

GISCI Policy on ADA Accommodations for Professional Testing

Introduction

The GIS Certification Institute (GISCI) complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as amended by the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA), and is committed to ensuring equal access to the test for all individuals with disabilities. GISCI works with our contracted exam provider Pearson VUE to provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations to individuals with documented disabilities who demonstrate a need for accommodations.

Purpose

This policy ensures that individuals with disabilities are provided equal access to professional testing environments in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other relevant regulations. The aim is to provide reasonable accommodations that enables all candidates to demonstrate their qualifications and abilities on an equal footing with other candidates.

Scope

This policy applies to all professional testing environments, including but not limited to certification exams, licensure exams, and other standardized assessments administered by GISCI.

Definition of Disability

Under the ADA, a disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. This policy recognizes that disabilities may vary in nature and severity, and everyone's needs may differ.

Requesting Accommodations

1. **Eligibility:** Candidates requesting accommodations must have a documented disability as defined by the ADA. Under the ADA, an individual with a disability is a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity (such as seeing, hearing, learning, reading, concentrating, or thinking) or a major bodily function (such as the neurological, endocrine, or digestive system). This includes, but is not limited to, physical disabilities, sensory impairments, learning disabilities, and mental health conditions. The determination of whether an individual has a disability generally must be made without regard to any positive effects of measures such as medication, medical supplies or equipment, low-vision devices (other than ordinary eyeglasses or contact lenses), prosthetics, hearing aids and cochlear implants, or mobility devices. However, negative effects, such as side effects of medication or burdens associated with following a particular treatment regimen, may be considered when determining whether an individual's impairment substantially limits a major life activity.
2. **Procedure:**
 - If an applicant believes they need an accommodation because of your disability, they are responsible for requesting a reasonable accommodation in a timely manner. Candidates must submit a request for accommodations at least 8 weeks prior to the testing date. Requests can be submitted using procedures outlined on the GISCI website, available at the following link: <https://www.gisci.org/Want-to-be-a-GISP/The->

Exam/Accommodations. GISCI encourages applicants to include relevant information, such as:

- A description of the accommodation you are requesting.
 - The reason you need an accommodation.
 - How the accommodation will help you perform the testing.
- Along with the request, candidates must provide documentation provided by a qualified evaluator of their disability. This documentation should:
- State a clear diagnosis of the disability.
 - Be recent and relevant to the nature of disability.
 - Clearly state the specific accommodations being requested. If possible and appropriate, this should include an explanation of why these specific accommodations or devices are needed and how they will reduce the impact of the identified functional limitations. Recommendations should be tied to specific test results or clinical observations when possible.
 - Be from a licensed healthcare professional or a qualified practitioner or other professional evaluator whose scope of practice is relative to the disability and who is licensed who can provide an explanation of the disability and recommend specific accommodations. The evaluator's professional credentials, evidence of licensure/certification, area of specialization, employment and the state in which the individual practices should be provided and should establish that such professional qualify them to make the particular diagnosis.
 - Describe the specific diagnostic criteria and/or diagnostic tests used, including date(s) of evaluation, test results and a detailed interpretation of the test results. This description should include the specific results of diagnostic procedures and tests utilized and should include relevant history. Where appropriate, specific test scores should be reported to support the diagnosis. Diagnostic methods used should be current practice within the field and appropriate to the disability. Informal or non-standardized evaluations should be described in enough detail that other professionals could understand their role and significance in the diagnostic process
 - **Prior accommodations:** A history of prior accommodation is helpful in documenting a disability and the need for an accommodation. If no prior accommodations have been provided in testing situations, it is in the candidate's best interest for either the applicant or the qualified professional expert to include an explanation as to why no accommodations were given in the past and why accommodations are needed now.
 - **Incomplete applications.** If there is a need for further verification of the disability or the need for further documentation, it is possible that the decision

on providing the accommodation will be delayed until the next scheduled test administration.

