should originate current documentation for a medical disability. A specific diagnosis with treatment history and treatment plan should be included.
- The report should include how the disability impacts the student in the educational setting.
- If specific recommendations of accommodations are made, the rationale must relate the accommodation to the functional limitations imposed by the disability. The final determination of appropriate and reasonable accommodations rests with the Accessibility Counselor.
- In cases of head trauma or medical conditions which affect the brain, a neuropsychological evaluation may allow the student to be accommodated more thoroughly.

Learning Disability

The following professionals are considered qualified to assess and diagnose learning disabilities: appropriately licensed/certified clinical psychologists, such as school psychologists, neuropsychologists or an evaluator specializing in learning disabilities who has a Master's Degree in Education or Developmental Psychology.

This professional must have expertise in evaluating the impact on the student's educational performance.

*All reports should be on letterhead, dated, and signed and include the name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator.

- **A psychoeducational report should be current within five years.** Documentation should substantiate the need for service based on the student's current functioning in an *educational* setting. The psychoeducational evaluation *should* include a clinical interview. In addition, the student's developmental, academic, mental, and social history should be investigated and reported. This evaluation must include a comprehensive assessment battery including aptitude, achievement, and processing instruments.

The following aptitude tests are considered appropriate in the substantiation of a learning disability:

- Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-III (WAIS-III)
- Woodcock-Johnson Test Psychoeducational Battery-III: Test of Cognitive Ability
- Kaufman Adolescent and Adult Intelligence Test (KAIT)
- Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-III or IV (WISC-III, WISC-IV)

The Slosson Intelligence Test and the Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test are primarily screening devices which are not comprehensive enough to provide the information necessary to make accommodation decisions.

The following achievement tests are considered appropriate in the substantiation of a learning disability:

- Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery-III
- Wechsler Individual Achievement Test-II (WIAT-II)
- Scholastic Abilities Test for Adults (SATA)

The Wide Range Achievement Test is not a comprehensive measure of achievement and, therefore, is not useful as the sole measure of achievement.

Psychological/Psychiatric Conditions Resulting in Need for Accommodations

- Documentation should be prepared by a licensed/clinical psychologist, psychiatrist, or other qualified, licensed professional.
- The evaluation should include a current DSM-V diagnosis and the treatment history and treatment plan.
- The impact of the disorder on the individual should be discussed with particular detail regarding academic requirements.

- Any documentation shared with the disability coordinator should include medical information specifically related to the impact of current medication on the student's ability to participate in all school activities.
- If specific recommendations of accommodations are made, the rationale must relate the accommodation to the functional limitations imposed by the disability. The final determination of appropriate and reasonable accommodations rests with the Accessibility Counselor.
- A neuropsychological or psychological evaluation may allow the student to be accommodated more thoroughly.

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD/ADHD)

A **comprehensive report** on letterhead is required and should include:

- A specific diagnostic statement using DSM-V classification, avoiding the use of terms such as “suggests,” “is indicative of”, or “attentional problems.”
- Discussion of the student's developmental, academic, mental, and social history.
- Methods of assessment with supporting data such as checklists and rating scales. Psychoeducational batteries completed within the last five years that include intelligence and achievement testing will allow the possibility of providing more services.
- Discussion of substantial limitations in an educational setting to support the need for services.
- The following professionals are considered qualified to evaluate ADD/ADHD: An appropriately licensed /certified psychologist, psychiatrist, neuropsychiatrist, neurologist, or relevantly trained medical doctor. This professional must have expertise in evaluating the impact on the student's educational performance. All reports should be dated, signed and include the name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator.
- If specific recommendations of accommodations are made, the rationale must relate each accommodation to the functional limitations imposed by the disability.
- The final determination of appropriate and reasonable accommodations rests with the Accessibility Counselor at Rockingham Community College.

Reasonable Accommodations

Academic adjustments or physical adjustments are necessary to make a facility or activity accessible to qualified individuals with disabilities. Once the individual is determined otherwise qualified, the known physical or mental limitation is to be accommodated unless it can be shown that the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the college.

All accommodations are arranged with the Accessibility Counselor. A request for services can be made at any point in a semester, but students cannot request accommodations for tests, assignments, or papers, that have already been completed. If a student would like to request accommodations, please contact the Accessibility Counselor.

Typical Accommodations

The following describes typical accommodations that are most often approved, when appropriate, for students who have provided the required documentation. This is not an all-inclusive list, as other accommodations are approved when deemed appropriate and necessary. Accommodations are approved based on the nature of the student's disability.

