



# **Charter Oak State College Office of Accessibility Services**

Student Guide and Handbook  
Revised 2/12/19

## **OFFICE OF ACCESSIBILITY (OAS)**

Welcome to Charter Oak State College's (the College) Office of Accessibility (OAS). This Student Guide and Handbook is intended to answer questions you may have regarding accessibility, the process for requesting accommodations, and next steps. The Student Guide and Handbook is broken into five sections (with links for easy access):

- 1) [Guiding legislation](#)
- 2) [Rights and responsibilities of the College](#)
- 3) [Rights and responsibilities of students](#)
- 4) [Definitions, Processes, and Policies](#)
- 5) [Getting Started](#)

## **GUIDING LEGISLATION**

### **Section 504 and the ADA**

*Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973* (Section 504) and the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) provides that any person with a mental or physical impairment that limits one or more major life activities shall be considered for and entitled to reasonable accommodations.

Charter Oak State College is committed to providing qualified students equal opportunity to higher education through the provision of reasonable and appropriate accommodations and support services.

### **Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) govern all student records. FERPA assures primary educational privacy rights to students including: 1) the right to inspect and review education records; 2) the right to seek to amend education records; and 3) the right to have some control over the disclosure of information from education records. Unless identified as "Directory Information,," FERPA protects academic records.

While FERPA does not protect medical information, documents submitted by persons requesting or receiving disability services used to determine appropriate educational placement and achieve educational goals is protected and will be kept confidential unless

a release of information is provided by the student or unless the release is specifically allowed under the law.

In accordance with FERPA, disability-related information may be shared on a limited basis within the academic community on a “need to know” basis pertaining to a specific and/or an emergency. The “need to know” is determined in each instance by the OAS Specialist and is very limited.

The OAS treats all materials pertaining to the documentation of a student’s disability as confidential and keeps the information locked within the OAS and separate from the student’s academic file. Only those faculty or staff directly involved in the provision of accommodations and/or services need to know that a student has a documented disability. Specific details of a student’s disability is not revealed unless the student chooses to disclose this information to the faculty or staff member.

## **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COLLEGE**

### **The College has the right to:**

- Establish essential functions, skills, knowledge and standards for courses, programs, services, jobs and activities, and evaluate students on this basis.
- Request and receive current 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, based on the assessment of the OAS, an individual fails to provide the required documentation, the documentation does not demonstrate the need for such accommodations and/or it imposes a fundamental alteration to the essential standard of a course, program or activity.
- Choose among equally effective accommodations, adjustments and/or auxiliary aids and services.

### **The College is responsible for:**

- Evaluating current and prospective students without regard to their disability.
- Providing or arranging reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services to students with documented disabilities in a timely fashion.
- Ensuring that courses, programs, services, jobs, activities and facilities are available and usable in the most integrated settings when viewed in their entirety.
- Maintaining appropriate confidentiality of records and communication, except where disclosure is authorized by the student or required by law.
- Provide, in timely fashion, information in alternate formats when requested.

### **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT**

#### **Students have the right to:**

- Equal access to courses, programs, services, jobs, activities and facilities available through the college.
- Equal opportunities to work, learn, and receive reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids and services.
- Appropriate confidentiality of all information regarding his/her disability, except when disclosures are required or permitted by law.
- Information available in alternate formats.

#### **Students are responsible for:**

- Registering with the OAS as an individual with a disability and provide appropriate documentation when an accommodation, auxiliary aid, or service is requested.
- Meeting qualifications and maintaining essential institutional standards for courses, programs, services, and activities.

- Reviewing letters of accommodations with his/her professor(s) to ensure mutual understanding of the specific accommodations granted in the course.

## **DEFINITIONS, PROCESSES, AND POLICIES**

### **Connecticut Association for Higher Education and Disability (CT AHEAD) Documentation Guidelines and processes**

In order to provide appropriate accommodations, official documentation of the disability is required. Charter Oak State College uses the guidelines as endorsed by CT Association for Higher Education and Disability (CT AHEAD).

In adherence to Amendments to the Americans with Disabilities Act in 2008 (S. 3406) and revised Title I regulations, determination of eligibility for accommodations requires an interactive process and is made on a case-by-case basis.

#### **Do I Need to Provide Documentation?**

Postsecondary programs may request documentation of a disability. If a person obviously uses a wheelchair or is blind or deaf, no further documentation may be necessary. For those with hidden disabilities, such as learning disabilities, mental disorders or chronic health conditions, it is reasonable and appropriate for a program to request current documentation to establish the validity of the request for accommodations and to identify the accommodations needed.

