



# **Volunteer State Community College**

*Access Center*

**A Student Handbook**

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## **OUR MISSION**

The Access Center (AC) at Volunteer State Community College (VSCC) helps students with disabilities participate more fully in educational programming, benefit from an accessible environment and achieve greater academic success by facilitating educational, programmatic and environmental access.

The promotion of student independence and self-advocacy is instrumental to our mission and remains a major tenet of our philosophy for working with all students.

## **WE'RE ALL ABOUT ACCESS!**

### **For Students...**

...We provide a variety of resources and advocacy services to assist students in obtaining full access and greater success as they work toward earning a college degree.

### **For Faculty and Staff...**

...We provide training, guidance and support to faculty for creating a more accessible learning environment for all students.

### **For the VSCC Community...**

...We provide consultant services, educate the campus community, interpret disability law, and recommend campus improvements that lead to greater physical access.

We recognize disability as one aspect of diversity and believe all students have the right to full access, as well as the opportunity to enjoy a successful and inclusive college experience. As such, we seek to provide all programming and activities from a social justice perspective using a core philosophy of equal access and nondiscrimination for all.

Students are encouraged to become actively involved in academic and social organizations, sports and wellness programs, student government activities, and other extracurricular activities which enhance both personal and professional development.

**Volunteer State Community College, a Tennessee Board of Regents institution, is an AA/EEO employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status in its programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies: Director of Human Resources, Affirmative Action Officer, Title IX Coordinator, 1480 Nashville Pike, Gallatin, TN 37066, 615.230.3592**

## **TRANSITION TO COLLEGE**

The Access Center (AC) at Volunteer State Community College (VSCC) offers resources to all students with disabilities, whether you've recently graduated from high school or you've been out of high school for several years. However, if you're a recent high school graduate you may be confused by the changes with which you're faced and unsure what to expect as you prepare for college. Realistically, the transition from high school to college requires a period of adjustment for all students since the academic demands are different in the two environments. However, the transition for students with disabilities requires special preparation in order to progress smoothly. During the high school years, much of the responsibility for accommodating your disability fell to school personnel and your parents served as your primary advocates. Even though you were required to participate in case conferences and the implementation of your Individual Education Plan (IEP) you may have felt more on the "sidelines." In college, your parents no longer serve as your primary advocates and you're asked to assume this role. It's important you understand that in college you'll be expected to:

1. Seek out needed services.
2. Provide adequate documentation of your disability.
3. Self-identify your accommodation needs.
4. Follow-through with your responsibilities in the accommodation process.

Some of the confusion surrounding the transition from high school to college for students with disabilities can be traced to the fact that colleges and high schools are governed by different laws. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) no longer applies as you transition to college and an IEP, mandated by IDEA, will no longer be used once you become a college student. Even Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) has different provisions for colleges than are in place for K-12 schools.

By law, K-12 schools:

1. Provide assessments to identify students with disabilities.
2. Guarantee all students receive a Fair and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).
3. Develop Individual Education Plans (IEP's) for providing accommodations to students with disabilities.
4. May modify or waive course content as deemed necessary to guarantee student success.
5. May provide any accommodation available to guarantee student success, including for personal use or study.

By law, colleges:

1. May require students with disabilities to provide adequate "evidence of need" for specific accommodations.
2. Guarantee all eligible students have the opportunity to attend college, if they are accepted and have the means.
3. Provide only reasonable, appropriate accommodations needed to guarantee access to activities, programs and services.
4. Are not required to fundamentally alter the essential academic requirements of a course or field of study.
5. Are not required to provide accommodations for personal use or study, such as tutors or personal aids.

## **THE ACCESS CENTER**

Staff in the AC is committed to creating a “safe place” where students with disabilities feel respected and valued, and where they find meaningful support from caring professionals who encourage them to be independent and successful, as well as vital, contributing members of our community.

Under the law, faculty are responsible for ensuring students with disabilities receive reasonable and appropriate accommodations in their classes; however, as a student with a disability you are responsible for initiating and maintaining communication with each of your instructors and for following through with your assigned responsibilities in the process. The AC’s role is to assist VSCC in determining your eligibility for the specific college-level accommodations you are requesting, to advocate on your behalf with your instructors, to assist you and your instructors in setting up reasonable academic accommodations, and to locate the resources you need to be more successful in the college environment. The College never charges any additional costs to a qualified student for the provision of reasonable and appropriate accommodations for a disability.