1. Personal Devices and Attendant Care

Rockingham Community College does not provide prescriptive devices, devices of a personal nature, or attendant care.

2. Service Animals

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, service animals assisting students with disabilities are permitted in all facilities of the college. The service animal aids the student in overcoming difficulties related to his/her disability and is trained to assist or accommodate sensory, mental, or physical disability. **This right is granted upon presentation of documentation by the student to the accessibility counselor.**

A request for an Emotional Support Animal will require the student to follow the steps and procedures for requesting accommodations. Please contact the Accessibility Counselor for information.

3. Priority Registration

Students with disabilities with appropriate documentation may be offered priority registration for the following reasons:

4. Extended Testing Time

Students who are approved for extended time on tests, exams, and/or quizzes will generally be allotted one and a half the length of time allowed for the class. (ex: 60 minutes for the class x $\frac{1}{2}$ = 90 minutes or 1hr. 30 minutes). All arrangements for extended testing time should be made prior to the beginning of the semester through the Accessibility Counselor. Once accommodations have been approved, students must confirm testing arrangements with the instructor or Testing Center at least 2 weekdays before the day of the test/quiz.

5. Isolated/ Distraction-Reduced Environment

This is defined as an examination setting which provides reduced auditory and visual stimuli and minimal interruptions. All Students who have this accommodation will have tests proctored in the Testing Center; located on the ground floor of the Advanced Technologies (ADT) Building.

6. Alternative Formatting (enlarged print)

All class handouts including, but not limited to: course information, syllabus, terms and definitions, instructor notes, diagrams, and charts, quizzes, exams, and tests must be made available to the student in an enlarged format if noted as an approved accommodation. At the beginning of the semester, the student and instructor should discuss which appropriate font and type meets the accommodation.

7. Alternative Textbook Formats

Students who receive accommodations from Rockingham Community Collage are eligible to have textbooks in alternative formats. To have a textbook published in an alternative format, please fill out a request for an alternative text and return it to Accessibility Counselor. The Accessibility Counselor is responsible for making the request to the bookstore manager, who will contact an outside entity that is used to create alternative textbooks for students.

8. Reader

A reader is defined as a volunteer who reads a quiz, test, or exam word for word for a student when it is noted as an appropriate accommodation. The reader is not able to explain or clarify the question for the student.

9. Scribe/Note takers

The scribe is responsible for typing the student's responses to a question, essay, and/or written prompt on a test or exam. The scribe writes the exact responses of the student, including grammar, spelling and punctuation. The student will be able to review responses to questions prior to turning the test or exam in. The scribe will attach any scratch paper from the student and turn it in with the test.

Note takers are provided to students that have a visible need for note taker services and have documentation that substantiates a need for note taker services. Note takers are peers who are hired or volunteer to take notes for students with disabilities.

10. Lecture Recording Privileges

Students have permission to record lecture materials to supplement or replace hand-written notes. The recordings are for personal use only.

Please note the lecture material is the intellectual property of the instructor and cannot be used for publication without citation.

Students can only record the lectures that they attend and must provide their own equipment.

11. Accessible Tables, Desks, and Special Chairs

A student who requires a certain height for a table or desk due to wheelchair accessibility or orthopedic issues must inform the Accessibility Counselor at least three full weeks prior to the beginning of the semester or summer session.

If a Student needs an accessible work space or lab space, this must be brought to the attention of the Accessibility Counselor so that proper physical classroom arrangements can be made.

Students who require special accommodations regarding specific furniture needed inside the classroom must be approved by the Accessibility Counselor prior to attending class.

12. Assistive Technology

A computer with assistive technology software is located in the ADT Building- Testing Center lab on the first floor of the building.

14. Interpreter Services

The college provides interpreters for qualified students with hearing impairments for scheduled classes, labs, appointments, or activities. Students who need the services of an interpreter for college-sponsored meetings, appointments, or activities must submit a written request for those services to the Accessibility Counselor in a timely manner.

Career & College Promise & Rockingham Early College HS Students

Students with a disability that may affect his/her education and register as a Career & College Promise student or Rockingham Early College HS student, should contact the Accessibility Counselor at 342-4261 ext. 2243 to request accommodations for their college classes.