#### **What Kind of Documentation Is Needed?**

Documentation should be completed and signed by a professional familiar with the applicant and the applicant's disability such as a physician, psychologist, special education evaluator, therapist, or rehabilitation counselor. It should verify the disability and suggest appropriate accommodations. If previous documentation exists, it will likely be enough if it is current (usually no less than five years old). If no current documentation is available, it is the responsibility of the student to have new documentation prepared. This can sometimes mean paying to have a new evaluation done.

For further information about documentation for different disabilities, please see our [Documentation Guidelines](#).

The Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) views all information pertaining to a student's disability as confidential. Any information obtained by OAS is used to verify the disability, plan for appropriate services, and document service and communication with the OAS office.

Maintaining student disability information as confidential does not guarantee a student's anonymity. This means that OAS will only share information with faculty, staff or service providers on a need to know basis, which may include name and accommodation(s) being used. Please contact OAS for further information.

The following are the guidelines used by OAS regarding disability-related information:

- All disability-related information for students at Charter Oak State College is managed by OAS.
- Only authorized personnel working at OAS have access to this information.
- Disability information may be released only when a student has signed a Release of Confidential Information form (please contact OAS for electronic or hard-copy form). This includes information to be shared with family, other institutions, or a provider.
- The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) do not allow faculty, family members or third parties access to information pertaining to students' medical conditions, such as medical or psychiatric records unless OAS has a signed release or there is a need to know.
- Submitting an online request for accommodations authorizes OAS to notify faculty of the approved accommodations the student will be using in their class.
- The functional impact of a student's disability may be disclosed to faculty on an educational need to know basis.
- OAS may engage in discussions or consultations with faculty and staff, as needed, in order to effectively implement approved accommodations.
- Students may request to review the contents of their own file. This must be done with OAS staff present.
- Students may request a copy of the documentation of their disability by submitting a written request or in person. A student's records are retained for five years after the student's departure from Charter Oak State College.

## **CHARTER OAK STATE COLLEGE ACCOMMODATIONS**

Accommodations at Charter Oak State College are provided based on student need. Examples of possible accommodations are extended time for course assessments or

written work, accommodations for visually and/or hearing-impaired students, tutoring, e-books, and readers.

**Note:** Accommodations are not retroactive. Accommodations from Charter Oak State College do not guarantee a passing grade in a course. Not all accommodations requested will be approved.

Documentation policies differ from one institution to another. The OAS' documentation policy is designed to fit the Charter Oak State College student climate and does not consider documentation requirements external to Charter Oak State College. If a student intends to apply to another institution or take a standardized test (GRE, MCAT, etc.) administered by an outside agency, the student is responsible for researching those documentation policies and should investigate requirements at least six months prior to an anticipated start date or test date.

## **REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS**

Reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment to a course, program, service, activity, or facility that ensures equal opportunity for qualified students with disabilities to participate in, and enjoy the benefits of, a service, program, or activity. Aids, benefits, or services need not produce equal results, but must afford an equal opportunity to achieve equal results.

When necessary, OAS staff will consult with faculty regarding whether an accommodation would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program, or activity or whether an academic requirement is essential to the instruction being pursued or to any directly related licensing requirement. In doing so, the OAS will examine the following:

1. Barriers between individuals with disabilities and accessing courses, programs, services, jobs, activities or facilities without accommodations;
2. Requested modifications, accommodations, and auxiliary aids;

3. Whether effective alternatives exist, that would allow the individual with a disability to participate without lowering essential requirements or fundamentally altering the nature of the program.
4. Whether an academic requirement is essential to the instruction or to any directly related licensing requirement.

When the College determines that a modification related to facilities or communication would result in a fundamental alteration or undue burden, OAS shall acquire the written opinion of the proper authority, i.e. department chair of impacted discipline, providing the reasoning supporting the decision.

### **TIMELINESS OF DECISIONS CONCERNING ACCOMMODATION REQUESTS**

The OAS' goal is to process requests for accommodations in a timely manner. This means that we can usually process completed requests within 3-7 business days. During peak times, however, this timeline may take longer depending on volume of requests. Please consider this when seeking accommodations and submit your request for services as early as possible.

#### **Initial request for accommodations**

Initial requests for accommodations are considered complete when the OAS office has:

1. Received the "[Request for Services](#)" form.
2. Received the "[Release of Information](#)" form.
3. Received the "[Medical Provider Documentation](#)" form.
4. Interviewed the student requesting documentation.
5. A determination has been made for the request for services.

#### **Subsequent, unchanged requests for accommodations**

OAS registered students need only to alert the OAS Accessibility Specialist via email. If new documentation is required, the OAS will notify the student.



## **APPEALING ACCOMMODATION DETERMINATION**

Any student, who disagrees with the accommodations or other services determined by the Accessibility Specialist or OAS staff, should speak to the Director of Academic Services as soon as possible. Students should express their concerns and be prepared to offer reasonable alternative solutions.