The services offered through the AC are designed to assist all students with disabilities in navigating the accommodation process and learning self-advocacy skills for the college environment. If you will be seeking accommodations in your VSCC classes, you are asked to register with the AC, ideally as soon as you’re accepted to the College.

## REGISTERING FOR ACCOMMODATIONS

### AIM Application

At the Vol State AC, we use an online registration and accommodation management system called AIM, which allows you to independently request and manage the accommodation process anytime, anywhere. To register:

1. Go to the Access Center website at [www.volstate.edu/access](http://www.volstate.edu/access) . Click on the large button “Apply Online.”
2. Fill out the AIM Application Form.
3. Scan and upload your documentation into AIM.
4. After you receive an email confirmation of your completed registration, you will be able to login to AIM by clicking the large button “Login” and using your Vol State username and password.

If you do not have your documentation readily available when you fill out your AIM application form, you may:

1. Scan and email it later to [access.center@volstate.edu](mailto:access.center@volstate.edu).
2. Deliver it to the AC office on the Gallatin campus in the **Ramer Administration Building, Suite 143**. We will scan and return your original.
3. Scan and upload it at a later date using the **link provided in the email** you received when you completed your AIM application.

### Disability Documentation

All disability documentation must be received in the AC before we’re able to endorse your eligibility for specific academic accommodations. Please call and request our “Documentation Requirements” information sheet which describes the information we need in your documentation. By taking this information sheet to your licensed professional or specialist, he/she can better include the necessary information in either a **Diagnostic Narrative** (letter) or a **Diagnostic Test Report**. Once received in our office, your documentation will be evaluated to determine your eligibility for specific academic accommodations. Please note, we do not use high school education plans, such as a Section 504 or an individualized education plan (IEP), for determining college-level accommodations. However, you may choose to submit your most recent school plan, in addition to your professional documentation, in order to help us understand your history of accommodation use and better determine appropriate accommodations for your situation.

Your accommodations will be individually “prescribed” based on how your disability affects you in the academic environment; therefore, the documentation you submit must specify your symptoms and functional limitations, which in turn will help us reasonably determine appropriate accommodations for your classes. If your documentation does not provide the information we need to make accommodation decisions, you may be asked

to submit additional or updated documentation for review and consideration. Generally, we do not ask that diagnostic testing be completed within a specified time frame, unless your testing is not a complete or comprehensive testing. We're more concerned about the quality of the information your testing provides, than we are with the age of your testing. Please contact the AC for assistance in determining whether or not your documentation needs to be updated, or if we request additional information.

## **REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS**

Reasonable accommodations are defined as modifications or adjustments to requirements for qualified individuals with known physical or mental limitations, which ensure that the requirements do not discriminate on the basis of disability. The reasonable accommodation should reduce or eliminate unnecessary barriers between the individual's abilities and the requirements for performance unless the requirement demonstrated is essential to the program of instruction being pursued by the students, or to any directly related licensing requirements.

## **ACCOMMODATIONS NOT PROVIDED**

Accommodations are only considered appropriate if they do not compromise or fundamentally alter the essential, academic requirements of a course or field of study. The Department of Education has determined that accommodations need not be provided if they are for the purpose of "personal use or study." These types of accommodations include wheelchairs and other individualized services needed for independent living, mental health stability, rehabilitation, individual remediation instruction, and private tutoring. However, a student cannot be prevented from using any VSCC service that is available to all students. Finally, accommodations that create an undue financial or administrative burden for the College may not be provided, including those for which VSCC does not have enough advance notice or those that are impossible or infeasible to provide.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF ACCOMMODATIONS**

Accommodations officially begin when you receive notice that you have completed the registration process in the Access Center, and you submit a request, through your AIM dashboard, for a Faculty Notification Letter to be emailed to your faculty. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive. Additionally, you are not be required to accept any accommodation, service, aid, or separate program designed for you, even when the benefit to do so may be obvious. You should only accept services and accommodations on a voluntary basis.

