The Evolving Landscape of Accommodations

Funded by the Mental Health Innovation Fund

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Ontario

Presentation Outline

- Research goals and methods

- Focus Group and Survey Results

- Consultations

- Draft Recommendations for Documentation Standards and Guidelines

Review of Project Goals

- Documentation standards and guidelines

- Training program on accommodating students with mental health problems/disabilities

- Resource handbook for students

Environmental Scan - Method

Regional Focus Groups

    Windsor   Toronto

    North Bay   Thunder Bay

    Ottawa   Kingston

$\longrightarrow$ **Students / Faculty**

Sector Focus Groups

    IDIA and CCDI

$\longrightarrow$ **Disability Advisors/ Counsellors**

Online Survey

    Province-wide

$\longrightarrow$ **Students / Disability Advisors / Faculty / Administrators / Physicians**

Draft

Study Participation

	Focus Groups				On-line Survey		
		C%	U%			C%	U%
Students	37	57	43		914	48	52
Dis Adv.	57	54	46		97	72	28
Faculty	83	57	43		986	54	46
Administrators		n/a			125	60	40
Physicians		n/a			28	17	82

Draft

Themes - Students

- Training for faculty

- Better awareness that accommodations are available

- Shorter wait time for appointments – shorter process

- Note-takers /Exams

- More staff

- Stigma

Self-Stigma (Student voices)

Embarrassment

Crazy

Burden

Weird

Stupid

Failure

Inferior

Scammer

Weak

Student Recommendations

- Institution to provide letter to professors
- Faculty training
- Survey about accommodation experience
- Information on mental health disabilities and services in:
    - acceptance packages
    - brochures
    - e-mail blasts
    - Information on course syllabi
- Clear policies
- More Staff

Faculty Comments on Training

"…from my perspective, I think we need to begin to offer a lot more workshops in this area (mental health)."

"All faculty and TA's should get training."

Themes - Faculty

- Nature of their role – not counsellors!
- Lack of Training
- Lack of formal policies
- Workload
- Confidentiality- Administrative Red Tape
- Abuse of accommodations
- Students who don't disclose to OSD
- Stigma

Themes – Administrators

- Faculty and staff training

- Documentation requirements

- No clear polices

- Lack of best practice/UID

- Abuse of accommodations

- Increase in numbers

- Staffing

- Stigma

Draft

Themes – Disability Advisors

- Inconsistency in documentation

- Workload

- Faculty Education and Training on Mental Health and UID

- Field Practicum

- Lack of institutional policy

- Different faculties, different policies

- Students who don't disclose

- Stigma

Draft

Themes - Physicians

- Lack of clear policy/direction

- Challenge of "permanent" disability requirement

- Professors need to be understanding

- Paperwork

- Stigma

Physician Comment

"It would be wonderful if all universities followed the same process. Get everyone using the same terminology.   I would suggest training the doctors in what to say to disability centres about symptoms and diagnosis,   and leave the specific accommodation decision to disability experts."

Physician Comment 2

"Students get such a run-around. From prof to accessibility to us, back again the other way. It would be wonderful if it could all be streamlined somehow."

Update: The Student Handbook

Final reviews being completed.   Sections include:

1. **The Academic Accommodations Process** (step by step)

2. **Academic Issues** (Frequently Asked Questions)

   - Retroactive Accommodations

   - Missed Exams

   - Change in status, etc.

3. **Managing your mental health on campus**

   - Seeking help

   - Relevant Mental Health Legislation

   - Access to Personal health Information, etc.

4. **Resource Links**

5. **Glossary**

Consultations

The Ontario Human Rights Commission

Dr. Chiachen Cheng

University of Manitoba

OHRC

Ontario HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

- Issue of Diagnosis

- Temporary versus permanent Impairments

- Time as an element for seeking accommodations

- Concept of "Good faith"

OHRC

- Policy on preventing discrimination based on mental health disabilities and addictions

- Approved: January 31, 2014
  Official release: June 18, 2014

Draft

Policy – What Information is Needed for Accommodation

- Generally, the *educational institution* does not have the right to know a person's confidential medical information, such as the cause of the disability, the diagnosis, symptoms or treatment,

- unless these details clearly relate to the accommodation(s) being sought,

- or the person's needs are complex, challenging or unclear and more information is needed.

