

North Carolina State Testing ACT – Accommodations Webinar
December 5, 2011
Transcript

Slide 1: Today’s presentation will provide you an overview of test accommodations on the ACT, particularly in North Carolina.

Slide 2: Today’s goals include: Providing important information to North Carolina school personnel to assist in the successful planning & administration of the ACT with accommodations, and Reviewing information the Testing Accommodations Coordinator (TAC) needs to know to complete the “ACT-Approved Application Process”

Slide 3: Today’s agenda will be:

- Accommodations Overview
- ACT-Approved Accommodations Process
- State-Allowed Online Order
- Accommodations Summary
- Frequently Asked Questions Received by the NCDPI
- Questions and Answers

Slide 4: As most of you are aware, there are two types of accommodations, an ACT-Approved accommodation, which result in a college reportable score, and a State-Allowed accommodation which does not produce a college-reportable score but is used for State Accountability purposes. For ACT-Approved test accommodations, ACT is in compliance with the regulations of Title III of the American’s with Disabilities Act (ADA). ADA’s definition of a person with a disability is someone who has a mental or physical impairment or condition that substantially limits a major life activity. This may be different than the rules and regulations used to determine special education needs in the classroom. Some students may have a disability that does not require extended time or a special testing format that may not require the approval of ACT- we consider those accommodations “locally approve accommodation”. These students must test with standard time and a regular type test book. Some common examples include students who need to be seated near the front of the room, students who need access to a snack for medical reasons, students who wear a medical device such as a diabetic pump that may require them to test in a separate room to avoid distraction.

Slide 5: An application must be completed for every student applying for an ACT-Approved accommodation. ACT must RECEIVE all applications by December 16th.

On the first side of the application, you will need to complete the Student information as well as the High School Code and Name and whether or not the student has been approved for accommodations previously on the ACT.

Indicate in section C the diagnosed disability – checking **all** that apply to your student. There is also a place to indicate a Full Scale IQ for those students with an Intellectual or Cognitive Disability. For those diagnosis that are marked with an asterisk or if you student does not have a diagnosed history of more than 3 years, ACT requires that you include full documentation with this application. If the student has a history of 3 years or greater and the diagnosis is not marked with an asterisk, all we need is the IEP/504 pages that explain what accommodation the student is receiving in school on tests.

When marking the test format – it’s important to check only one format. The type of materials you are applying for must be consistent with that on IEP or 504. When requesting an oral presentation format –

keep in mind that each student approved to test with a reader must test individually in a separate room. We also have audio formats such as cassettes and DVDs. Students who use these types of audio formats can test together as long as they each have their own headphones.

ACT will assign a timing code based on the disability and approved test format. Some formats, by their design, require considerable extended time and will be authorized to test over multiple days due to the test presentation time. If you have a student that requires multiple-day testing, this is the section where that request should be indicated. Keep in mind when you complete the application that you may not test students with different timing codes in the same room.

Slide 6: On Side 2 of the application, it asks you to complete details on the specific disorder or condition of the student, as well as the history, describing when the student was first diagnosed.

You also need to indicate what type of plan the student is on, either an IEP or 504, and indicate how many years that student has been receiving services.

The last two sections include the TACs signature as well as the parent. If you've received parent permission to sign for him or her over the phone, write "per phone call" and date on the signature line.

ACT will not process any accommodation without a parent's signature.

The documentation must state the impairment or diagnosis and demonstrate functional limitations or impairment to learning and academic achievement. A current IEP or 504 Plan can serve as an updated assessment of a student's need. As stated earlier, just the pages of the plan indicating what the child is receiving for services at school are needed along with this application unless the student was recently diagnosed or the diagnosis is one of the 8 listed with an asterisk on side one of the application. If that is the case, ACT requires complete documentation for that student.

If you are applying for accommodations because of a LD or ADHD, a comprehensive psycho-educational evaluation must be on file.

Slide 7: For every group of applications, whether it is one or any number more than one, you need to include a TAC header with the applications. The TAC header serves as the form that includes the school information so that the information does not need to be repeated on each individual application itself.

The TAC header includes a checklist for your reference to make sure that all applications submitted for your school are complete. Applications must be sent through mail, they are not to be faxed or emailed. We recommend using a trackable method to ship the applications in order to ensure ACT receives the applications by December 16th.