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

### **Academic Accommodation/Access Grievances**

If a student's approved classroom accommodations have not been provided by a faculty member, or if a student's disability prevents access to a course, course materials, program, building, service or event, the student should:

1. Contact the manager of the Access Center immediately for assistance in resolving the situation and in gaining appropriate access.
2. In cases where there is a disagreement concerning the provision of an approved accommodation, the AC manager will contact all parties involved to gather information, assess the nature of the situation and work toward resolution. A meeting to include the AC manager, student and instructor may be scheduled to establish and encourage a voluntary and informal resolution. If the complaint cannot be resolved voluntarily and informally, the student should complete a Disability Complaint form available in the AC, or provide other written notification to the AC manager of his/her intent to file a formal grievance.
3. The Disability Complaint form will be forwarded to the Assistant Vice President of Student Services for review and resolution. If not resolved, the line of succession for the grievance will be to the Vice President of Student Services, followed by submission to the President. Personal meetings may be requested by the student at any time with these individuals.
4. If the student has a grievance regarding actions by the AC manager, written notification should be submitted to the Assistant Vice President for Student Services, followed by the Vice President, and finally the President.
5. Please note: students with disabilities who have academic complaints not necessarily related to disability may still contact the AC manager, who will assist in clarifying the nature of the complaint. If the complaint is determined to be unrelated to disability, the student will be directed to the college's policies and procedures for filing academic complaints.

### **Disability-Related Discrimination or Harassment Grievances**

If a student's grievance is not related to classroom, programmatic or physical access, but instead relates to discrimination or harassment based upon disability, the student should contact the Volunteer State Community College Title IX/EEO Coordinator or designee directly and immediately. More information on the procedures for filing discrimination and harassment grievances can be found in VSCC Policies VIII:04:00 and VIII:05:00. If requested, the AC manager will provide direction and assistance to the student in contacting the VSCC Title IX/EEO Coordinator.



Please always keep in mind, if a student is unable to resolve a grievance satisfactorily using either of the above procedures, a discrimination complaint can be filed with the federal Office of Civil Rights. Online complaints may be submitted using OCR's electronic complaint form at the following website:

<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/complaintintro.html>

## **TYPES OF ACCOMMODATIONS**

A student with a disability may qualify for a variety of accommodations, based on the individual evaluation conducted during the registration process in the AC. If you find accommodations to be ineffective or if your needs change, you should contact the AC for guidance and/or a re-evaluation for new or additional accommodations.

### **Testing Accommodations**

The AC provides adjustments to various testing procedures when testing presents a barrier. These changes in testing may include extended test time, a separate test location, testing with minimized distractions, provision of a reader, scribe or technology for testing, allowance to use a computer or spell check for essays or a calculator for some math, large print tests, and breaks during testing. Please note that modifications generally only apply to testing procedures, not to the actual tests, themselves.

### **Note Taking Support**

Assistive technology, including adaptive equipment or software, is provided to students who qualify for assistance generating notes from classroom lectures. When technology is inappropriate or inadequate based on individual classroom or symptoms of a student's disability, other options will be explored.

### **Sign Language/CART Services**

Students who use sign language services or CART (remote captioning) to facilitate communication in their classes should submit a request through their AIM dashboard at least 60 days before services are needed, since these services often take an extended period of time to arrange.

### **Alternative Format Materials**

Students who require course work materials in an alternate format, such as electronic text (e-text) or braille, should set an appointment with the Accessible Technology Coordinator as soon as possible after registration in the AC has been completed. The student will be shown a variety of methods for obtaining alternative format textbooks, provided with individual licenses for software or memberships for services, as appropriate, and receive training on appropriate assistive technologies

### **Assistive Technology for the Classroom**

Assistive technology may enable a student with a disability to more fully participate in

and benefit from the educational process. When determined necessary and appropriate, DS staff will work with the student to identify specific types of assistive technology to address the student's individual needs. Available assistive technology may include but is not limited to: speech to text and text to speech software, smart pens, magnifiers, spellers, talking calculators, FM systems for hearing impaired, headphones, MP3 players, and tablets.

All requests for technology or software should be submitted to the Accessible Technology Coordinator in the AC.

### **Service Animals in the Classroom**

Under the ADA, a service animal is defined as a dog (or miniature horse) that is specifically trained to work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a physical, sensory, psychiatric/mental, or intellectual disability. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual's disability, such that animals that only provide crime deterrent effects, emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship do not fall under the ADA definition of a service animal. Pursuant to TBR policy # 1:03:02:55 regarding *Animals on Tennessee Board of Regents Campuses*, service animals are permitted in all areas of TBR campuses where its owner, the person being assisted by the service animal and/or the public are permitted to enter or occupy. Please contact the AC or the VSCC HR department if more information is needed.

