

Guidelines for Providing Accommodations Using CASAS Assessment for Learners with Disabilities

www.casas.org

► Purpose

The accountability standards in the 1998 Workforce Investment Act include the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 to improve access to adult programs and achieve employment outcomes for learners with disabilities. Other legislation addresses provisions related to testing accommodations for learners with disabilities, including Section 504 in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act reauthorized in 2004. These laws ensure equal access for all learners in education programs, including learners with disabilities. Accommodations provide an opportunity for all test takers to demonstrate their skills and ability. The accommodations may alter test administration procedures without changing what the test is intended to measure.

The following guidelines address methods for administering CASAS assessments using accommodations for learners with documented disabilities. The suggested accommodations for disability categories consist of the provisions below.

1. Accommodations in test administration procedures.
2. Use of appropriate CASAS test forms.

► Local Agency Responsibility

Local test administrators must consider the individual needs of the learner when they provide accommodations. The responsibility of fulfilling learner requests for accommodations is that of the local agency, not of CASAS. However, CASAS will work with state and local agencies to develop additional tests that are in a format reflecting the manner in which learners acquire and report information needed to function in everyday life. For example, if a learner is legally blind and reads information using Braille, then a standardized reading test in a Braille format is appropriate for testing. CASAS is currently developing such a form to include test items in Braille that reflect functional literacy situations in the life and work of a person who is blind.

Local agencies are responsible for providing fully accessible services and have the responsibility to ensure that these services meet reasonable criteria. In addition, the agency administering the test must provide any necessary accommodations at no cost to the learner. The costs are negligible for most of the common accommodations that learners will request.

Local agency, district, and state accountability data collection systems should include CASAS test results for learners with disabilities. However, all public reports of test results must follow confidentiality laws and report scores without reference to name, address, or Social Security number of the learner. Local and state

agencies may also want to collect accountability data on which and how many accommodations or alternate test forms are provided during test administration for program improvement purposes.

Adult learners with disabilities are responsible for requesting accommodations and for submitting documentation of their disability at the time of registration, program entry, or after diagnosis. The need to use an accommodation should be documented in official learner records, such as the Individual Program Plan (IPP) or Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The information could come from a doctor's report, a diagnostic assessment from a certified professional, and other clinical records. Adult agencies can often contact the local division of vocational rehabilitation or a secondary school to request documentation of a disability. The documentation must show that the disability interferes with the learner's ability to demonstrate performance on the test. Local agencies should provide the same accommodations when they administer CASAS assessment as they do for the learner during instruction and as documented in annual plans such as individual education plans. For example, if the learner acquires information and receives instruction with the assistance of a sign language interpreter, then an interpreter is also necessary to provide directions for standardized testing. However, interpreters *do not sign the test questions themselves* because the purpose of the assessment is to determine level of basic reading literacy skill.

It is important that a learner practice using the appropriate accommodation during instruction *before* using the accommodation during the assessment. Also, it is important to *ask learners* what accommodations will work best in their situation.

CASAS has a variety of standardized performance-based assessment instruments to use with learners who do not demonstrate their skills well on multiple-choice tests. Standardized performance-based instruments are available for special purposes such as demonstration of writing and speaking skills and functional life skills for developmental disabilities.

► Accommodations in Test Administration Procedures

Local test administrators may provide or allow some accommodations in test administration procedures or environment for documented disabilities without contacting CASAS. Test administrators often use these same strategies as *test taking strategies* for other learners who do not have documented disabilities. Students may request to take only one test per day or to test in an alternate quiet room. Learners may also use a variety of strategies when they take a test, such as a plain straight-edge ruler, magnifying strips or glass, colored overlays, ear plugs, and other devices as deemed appropriate (www.acenet.edu/calec/ged/).

Sample accommodations in test administration procedures or environment are shown in Table 1. Examples of these accommodations are extended time, supervised breaks, or sign language interpreter *for test administration directions only*. The accommodations listed are suggestions only. Accommodations are based on needs of individual learners and not on a disability category. Any testing accommodation must be consistent with documentation in the annual plan, such as an IEP. These strategies do not alter the validity of the test results. The local test administrator does not need to contact CASAS when providing these accommodations.

It is *not* an appropriate accommodation in test administration procedures to *read a CASAS reading test* to a learner with low literacy skills or blindness. The purpose of a reading test is to assess reading skill levels and to determine the learner's appropriate instructional level, not to assess knowledge of a subject area. Agencies may call CASAS to provide information on these or other suggested accommodations.

► Use of Appropriate CASAS Test Forms

It is important to use an appropriate test form that best meets the learner's goals and manner of receiving and reporting information. Most learners with a disability can take some form of a CASAS test. CASAS is able to provide large-print versions of all tests. Large-print tests and computer-based tests are examples of test forms often used for learners with documented disabilities based on need as well as for *all* learners. The Employability Competency System (ECS) appraisal as well as the ECS reading pre- and post-tests and the Life Skills reading pre and post-tests are available in large-print forms. Beginning Literacy Reading and the Reading for Citizenship series are

in a large print format. The POWER performance-based assessment and the Tests for Life Skills, Forms 310 through 340, are available specifically for learners with developmental disabilities.

CASAS is currently expanding development of other test forms to measure basic literacy skills of learners with specific documented disabilities. For example, a functional Braille reading test to measure basic literacy skills is in development for learners who are blind or have a visual impairment. Current CASAS reading, math, and listening tests include multiple displays (test prompts) of actual everyday items — maps, telephone books, paycheck stubs, graphs — that cannot be translated realistically into an audio format or into Braille. Please contact CASAS if you are interested in participating in a national validation of appropriate assessment for visually impaired or blind learners. The CASAS test development process always includes field-based specialists who help design, develop, and field test assessment instruments to ensure appropriateness for assessment of the specific population.

► When Appropriate CASAS Tests Are Not Available

Please contact CASAS if the accommodation needed is not currently available from CASAS. Changes in test format affect the standardization and statistical measures for the test. CASAS will provide advice regarding appropriate accommodations that are not currently available to test administrators.

Contact CASAS at 1-800-255-1036 for further information on appropriate accommodations for using CASAS tests.

Disability	Test Administration Procedures	CASAS Test Forms Available	CASAS Test Forms In Development
Specific Learning Disability and/or ADHD such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, receptive aphasia, hyperactivity, written language disorder, attention deficit disorder	Extended time Alternate schedule Frequent breaks Scribe/writer/alternate room Computer — spelling and grammar check disabled Simple calculator <i>for Level A/B only</i>	<i>Large- print tests</i>	Auditory format for Government and History for Citizenship
Deaf or Hearing Impaired	Sign language interpreter <i>for test directions only</i> Head phones for those taking a listening test		
Blind or Visually Impaired	Magnifier	<i>Large- print CASAS tests</i> <i>Computer-based CASAS tests</i>	Braille format
Mobility impairment	Extended time Alternate site/equipment Scribe/writer/ communication board		
Psychiatric Disability such as schizophrenia, major depression			
Developmental Disability such as autism, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, mental retardation		<i>Adult Life Skills</i> Forms 310 through 350 <i>POWER</i> Forms 301, 303 and 305	

Note. The accommodations listed above are suggestions only and in addition to use of regular CASAS tests. Accommodations are based on needs of individual learners and not on a disability category. Any testing accommodation should be consistent with documentation in the annual plan, such as an IPP. Alternate test forms developed by CASAS do not modify test standards.