Slide 8: ACT reviews each application received individually. If ACT is unable to approve any of the requested accommodation, the TAC will receive a letter indicating the reason for the denial. In turn, the TAC will have an opportunity to submit additional documentation for ACT to review and reconsider a decision. Otherwise, students not approved for accommodated testing must then test under standard time conditions OR submit a State-Allowed accommodations order.

All students who were approved for all or even part of the accommodation requested are on Preliminary Rosters, which are set to arrive in schools the week of January 23rd. If there is any part of the requested accommodation that gets denied, that is also listed.

Once your TAC receives the roster, review it for accuracy and completeness. If you have additional documentation to help support the use of any part of an accommodation request that was either not listed as approved or denied, you will need to send that information to ACT by February 6th.

Denial letters are not sent to schools for those students that ACT can approve one or more of the requested accommodation. That is why it's very important that you review the Preliminary Roster for

each student listed checking the assigned timing code, accommodation test package, and any other special authorization or notations that are listed.

Slide 9: Those you should consider for a State-Allowed Accommodation are those who are denied an ACT-Approved Accommodation or those who do not meet the eligibility requirements for an ACT-Approved accommodation. The most common case would be a student who has a new diagnosis that does not show functional limitation or there is not a formal diagnosis.

Any ESL or ELL students who have an accommodation plan based solely on language should test with state-allowed accommodations.

Unlike the ACT-Approved application process, there is no approval needed from ACT to provide State-Allowed accommodations to students. There is no restriction to the type of accommodation or timing regulation for students testing with State-Allowed accommodations. Your school will simply submit an order online to request the test type and quantity of State-Allowed test materials needed for your school. Online orders must be submitted by February 24th.

The materials will be assembled into individual test packages and sent based on the quantity ordered. The materials will not be assigned to individual students; therefore your school will not receive a roster of students testing with State-Allowed Accommodations as you did with the ACT-Approved students. But again, the main thing to remember about students who test using State-Allowed accommodations is that the results earned are not college reportable. They are only used for State accountability purposes.

Slide 10: That was a brief overview of what accommodations look like on the ACT. Now to summarize some critical dates

Submit a completed application and supporting documentation plus TAC Header for each student needing ACT-approved accommodations by December 16th.

Review the Preliminary Roster for all students, checking for accuracy and any other additional information ACT may need for approval of other accommodations requested by February 6th.

Complete your online order for those students needing State-Allowed materials by February 24th. You will not receive State-Allowed materials if you don't place an order.

Testing will occur starting on the initial test day – March 6 and run until the makeup test day – March 20th. Testing of your accommodated students cannot occur outside of this window.

Our Student Services website lists our policy for documentation to support testing with accommodations. We also have staff available to help answer your questions Monday through Friday from 7:00 AM – 5:00 PM CST as well as an email address to submit your concerns. So please, contact us with your questions at any point throughout this entire process. If you get stuck or need walked through the application process, call us, we're here to help.

Slide 11: Now that you've heard ACT review the policies and procedures related to ACT accommodations and the accommodation request process, we're going to switch gears and answer some of the frequently asked questions that have been received by the NCDPI. We've received many detailed, thoughtful questions that make it very apparent that you're taking great care in your preparations for the ACT. I'll review eight of the questions that we've seen most frequently, and then we'll take time to address some of your questions submitted live during this Webinar.

Slide 12: Question #1. The question is, are OCS students required to participate in the administration of the ACT?

Yes, all 11th grade students must participate in the ACT, with the exception of students eligible for the **NCEXTEND1** and those who have qualifying SAT scores. Therefore, OCS students in the 11th grade are required to take the ACT.

Slide 13: Question #2. The question is, why should an ACT-approved accommodations request be submitted for a student if they will not need a college-reportable score?

An ACT-approved accommodations request should be submitted for all students who will be taking the ACT who require accommodations based on their IEP or Section 504 Plan. The main reason for this is equitable access, or allowing all students fair and equal access to the ACT test and the opportunity for a college-reportable score. All students deserve the opportunity to receive a college-reportable score, whether or not they have immediate plans to go to college. It may seem easier to forego the request process and use state-allowed accommodations under the assumption that a student will not need a college-reportable score, but this assumption could be very detrimental to a student who changes paths and decides to pursue college in the future.

Slide 14: Question #3. The question is, what are the approval rates for ACT-approved accommodation requests?

The approval rates last year for two states with student populations similar in size to that of North Carolina were 95.2% and 93.4%. About half of the denied requests were not approved due to issues with the documentation and the paperwork. If accommodation requests are denied during the initial submission, the requests may be resubmitted for a second round of review.