(Pg. 53. As pointed out during the presentation, the presenters changed the words "accommodation provider" to "educational institution" to make the information pertinent in a post-secondary education context)

Policy - The Need for More Information

- In the rare case where an *educational institution* can show that it legitimately needs more information about a person's disability (as opposed to just the needs related to the disability) to make the accommodation, it could ask for the nature of the person's illness, condition, or disability (for example, it is a mental disability, a learning disability or an addiction?), as opposed to a medical diagnosis.

(Pg. 53. As pointed out during the presentation, the presenters changed the words "accommodation provider" to "educational institution" to make the information pertinent in a post-secondary education context)

Policy – Rationale for Documentation Requests

An *educational institution* should be able to explain why it requested particular information about a student's disability and how this information relates to accommodating the student

(Pg. 53. As pointed out during the presentation, the presenters changed the words "accommodation provider" to "educational institution" to make the information pertinent in a post-secondary education context)

Policy - Perception of a Mental Health Disability

Educational institutions must attempt to help a student who is clearly unwell or perceived to have a mental health disability or addiction by inquiring further to see if the students has needs related to a disability and offering assistance and accommodation.

(Pg. 49. As pointed out during the presentation, the presenters changed the words "accommodation provider" to "educational institution" to make the information pertinent in a post-secondary education context)

Consultation

Dr. Chiachen Cheng MD, FRCP(C), MPH, *Medical Director, CMHA Thunder Bay, co-chair of Early Psychosis Intervention of Ontario Network (EPION)*

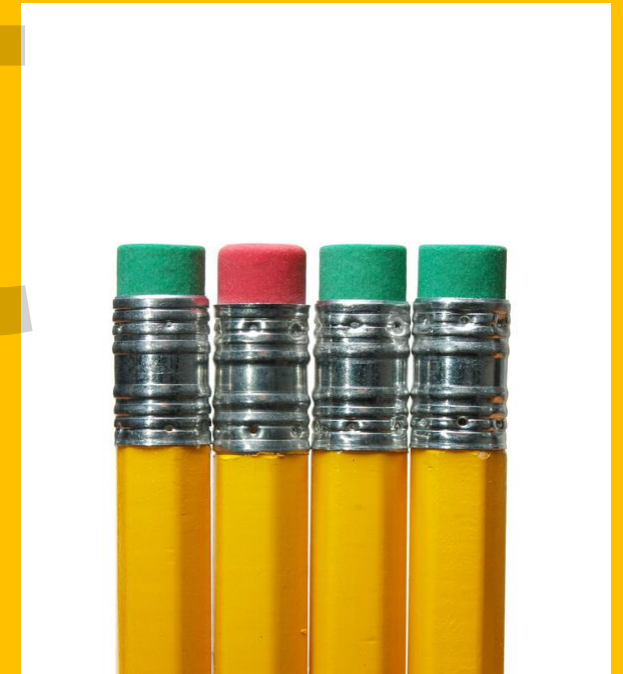# Consultation on Documentation Standards – Dr. Cheng

- The need for consistency in the post secondary system

- Move away from **diagnosis** to **impairment**

- Evidence of impairment vs. time for diagnosis

Tip from Dr. Cheng

- "Being given an accommodation sheet and told to take it to your instructor/professor can be daunting. Support for this process would be great"

From: "*Early Psychosis Intervention on Campus*" Webinar, Centre of Innovation in Campus Mental Health, Sept. 24th, 2014

University of Manitoba

- Cooper Commission Report, [Cooper Report](#)