There are certain requirements for the safe use of service animals on VSCC property. A service animal may be excluded from VSCC campuses, facilities or programs:

1. If the animal is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it.
2. If the animal is not housebroken.
3. When the presence of an animal fundamentally alters the nature of a program or activity, or presents a danger to the animal or other individuals. Examples may include, but are not limited to research labs, areas requiring protective clothing, and food preparation areas.

The following are also required of a person using a service animal on VSCC properties:

1. Vaccinations: the State of Tennessee requires all dogs over the age of 6 months be currently vaccinated against rabies.
2. Control: Animals must be on a harness, leash, or other tether at all times, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's safe and effective performance of work or tasks, or the handler's disability prevents using these devices. In that case, the handler must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or

other effective controls. The handler of an animal must be in full control of the animal at all times.

3. Animal care and cleanup: The handler of an animal is responsible for prompt clean-up of all animal waste. Handlers should always carry equipment and bags sufficient to clean up the animal's feces, and are required to properly dispose of the feces. Handlers who are not physically able to pick up and dispose of the feces are responsible for making all necessary arrangements for assistance. VSCC is not responsible for these services. The care and supervision of an animal is solely the responsibility of the handler, including grooming, nutrition (food and water), and veterinary care. Regular bathing or cleaning of the animal is expected to avoid significant odors or shedding and to avoid health problems. Failure to exercise proper care for the animal may result in the exclusion of the animal from campus.
4. Health: Any animal with signs of illness, including but not limited to a known zoonotic disease (a disease of animals, such as rabies or psittacosis, that can be transmitted to humans), diarrhea, vomiting, fever or open sores should not be on campus until deemed non-infectious/contagious by the written statement of a licensed veterinarian.
5. Damage: Handlers of service animals are solely responsible for any damage to persons or property caused by their animals.

### **Absences**

VSCC has an attendance policy and students are expected to attend all classes and keep faculty members informed regarding absences from class. However, the U.S. Office of Civil Rights has determined that under certain circumstances regarding students with disabilities, it is appropriate to modify course attendance policies as an accommodation for a disability if the essential components of the course are not compromised. Disability-specific absences, as an accommodation, is a modification of attendance policies; it is not a waiver of those policies. Generally, this simply mean a faculty member may not penalize a student or lower the student's coursework grade based on attendance alone when the absences are due to an exacerbation of the symptoms of a disability.

This accommodation is only activated if a disability-related situation develops during the semester that impacts attendance in class, may only be used for disability/medical/health reasons on file in the Access Center, and may not be used for seasonal colds and flu, or non-disability related reasons. This accommodation is not designed to support a substantial number of missed classes, lengthy assignment extensions or lengthy delays in taking an exam for reasons beyond unpredictable, brief, periodic flare-ups of disability symptoms. It's also understood that it may not be possible to make up some types of assignments and participation points for some classes.

If it is determined this accommodation will fundamentally alter an essential component

of a class or if absences become frequent, this accommodation may not be possible and other available accommodations will be considered.

### **Course Substitutions and Waivers**

In certain situations and when warranted by a student's specific functional limitations, it may be appropriate to submit a request for a substitution or waiver of some required courses. However, substitutions and waivers will not be considered for any classes that are considered **essential**. For example, core requirements for a degree or courses that are a pre-requisite for a core requirement are unable to be waived. A student must have current, appropriate documentation of a disability that states the student cannot complete the course work as a direct result of the functional limitation of the disability. Students who are requesting a course substitution or waiver should use the following procedures:

1. With the assistance of the Access Center, complete the Substitution/Waiver Form and provide appropriate documentation of the disability.
2. Submit the completed form to your advisor, the appropriate department head/academic Dean, and the Vice President of Academic Affairs for consideration of approval.
3. Submit an appeal to the President of the College for a final decision, if indicated.

### **COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION**

The Access Center takes appropriate measures regarding individual needs in providing information to persons with sensory impairments. Such information may be provided using readers, qualified interpreters, alternative format materials, and assistive technologies. Information concerning the College, such as publications, brochures, and handouts, will be made available in alternate formats upon request and with advance notice by a person with a qualifying disability.

