Tips for Students with Disabilities Applying for Testing Accommodations on the Bar Exam

Prepared by the Office of Student Services and Advising

(The information concerning the “Bar exam” is based on applying for testing accommodations for the New York State Bar Exam. However, the tips provided can be useful when applying for testing accommodations on any state bar generally.)

Applying for the Bar exam can be a stressful and time-consuming process. For students applying for testing accommodations it can be even more so, since an additional application and supporting documentation is required. Staying organized is the key to submitting a complete application in a timely manner. To assist you with the process we have provided some tips below which we hope will help you make sure your application for testing accommodations is timely and complete.

Start Preparing your Application Early

In order to be considered for testing accommodations for the Bar exam you must submit your application and supporting documentation by a deadline set forth by the Board of Law Examiners for the state in which you will be taking the exam. The application for testing accommodations is a separate application from the general bar exam application. In some states, including NY, applicants can apply for testing accommodations as early as six (6) months before the date of the exam.

• Early on in your 3L year, go to the website(s) for the Bar exam(s) you will be taking and read the information provided regarding testing accommodations, including what the deadline to apply is, and what supporting documentation is required.
• Print out the application. Since the application is lengthy, making a table of contents and numbering the pages of the application may make it easier to go through.
• Your application can take a while to process. Submit your application and all supporting documentation as early as possible. If the Board of Law Examiners reviews your application and determines you are missing documentation, or you need to submit updated documentation, you want to make sure you have left yourself enough time to collect and submit the additional documentation. The Board of Law Examiners will not consider additional documentation after the deadline to submit an application for testing accommodations has passed.
Supporting Documentation

The Board of Law Examiners requires different supporting documentation depending on the type of disability. Make sure you read all of the material regarding what type of documentation you are required to submit. Once you have done this, consider the tips below to make sure your supporting documentation is up-to-date, complete and submitted in a timely manner.

- Make a list of what supporting documents you are required to submit with your application.
- Provide the Board of Law Examiners with the most extensive background of your disability as possible. For example, if you received accommodations in middle school, contact the person in charge of testing accommodations and ask them to write you a letter stating the accommodations and years in which you received the accommodations. The more history you provide regarding testing accommodations you have received in the past, the more likely you are to be approved for accommodations on the bar exam.
- Be sure to reach out as early as possible to any health care professional, school administrators, and anyone else from whom you will need to obtain documentation from as early as possible.
- Once you receive requested documentation, check for yourself that the documentation is correct and up-to-date before submitting it to the Board of Law Examiners.

Personal Statement

The Board of Law Examiners requires you to submit a personal statement as part of your application for testing accommodations.

- Put thought into what you are going to say in your personal statement. It is your opportunity to “connect the dots” for the person reviewing your application.
- Do not be vague when writing about your disability history. Be sure to explain your disability and how it affects you on a day-to-day basis. Include examples.

If Your Application is Denied, Appeal the Decision

Being granted testing accommodations for the Bar exam can prove difficult in some applicants’ cases. If your application is denied, appeal the decision. While there is no guarantee, there have been times when an applicant has appealed the denial of their request and as a result, has been granted an accommodation, albeit a lesser one than that which they had originally requested (e.g. instead of being given time and a half the applicant was given a lesser amount of extended time to take the exam).
Miscellaneous

- If you apply for accommodations on the Bar exam in two different states, both of which require the MBE, and you are only granted accommodations in one of those states, take the MBE in the state in which you received the accommodations. The MBE score can be transferred to the state in which you did not receive accommodations. For example, if you apply for accommodations for both the New York and New Jersey bar exams, and only receive accommodations on the New Jersey bar exam, take the MBE in New Jersey using your accommodations and apply the score to New York Bar exam.