- Accommodation Model Redesigned to Include Faculty

- Accessibility Advisory Committee, 4-8 Members

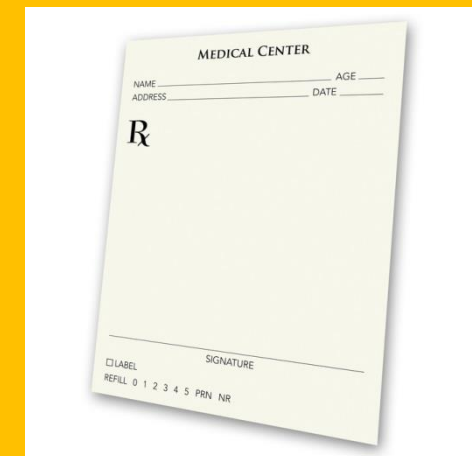- Accommodation Team, 2-3 Members

University of Manitoba 2

- Key elements of the Accommodation process
  - Bona Fide Academic Requirements
    - Identified for programs with professional designations (e.g. Medicine, Nursing, etc.)
    - To be developed for all other programs
  - Faculty/School based teams to deal with complex accommodations
  - Appeal process for students and faculty
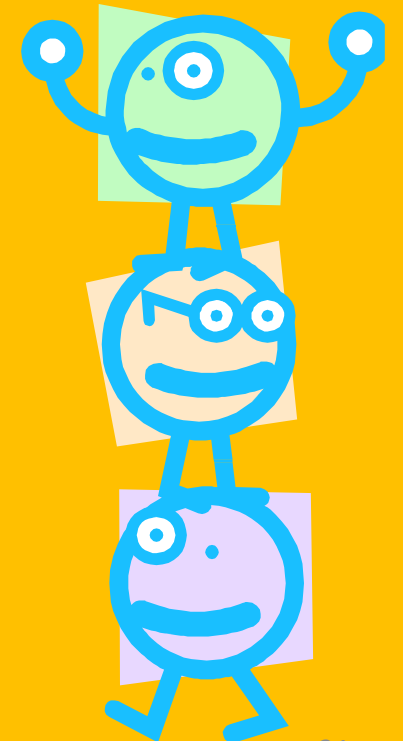
Faculty of Medicine Policy

- University will endeavour to meet the identified needs of each student by adapting services, courses, and programs as feasible and as resources allow, while maintaining appropriate academic standards.

- Within the Faculty of Medicine, each student with a disability is entitled to reasonable accommodation that will assist her or him to meet the academic as well as technical standards.

Bachelor of Nursing Program – Accommodation Team

- The purpose of the Accommodations Team is to provide a systematic preplanned collaborative effort to develop reasonable accommodation strategies for courses in the Bachelor of Nursing Program, with a particular focus on clinical courses.

We are building on what is going on elsewhere in Ontario....

Draft

Some examples

Trent University
Faculty Roles and Responsibilities in Accommodation

- Accept requests for accommodation in **good faith** (whether the accommodation involves the services of SAS or otherwise), unless there are legitimate reasons for acting otherwise;

York University – FAQ for Faculty

- Accommodations are continuous.
- A student does not have to be in relapse to need these accommodations.
- …. a preventative measure to reduce stress and to best manage school and their mental health simultaneously.

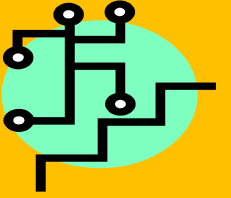# Humber College - Easy Start Transition Program

[Easy Start Transition Program For Students With Disabilities](#)

Draft Recommendations

1. Impairment-focused, not diagnosis-focused
2. Accommodations provided in good faith
3. OSD to send letters of accommodation to professors
4. Retroactive Accommodations
5. Clear policies
6. Streamlined services for students
7. Effective training for faculty
8. Accommodation Teams

Next Steps

- Continue to Identify best practices

- Continue consulting – Human Rights, Dr. Cheng, Lawyers, Professional Organizations, Students. CCDI, IDIA

- Develop

  – Refine Documentation standards & guidelines

  – Training modules

Contact Information

Eleanor Condra: econdra@sl.on.ca

Mike Condra: condram@queensu.ca

www.supportcampusmentalhealth.ca