It is the student's responsibility to notify the college of his/her disability well in advance of accommodations being provided. Students who have a disability and are 16 years old or under and choose to attend Rockingham Community College for credit fall under ADA/504 guidelines, not IDEA. *(Please refer to the section on Differences Between High School and Post-Secondary Disability Services)*

Evacuation Procedures for Individuals with Disabilities

At the beginning of each semester, each instructor should assist in the identification of all individuals in their classes who will need assistance in exiting the building in case of an emergency. During the initial meeting between student and instructor to discuss accommodation services, there should be a discussion about evacuating the classroom and/or building. This includes wheelchair bound individuals, those with any condition limiting mobility, visually or hearing-impaired individuals and anyone else who might have difficulty following directions in an emergency situation. *Building elevators may not be available for use and those with limited mobility may require assistance.*

College Sponsored Programs

Any student needing reasonable accommodations to attend or participate in any college-sponsored activity should contact the Accessibility Counselor for assistance with arrangements at least four weeks in advance, so arrangements can be made.

Key Points to Remember for Students with Disabilities:

- Encourage students to see the Accessibility Counselor early – right after they apply
- Cannot provide accommodations until the appropriate documentation has been received and eligibility for services is determined

Typical Request Process

- Initial meeting between counselor and student to discuss process
- Review documentation to determine eligibility
- 2nd meeting to discuss student's needs and appropriate accommodations ○ Student meets with the instructor to discuss accommodations (counselor will be present at student's request)
- Submitting Documentation
 - Needs to clearly state the diagnosed disability, and needs to be more specific than the IEP

If possible, the student should get re-tested prior to graduating high school to ensure that the documentation is not outdated

Major Differences Between High School and Post-Secondary Disability Services

Applicable Laws

High School

- I.D.E.A. (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)
- Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- I.D.E.A. is about SUCCESS

College

- A.D.A. (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990)
- Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- A.D.A. is about ACCESS

Required Documentation

High School

- IEP (Individualized Education Plan and/or 504 Plan)
- School provides evaluation at no cost to student
- Documentation focuses on determining whether student is eligible for services based on specific disability categories in I.D.E.A.

College

- High School IEP and 504 are not sufficient. Documentation guidelines specify the information needed for each category of disability
- Student must get evaluation at own expense
- Documentation must provide information on specific functional limitations, and demonstrate the need for specific accommodations

Self-Advocacy

High School

- Student is identified by the school and is supported by parents and teachers
- Primary responsibility for arranging accommodations belongs to the school
- Teachers approach you if they believe you need assistance

College

- Student must self-identify to the Office of Accessibility Services
- Primary responsibility for self-advocacy and arranging accommodations belongs to the student
- Professors expect you to initiate contact if you need assistance

Parental Role

High School

- Parent has access to student records and can participate in the accommodation process
- Parent advocates for the student

College

- Parent does not have access to student records without the student's written consent
- Student advocates for self

Instruction

High School

- Teachers may modify curriculum and/or alter pace of assignments
- You are expected to read short assignments that are then discussed, and often re-taught, in class

College

- Professors are not required to modify curriculum design or alter assignment deadlines
- You are assigned substantial amounts of reading and writing which may not be directly addressed in class
- You need to review class notes and text material regularly

Grades & Tests

High School

- IEP for 504 plans may include modifications to test format and/or grading
- Testing is frequent and covers small amounts of material
- Makeup tests are often available
- Teachers often take time to remind you of assignments and due dates

College

- Grading and test format changes (i.e. multiple choice vs. essay) are generally not available.
- Accommodations to how tests are given (extended time, testing in a quiet setting) are available when supported by disability documentation.
- Testing is usually infrequent and may be cumulative, covering large amounts of material
- Makeup tests are seldom and option
- Professors expect you to read, save, and consult the course syllabus

Conduct

High School

- Disruptive conduct may be accepted

College

- Students who are disruptive and unable to abide by the Code of Conduct are deemed “not qualified” and can be dismissed

Grievance Procedures for Students with Disabilities

It is the policy of *Rockingham Community College* not to discriminate on the basis of disability. *RCC* has adopted an internal grievance procedure to allow for prompt and equitable resolution of complaints alleging any action prohibited by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 794) and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities ACT (28 CFR Part 35).

The Accessibility Services Counselor/Section 504 & ADA Compliance Officer has been designated to coordinate the efforts of *Rockingham Community College* to comply with Section 504 and ADA-related concerns. In the absence of this staff member, the Vice President for Student Development may be contacted for inquiries.

Students who believe they have been subjected to discrimination on the basis of disability, or have been denied access to services or accommodations for which they are entitled, may file a grievance under this procedure.

