

Faculty Guide **MENTAL HEALTH DISABILITIES**

OVERVIEW AND DEFINITION

While a single symptom or isolated event is rarely a sign of mental illness, a symptom that occurs frequently, lasts for several weeks or becomes a general pattern of an individual's behavior may indicate the onset of a more serious mental health problem that requires treatment. Some of the more significant indicators of a possible mental illness include:

- marked personality change over time
- confused thinking, grandiose ideas
- prolonged feelings of depression or apathy
- feelings of extreme highs or lows
- heightened anxieties, fears of anger or suspicion; blaming others
- social withdrawal, increased self-centeredness
- denial of obvious problems and strong resistance to offers of help
- substance abuse
- thinking or talking about suicide

Students who request accommodations because of a mental health disability are participating in some form of treatment intervention, either medication therapy or psychotherapy, or a combination. It is the responsibility of the disability support office in your college to work in collaboration with mental health professionals in hospitals and community agencies to ensure that students with mental health disabilities are capable of sustaining normal academic stress. As faculty, providing a supportive learning environment and working closely with the disability support services in your college will be key factors to the success of students with mental health disabilities.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS AND INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Disorder	Educational Implications
Adjustment disorders: develop in response to a particular stressor and complete recovery is anticipated to occur within a 6 month period	Loss of initiative to attend class, complete homework assignments; when accompanied with depression or anxiety may impact learning temporarily in ways similar to anxiety and depressive disorders do (see below); inappropriate interactions with others (i.e. may be belligerent)
Anxiety disorders: disorders in	

<p>Mood disorders: can be acute, severe, and of relatively short duration, or chronic conditions.</p>	