If after consulting with the Director of Academic Services, the student is still dissatisfied regarding the proposed accommodation or provision of accommodation, the student should submit a detailed, written appeal addressed to the Provost within 10 business days of the decision.

**Note:** The College has the obligation to *provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations* to ensure that otherwise qualified students with disabilities have equal access to their academic education. If the College can provide an accommodation that is equally as effective as the one requested, the College is not required to provide the requested accommodation.

## **COMPLAINTS WITH ACCOMMODATION COMPLIANCE**

Students should try to resolve issues with professors first. If unable to resolve the issue, then student should report their issues to the Accessibility Specialist.

If the student believes that the Accessibility Specialist's efforts to resolve the complaint have been unsuccessful, then the student may file a detailed, written appeal to the Director of Academic Services within 10 business days of the last effort at resolution.

Within a reasonable time, a meeting will be arranged between the student and the Director of Academic Services or designee. If the student remains dissatisfied with the resolution of his/her complaint, he/she may file a formal complaint with the Provost.

## GETTING STARTED

At Charter Oak State College, we are committed to providing qualified students with disabilities the necessary academic adjustments and accommodations to ensure equal access to programs, services, and activities. Students seeking ADA accommodations must register with the OAS.

### For New Students

1. It is incumbent upon the student to reach out to OAS to request services by formally requesting for services with the Office of Accessibility. The student must complete the “Request for Services Form” and “Release of Information Form” and submit the forms with official supporting documentation as endorsed by the *CT Association for Higher Education and Disability* (see section titled: *Connecticut Association for Higher Education and Disability (CT AHEAD) Documentation Guidelines and Processes*.) **Note:** Forms are located at the end of this handbook and on the College’s website at <https://www.charteroak.edu/current/services/accessibility.php>
2. It is highly recommended that the student contact OAS to speak with the Accessibility Specialist to 1) confirm that the documents were received, and 2) to start a channel of communication.
3. Once documentation is received, the Accessibility Specialist will contact the student by phone to schedule an interview and documentation review.

**Note:** *In adherence to Amendments to the Americans with Disabilities Act in 2008 (S. 3406) and revised Title I regulations, determination of eligibility for accommodations requires an interactive process and is made on a case-by-case basis. The [Office of Accessibility Services \(OAS\)](#) asks that any student in need of academic accommodations meet with staff by phone or in person. No student should delay meeting with the OAS out of concern for not having appropriate paperwork.*

4. After the interview, the Accessibility Specialist will evaluate the requested accommodation.
5. If accommodations are approved, the Accessibility Specialist will: 1) contact the student by phone to review services and expectations, and 2) generate letters of

accommodation to the student and respective faculty member via Charter Oak email.

6. It is the responsibility of students to review the letters with their professor to ensure mutual understanding and to communicate the student's needs in relation to the specific accommodations granted.
7. Students are also responsible for keeping the Accessibility Specialist informed. It is important that students alert the Accessibility Specialist of any changes in: 1) accommodation needs and/or 2) changes in registration status or changes in course schedules (i.e. adding, dropping, withdrawals, etc.)
8. If an accommodation request is denied, the student will be notified both by phone and in writing. If there is disagreement with the decision, the student may appeal the decision by going through the appeals process (*see section titled: Appealing Accommodation Determination.*)

### For Returning Students

1. Academic accommodation requests are required on a semester-by-semester basis. After registering for classes each semester, the students should email OAS, alerting the Accessibility Specialist of the enrollment.
2. The Accessibility Specialist will review students' request for accommodations and notify the student if supplemental documentation will be required. If not, the Accessibility Specialist will generate accommodation letter(s) and email them to the student and respective faculty.
3. Students are responsible for reviewing their letters of accommodations and communicating with their professors to reach a mutual understanding of the accommodations.
4. Students are also responsible for keeping the Accessibility Specialist informed. It is important that students alert the Accessibility Specialist of any changes in: 1) accommodation needs and/or 2) changes in registration status or changes in course schedules (i.e. adding, dropping, withdrawals, etc.)