It is against the law for *Rockingham Community College* to retaliate against anyone who files a grievance, otherwise complains of discrimination or otherwise advocates for their rights, or who cooperates in the investigation of a grievance. The College will maintain confidentiality throughout the grievance process to the greatest extent possible while still conducting a thorough investigation. The grievance and identity of the person filing the grievance and the identity of the person allegedly responsible for the discrimination will not be disclosed except as required by law, College policy, as necessary to fully investigate the complaint, and as authorized by the person filing the grievance.

When to Use the 504/ADA Grievance Procedure

The *504 Grievance Procedure* is applicable to all students at the College. It is designed to address disputes that include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Disagreements about a requested service or accommodation of a College practice or requirement;
2. Inaccessibility of a program or activity;
3. Harassment or discrimination on the basis of disability;
4. Violation of privacy in the context of a disability.

For all disability-related grievances, the *504/ADA Grievance Procedure* is to be used.

Role and Availability of Compliance Officer

Rockingham Community College's Compliance Officer is responsible for administering this *grievance procedure* and ensuring that the College is following all applicable laws.

The **Accessibility Services Counselor** is designated as the **Section 504 & ADA Compliance Officer**. Additional compliance officers may be designated occasionally by the Vice President for Student Development if needed, for example, if the Section 504 & ADA Compliance Officer is the subject of the grievance or is otherwise unavailable.

Students who seek guidance in determining if theirs is a potential disability-related grievance, or a potential grievance of another type that should be pursued using a different procedure, are advised to contact the Section 504 & ADA Compliance Officer for guidance.

Steps Toward Resolution of Disability-Related Grievances:

There are up to three steps available in the procedure to resolve disability-related grievances. These include: (1) an initial attempt at informal resolution (if appropriate), (2) a formal complaint if informal resolution is unsuccessful, and (3) an appeal of a decision regarding a formal complaint. These steps are described in the sections that follow.

Step 1: Informal Resolution

Prior to filing a formal complaint, as outlined below, a student is encouraged first to seek to resolve the issue informally by discussing it with the person(s) most directly responsible. Prior to this, a student may consult with the **Section 504 & ADA Compliance Officer or alternate designee**, to obtain guidance in this step. If the circumstances make it inappropriate for the student to make direct contact with the person(s) most directly responsible (e.g., if there is an allegation of harassment against the responsible person), the student should contact the **Section 504 & ADA Compliance Officer or alternate designee**, who will discuss with the student her/his right to file a formal complaint, as well as explain the process to file that complaint.

If an informal resolution of the complaint is achieved, both parties will verify this by signing a written agreement that specifically states the terms of the new arrangements. This agreement must be submitted to the **Section 504 & ADA Compliance Officer or alternate designee** in order to ensure that the agreement has been properly documented and also to ensure that the agreed-upon arrangements are fulfilled.

If the issue is not resolved informally, the student may then contact the **Section 504 & ADA Compliance Officer or alternate designee**, who will discuss with the student her/his right to file a formal complaint, as well as explain the process to file that complaint.

Step 2: Filing of a Formal Complaint

Should an individual seek to use the formal process for seeking resolution of a complaint, the following process is to be used.

1. Formal complaints must be submitted in writing to the **Section 504 & ADA Compliance Officer or alternate designee** within **20 class days** of the date on which the person filing the grievance (Complainant) either becomes aware of the alleged discriminatory action, or was unable to achieve an informal resolution of the complaint. Complainants are strongly encouraged to submit complaints as soon as possible to ensure a prompt resolution. Failure to file a complaint in a timely manner may result in a delay to the potential relief or remedy that a Complainant seeks. While 20 class days are permitted for the filing of a complaint, a Complainant should act *as quickly as possible* in order that a resolution may be reached as quickly as possible. Extenuating circumstances may be considered by the College that would permit the extension of time for the filing of a complaint. (Examples of such circumstances include, but are not limited to: documented personal illness; family emergency, weather related factors, natural disasters).

2. **The written complaint must contain the following:**
 - a. Name, address, email, and phone number of the person filing complaint,
 - b. A detailed description of the issue(s),
 - c. A description of the efforts that have been made to informally resolve the issue(s), if applicable
 - d. A statement of the requested remedy.