## PHYSICAL FACILITIES

Campus buildings, pathways, parking and other physical facilities at all VSCC locations must be accessible to the extent that no individual with a disability is denied access. Suitable methods to achieve accessibility to classrooms, labs, lectures or other events may include relocation to a more accessible location. Students are responsible for making physical access needs known, with reasonable advance notice to allow time for relocation. Requests for physical access, or submission of grievances or complaints should be made in writing to the AC manager.

## SELF-ADVOCACY

It's the student's responsibility to self-identify to the AC by providing appropriate documentation of disability and discussing needed accommodations. It's also extremely important, as well as expected, that students speak to instructors concerning approved accommodations and classroom needs, and to request assistance from AC staff and others on campus, when warranted.

Once you're registered in the AC, if you decide to receive accommodations in your classes, you must request Faculty Notification Letters be emailed to your instructors. This is your official notification to your the instructors that you're entitled to reasonable accommodations as set out by the ADA/ADAAA. This notification process is completed in your AIM dashboard and must be done each semester. **If you do not provide this notification to your instructors, they will not know you're an individual with a disability who requires classroom accommodations.**

## EMERGENCIES

Call campus police to report all emergencies, both medical emergencies and situations such as a crimes in progress, suspicious persons, or irate individuals. Please remember:

1. Remain calm.
2. Speak clearly.
3. Provide an exact location of the emergency.
4. Listen to ALL questions.
5. Answer ALL questions.

The individual speaking with you may ask many questions concerning the emergency. Your answers should be brief and responsive. Remain calm and speak clearly. You may be asked to stay on the line while the emergency units are responding to ask additional questions or to obtain on-going information. Be prepared to describe the persons or vehicles involved. Please use the following phone numbers:

- **Gallatin Campus: 615.230.3595**— officers are on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- **Highland Crest Campus: 615.433.7041**— officers are on duty during normal operating hours.
- **Livingston Campus: 931.823.5216**— officers are on duty during normal operating hours.
- **Cookeville Higher Education Campus (CHEC): 931.520.4616**- officers are on duty during normal operating hours.

Direct calls to 911 are answered by the agency with jurisdiction of that area.

### **TOTAL AND PERMANENT DISABILITY (TPD) FEE WAIVER**

Students who live in Tennessee and are totally and permanently disabled (TPD) may apply for a TPD Fee Waiver. Students must:

1. Apply for admission to the college and meet eligibility guidelines as outlined by the Department of Admissions.
2. Not be working at an occupation that brings an income.
3. Not have an open file with Vocational Rehabilitation (VRS).
4. Submit proof of a total and permanent disability to the Access Center.
5. Not register for classes prior to 4 weeks before the start of the semester nor have permits for classes prior to 4 weeks before the start of the semester.

A service fee of \$70 per semester is the responsibility of the student. Additional course fees may apply and are also the responsibility of the student. These fees may include: textbooks, incluEd fees, online course fees, science fees, music fees, radiology fees, veterinary technology fees, material fees, uniforms/special clothing, equipment, and other fees. For audit courses, no fee is required. Please see the current catalog for additional information.

### **COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

#### **The Division of Rehabilitation Services (Vocational Rehabilitation/VRS)**

VRS is a federal and state funded agency which provides services to retrain or re-educate people with disabilities to assist them in becoming more employable. This community resource agency provides diagnostic tests which determine the extent and nature of the disability, as well as job placement, counseling, and guidance services. Please apply for services at your local (county) VRS office. Area Vocational Rehabilitation Offices:

**Sumner County**

1019 Union School Road  
Gallatin, TN 37066  
(615) 451-5826

**Macon County**

607 Highway 52 Bypass E.  
Lafayette, TN 37083  
(615) 666-2179

**Davidson County**

1000 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave N  
Nashville, TN 37203  
(615) 741-1606

**Wilson County**

155 Legends Dr, Suite G  
Lebanon, TN 37087  
(615) 457-5046

**Cookeville Regional Office**

955 E 20<sup>th</sup> St  
Cookeville, TN 38501  
(931) 526-9783

**Rutherford County**

1132 Haley Rd  
Murfreesboro, TN 37129  
(615) 898-8088

**Robertson County**

809 Mabel St  
Springfield, TN 37172  
(615) 382-2402