## Office of Accessibility Services Request for Services

*Please complete this form and submit via email, fax, or mail to:*

Charter Oak State College  
Attn: Office of Accessibility Services  
55 Paul J. Manafort Drive  
New Britain, CT 06053-2150  
Email: [OAS@charteroak.edu](mailto:OAS@charteroak.edu)  
Fax: (860) 606-9673  
Phone: (860) 515-3841

### STUDENT INFORMATION

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone where we may reach you? \_\_\_\_\_

May we leave a message or voicemail? \_\_\_\_\_

Charter Oak Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender:  Male  Female

**Nature of Disability:** Indicate any disability for which you are seeking accommodations.

Visual impairment       Learning Disability       Hearing Impairment

ADHD       Psychiatric/Mood Disorder

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**How does your disability, medical condition, treatment (including medications), impact your academic or work performance?**

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Math              | <input type="checkbox"/> test taking           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Study skills                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Organization      | <input type="checkbox"/> retaining information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writing                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting deadlines | <input type="checkbox"/> communicating ideas   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintaining focus<br>instructions | <input type="checkbox"/> Prioritizing      | <input type="checkbox"/> understanding         |

**Do you use any of the following?**

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Screen reader        | <input type="checkbox"/> Screen magnifier                     | <input type="checkbox"/> speech-to-text software |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tutor/Academic Coach | <input type="checkbox"/> closed captioning and/or transcripts |  |

**Is there any other information you would like to share about your disability that will support your request for accommodations?**

**LEARNING PROFILE AND HISTORY:**

*All information disclosed in this form is confidential and will not go into your academic file.* Please describe any support services or devices you have used in previous academic or work settings:

## OAS SERVICES AND AGREEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

*Please initial each line item indicating you have read and understand the information.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ In order to receive academic accommodations, I am required to submit supporting documentation from a qualified evaluator stating my disability/medical condition, its impact on academic performance, and recommended accommodations. *More information about required documentation provided in the checklist below.*
- \_\_\_\_\_ In will provide the Office of Accessibility Services with a signed Release of Disability Information form, provided by the OAS.
- \_\_\_\_\_ There are no fees required for accessing reasonable accommodations. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, I have the right to receive reasonable accommodations in order to have equal access to Charter Oak State College programs, course content and student programs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ All documentation and personally identifiable information will be treated confidentially.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am required to provide each course instructor with a letter of accommodations, provided to me by the Office of Accessibility Services, for each term, session, or semester

## REQUIRED FORMS AND DOCUMENTATION CHECKLIST

- Request for Services Form
- Authorization to Release Disability Information Form
- Supporting Documentation

### Disability Documentation Guidelines

1. Provided by a qualified evaluator within the last five years, identifying the disability. (Generally, documents older than five years will not be accepted.)
2. Describe how the disability impacts the individual's academic performance and learning.
3. Make recommendations for appropriate learning accommodations.

## CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

Information contained in your OAS file will be treated confidentially and will not be shared with anyone outside Charter Oak State College without prior written authorization. Submitting the required documentation well in advance of the next term/semester will allow us enough time to put accommodations into place before the start of courses. Once documentation is received and evaluated, the Office of Accessibility will contact you to discuss the options for accommodations.

If you have any questions about how to access accommodations, please call the Office of Accessibility Services at (860) 515-3846 or email the office at [OAS@charteroak.edu](mailto:OAS@charteroak.edu).

### For OAS Staff Use Only

Request  Approved  Not approved

Basis for Decision:

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## Office of Accessibility Services Release of Information Form

*Please complete this form and submit via email, fax, or mail to:*

Charter Oak State College  
Attn: Office of Accessibility Services  
55 Paul J. Manafort Drive  
New Britain, CT 06053-2150  
Email: [OAS@charteroak.edu](mailto:OAS@charteroak.edu)  
Fax: (860) 606-9673  
Phone: (860) 515-3841

**Name of Student:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student ID #:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date of Birth:** \_\_\_\_\_

### RELEASE OF MEDICAL OR DISABILITY RECORDS

I, the undersigned, consent to and request all appropriate persons and/or agencies or institutions to release information regarding myself to Charter Oak State College for use in education planning. All information will be kept confidential and maintained as part of my records with the Office of Accessibility Services. I authorize the release of information to include one or more of the following records:

Medical Reports

Learning Disability Assessment

Reports Psychiatric Evaluation

Results Vocational

Rehabilitation Plan

Audiology and Speech/Language Pathology

Reports

Other: \_\_\_\_\_



## RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO SCHOOL PERSONNEL

I authorize Office of Accessibility, to release information pertinent to academic accommodations to my instructor(s) at Charter Oak State College or to a testing company such as ETS if I request accommodations for standardized testing.

I authorize further authorize the Accessibility Specialist at Charter Oak State College o seek further information from my documentation provider to further clarify requested accommodations.

### Information to be discussed/released

Approved accommodations Health/Disability information

Health/Disability information

Health/Disability related impacts on an academic setting

### Signature Required

By signing below, I consent to the release of the personally identifiable student information specified above to the individuals listed above. I understand that there is no expiration date for this authorization to release information, and that I may revoke it in writing at any time.

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Signature of Student

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Date of Signature

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Signature of Parent/Guardian  
(If under 18 years of age)

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Date of Signature