- **Physical Disabilities.**

- Purpose: Documentation of a physical disability is usually more straight forward and less difficult than for learning, psychological, and other mental disabilities. A physical examination and a few tests are often sufficient to reach a diagnosis.
- The basic steps
 1. The general guidelines apply as they do for any disability.
 2. Documentation must be based on objective evidence of a substantial limitation in physical function. At a minimum, the comprehensive evaluation should include the following: (i) a diagnostic interview and history taking, and (ii) a physical examination.
 3. A report of assessment should be attached which usually includes: (i) a description of the presenting problem(s), (ii) notes on the physical examination, (iii) the tests or procedures used to support the diagnosis.

3. Review Process:

- Upon receipt of the request and supporting documentation, the GISCI Accommodation Review Committee will evaluate the request based on the documentation provided and the nature of the exam. The GISCI will use commercially reasonable efforts to complete their review and make a determination in time for applicants to register and prepare to attend the test.
- The candidate may be contacted for further clarification or additional information. The GISCI will make commercially reasonable efforts to provide applicants with a reasonable opportunity to respond to any requests for additional information, and still be able to take the test in the same testing cycle
- GISCI will make reasonable efforts to grant accommodations that are appropriate, effective, and in line with the needs of the candidate while maintaining the integrity of the testing process.

4. Notification:

- The candidate will be notified in writing of the decision regarding their accommodation request. This will include the specific accommodations granted or the reason for denial (if applicable). The GISCI shall prepare a clear written explanation to support their decision regarding testing accommodations requests

5. Denial of Requests:

- If the requested accommodations are not deemed appropriate, reasonable, or feasible, alternative accommodations may be proposed. In cases where the candidates' requests for testing accommodations are not approved in full, the candidates shall be informed,

in writing, why each of their requests for testing accommodations are not approved in full, and what additional information, if any, could lead the GISCI to approve their requests in the future. An explanation of the appeals process shall be included in all correspondence to candidates whose requests for testing accommodations are not approved in full.

- If applicant procedures have been followed correctly, GISCI will make every effort to inform applicants of a denial at least 12 days before the exam.
- Candidates have the right to appeal any accommodation decision by contacting the GISCI Executive Director. GISCI will work with an outside evaluator to review the denial.

Currency of Documentation

Because the provision of reasonable accommodations is based on assessment of the current impact of the examinee's disability on the testing activity, it is in the applicants best interest to provide recent documentation. As the manifestations of a disability may vary over time and in different settings, in most cases an evaluation should have been conducted within the past three years. Lack of currency in any provided documentation may be taken into account by the GISCI Accommodation Review Committee when reviewing and evaluating an applicant's accommodation requests and making a determination. Specific currency of documentation requirements may include, but are not limited to:

- Candidates who are requesting accommodations based on a diagnosis of a psychological or psychiatric disorder, will do their best to provide current documentation of their condition from a qualified evaluator within the last one (1) year.
- Candidates who are requesting accommodations based on a diagnosis of a non-obvious physical disability or chronic health condition are generally expected to do their best provide current documentation of their condition from a qualified evaluator within the last one (1) year.
- Candidates who are requesting accommodations based on a diagnosis of a learning or other cognitive disorder are expected to provide a report from a current, comprehensive psychoeducational or neuropsychological evaluation. It is essential that the documentation be provided by a qualified evaluator within the last five (5) years.
- Candidates who are requesting accommodations based on a diagnosis of ADHD are generally expected to provide current documentation of their condition. It is essential that the documentation be provided by a qualified evaluator within the last five (5) years.

Confidentiality

All medical and disability-related information provided by the candidate will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of providing reasonable accommodations. Such information will not be disclosed to any other parties without the candidate's consent, except as required by law.

Compliance

GISCI is committed to complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act and other relevant federal, state, and local laws governing the provision of accommodations for individuals with disabilities. All accommodations will be implemented in a way that ensures fairness and does not compromise the integrity of the testing process.

Contact Information

For questions or assistance with the accommodation process, candidates may contact:

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