Slide 15: Question #4. The question is do IEPs and Section 504 Plans need to be amended to reflect ACT accommodations?

No, the ACT will be administered as a statewide pilot this year. As such, IEPs and Section 504 Plans should not be amended to include accommodations for these tests. Accommodations documentation that currently exists on a student's IEP or Section 504 should be used in the ACT accommodation request process. The IEP form will be updated for the 2012–13 school year to include a specific area to document accommodations for the PLAN, ACT, and WorkKeys assessments.

Slide 16: Question #5. The question is, how is an ACT-approved accommodation request made if the 11th grade student has completed all NCTP tests and therefore does not have any testing accommodations documented?

There may be instances where 11th grade students have completed all of their EOC assessments by 10th grade, and therefore their 11th grade IEP or Section 504 Plan does not include any testing accommodations documentation. If these students continue to demonstrate the need for accommodations in instruction and on classroom and benchmark assessments, the IEP and Section 504 would require documentation of these instructional and benchmark accommodations. The instructional and benchmark accommodations documentation should be submitted to ACT for the ACT-approved accommodation request.

Slide 17: Question #6. The question is, are ACT-approved accommodations request decisions determined for each individual subtest of the ACT?

With ACT-approved accommodations, once approved for an accommodation, the student may use the accommodation on all subtests of the ACT. Here is an example: A student with a learning disability in math requires a read aloud accommodation for math instruction and math tests based on his/her IEP. If

an ACT-Approved accommodation request is submitted and approved by ACT for the read aloud accommodation, this student would be eligible to use the accommodation on all subtests of the ACT.

Slide 18: Question #7. The question is, if extended time has been removed from a student's IEP because all EOC tests have 4-hour maximum time, what documentation is used to request extended time on the ACT?

It is correct that while all End-of-Course tests have an estimated test time of 2.5 hours, all students are allowed up to 4 hours of testing time without any accommodation documentation necessary. This point has been stressed in statewide training over the past couple of years, and therefore the extended time accommodation has been removed from many student's IEP and Section 504 Plans if they can finish the EOC within 4 hours. However, some students may continue to require extended time on assignments and tests that have more restricted time limits, such as classroom assignments, classroom tests, or benchmark assessments. In addition, an IEP or Section 504 team may wish to request extended time for a student for the ACT. In these instances, the instructional and benchmark accommodations documentation should be submitted to ACT for the ACT-approved accommodation request.

Slide 19: Question #7. The question is, how is the ACT-Approved accommodation of a read aloud different from the read aloud on North Carolina state tests?

The read aloud accommodation for the ACT, when vetted as an ACT-Approved Accommodation, has some similarities and some differences when compared to the read aloud accommodation for North Carolina-developed state tests such as the EOCs. For the ACT, the read aloud may be provided by a human reader or through use of an audio cassette or DVD. If a human reader provides the accommodation, they must follow the reader script verbatim, just as the test administrator must read aloud an EOC test word-for-word. The reader must not deviate from the script in any way, and may not paraphrase the wording of a test item or provide definitions to words. A major difference with the use of a human reader on the ACT is that this accommodation must be provided to a student in a one-on-one setting. An ACT read aloud may also be provided through use of an audio cassette or DVD. If students use headphones, the accommodation can be given in a small group setting. A read aloud for the ACT is to be provided for all subtests of the ACT assessment, including the reading subtest. This differs from what you're used to with the read aloud of North Carolina-developed state tests, where a test of reading, such as the English I EOC, may not be read aloud.

Slide 20: There are many resources for the ACT related to accommodations on ACT's North Carolina website and NCDPI's website. The NCDPI Accommodations Memo sent out on October 24 answers some frequently asked questions on ACT accommodations and provides contact information and links to resources. The Accommodations Summary Table is a document created by ACT that provides a crosswalk comparing ACT accommodations and North Carolina state-approved accommodations. The table also specifies which accommodations require approval from ACT and which accommodations result in college-reportable scores with ACT-approval. The State Special Testing ACT Supervisor's Manual provides detailed ACT administration policy related to testing sessions with accommodations. There is also an hour-long test accommodations coordinator training video on ACT's North Carolina website, which walks test accommodations coordinators through the process of submitting accommodation requests to ACT.

On the NCDPI Accountability homepage, you can find a 12-page FAQ with answer to questions on the PLAN, ACT, and WorkKeys assessments. The FAQ is being added to as we receive new questions, and an updated document will be made public after the holiday.