3. **Complaints must be filed with:**

Accessibility Services Counselor/Section 504/ADA Compliance Officer

Whitcomb Student Center, 484 County Home Rd, Wentworth, NC 27375 (336-342-4261), 336-634-0132 (TTY), 336-342-1809 (Fax), by mail addressed to P.O. Box 38, Wentworth, NC 27375

In the event the Section 504 & ADA Compliance Officer is unavailable or is potentially the subject of a complaint, the alternate officer with whom to file a complaint is:

Dr. Robert Lowdermilk, Vice President for Student Development

Whitcomb Student Center, 484 County Home Rd, Wentworth, NC 27375

By phone or fax: 336-342-4261, ext. 2128 (Voice), 336-342-1809 (Fax), By mail addressed to: P.O. Box 38, Wentworth, NC 27375, or by email: lowdermilkb@rockinghamcc.edu.

4. The **Section 504 & ADA Compliance Officer** (or her/his designee, as needed) will conduct an investigation of the complaint. The investigation must be thorough and allow all interested persons an opportunity to submit evidence and present witnesses relevant to the complaint. The investigation may involve requests for information from witnesses (as provided by the parties involved) and/or individuals that are believed to have relevant information that pertains to the complaint. Information requested may include:
 - a. Interviews and/or consultations
 - b. Written responses to the issues raised in the complaint
 - c. Any other information or documentation that is pertinent to the complaint

The **Section 504 & ADA Compliance Officer** will complete the investigation and issue a written decision on the complaint no later than ten (10) class days after the receipt of the complaint. The written decision will be issued to the Complainant and the person(s) against whom the complaint was filed. The **Section 504 & ADA Compliance Officer** will make every effort to keep the Complainant informed as to this matter, by way of telephone communication, email, and/or in writing, explaining the reason for any delay and indicating the estimated time frame as to completion of the investigation. While an efficient and expedient investigation of the complaint is the ultimate aim, thoroughness is also critical, and often involves the obtaining of information from persons who may not be immediately accessible due to other commitments or temporary absence from the institution.

(A delay in obtaining information needed to complete the investigation may result in a delay beyond the 10 class day period noted above for the issuance of a decision.)

Step 3: Appeal of a Decision Rendered by the Section 504 & ADA Compliance Officer (or Alternate)

1. If desired, the Complainant may appeal the decision of the **Section 504 & ADA Compliance Officer** by writing to the **Vice President for Student Development** (contact information listed in the preceding section) within **10 class days** of receiving the **Section 504 Compliance Officer's** written decision.
2. While 10 class days are permitted for the filing of an appeal, a Complainant should act *as quickly as possible* in order that a resolution may be reached as quickly as possible.

Extenuating circumstances may be considered by the College that would permit the extension of time for the filing of an appeal. (Examples of such circumstances include, but are not limited to: documented personal illness; family emergency, weather-related factors, natural disasters).

In the event the Vice President for Student Development is unavailable, or if the initial decision was rendered by the Vice President for Student Development as the alternate to the Section 504 & ADA Compliance Officer, the alternate officer with whom to file an appeal is:

Sheila Regan, Vice President for Academic Affairs

Administration Building, 215 Wrenn Memorial Rd, Wentworth, NC 27375

By phone or fax: 336-342-4261, ext. 2138 (Voice), 336-342-9986(Fax). By mail addressed to: P.O. Box 38, Wentworth, NC 27375

3. The written complaint must be in writing and contain the following:

1. Name, address, email, and phone number of the person filing the appeal (Complainant),
2. A detailed description of the issue(s),
3. A description of the efforts that have been made to informally resolve the issue(s), if applicable,
4. The reason(s) why the Complainant disagrees with initial decision,
5. A statement of the requested remedy.

4. The Vice President identified for the appeal review will have access to all information used in the previous level of review, and will determine if additional information is needed for a decision at the appeal level. As needed, the Vice President may require interviews with or other means of obtaining relevant information from the Complainant and any/all other persons involved in the preceding stage of investigation and decision.

5. The Vice President for Student Development (or alternate) shall issue a written decision in response to the appeal no later than 10 class days after the receipt of the Complainant's appeal, and will be issued to the Complainant, the person(s) against which the complaint was filed, and the **Section 504 & ADA Compliance Officer**. (A delay in obtaining information needed to complete the appeal may result in a delay beyond the 10-class day period noted above for the issuance of a decision.)

The appeal process ends with the decision made by the Vice President for Student Development (or alternate, as indicated above).

The **Section 504 & ADA Compliance Officer** will maintain the files and records of Rockingham Community College relating to such grievances.