

ANXIETY IN THE CLASSROOM

Sample 504S & IEPs

BROUGHT
TO YOU BY



International
OCD
Foundation



AnxietyInTheClassroom.org

Your students' anxiety or OCD symptoms may qualify as a disability if they are severe enough that they impact their ability to learn. In these cases, the student who is in public school is eligible for a 504 Plan or an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

With a 504 or an IEP Plan, accommodations are made so that the student has access to the curriculum in the same way their peers do.

OVERVIEW



1 What to consider when making accommodations

2 Examples of accommodations for Anxiety/ OCD

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN MAKING ACCOMMODATIONS



Involve all key players.

- It is important to get input from everyone on the team (teachers, guidance counselors, parents, the student's outside therapist, and the student) when creating accommodations for OCD and/or anxiety.
- Having the entire team involved increases the likelihood of developing an effective plan and having high "buy-in."

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN MAKING ACCOMMODATIONS



Operationalize the plan.

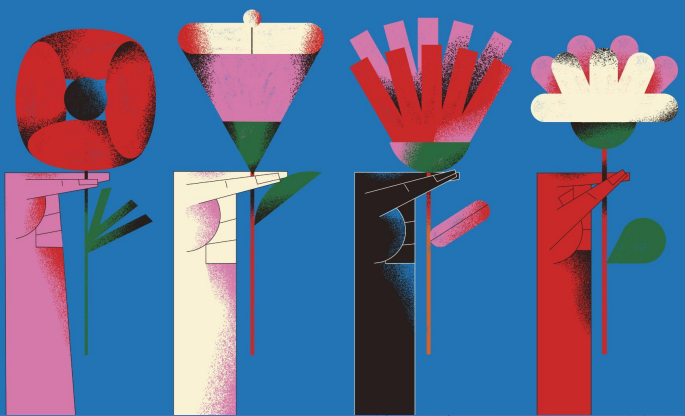
- Accommodations should be clear and measurable to reduce confusion and increase consistency across teachers and classrooms.
- For example, instead of saying “The student will get extensions on writing assignments”, the plan should state “The student will be given a one-day extension on all writing assignments when requested via email the day before the assignment is due.”



WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN MAKING ACCOMMODATIONS

Be realistic.

- Accommodations should be practical for both the teacher and the student. It may be helpful for a student to get a study guide before each exam in every class, but it is unrealistic to expect this to happen every single time.
- Setting unrealistic goals leads to inconsistencies in plan implementation and frustration for everyone involved.



WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN MAKING ACCOMMODATIONS



Collect data.

- Gathering information about how accommodations are working is an important part of any plan.
- For example, tracking homework compliance, attendance, visits to the nurse, use of coping strategies, behavioral outbursts, etc. helps the team determine if the plan is effective or not. Hard data is more reliable and useful than individual opinion or recollections.

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN MAKING ACCOMMODATIONS



Not all accommodations are helpful.

- It is important to make sure that an accommodation is, indeed, helpful and does not exacerbate a student's symptoms.
- For example, if a student has checking or perfectionism then an accommodation of extra time on all tests may simply be providing more time for the student to ritualize. A more appropriate accommodation for these symptoms might be to have the test broken up into different sections or to have a test given orally.

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN MAKING ACCOMMODATIONS



Review regularly.

- It is important to review plans regularly. In general, 504 plans and IEPs are reviewed annually, but it is wise to review plans more frequently, especially newly developed ones. The information collected ought to be reviewed and used to guide adjustments to the plan.
- Other factors that might warrant an adjustment to the plan are a change in symptom subtype and/or an increase in symptomatology.

504/IEP Plan: What Teachers Should Consider When Making Accommodations

Accommodations are NOT treatment.

- Often times, school personnel and/or caregivers worry that the plan is “giving into anxiety” or “will become a crutch.”
- It is important to remember that 504 Plans and IEPs are not treatment plans. They consist of **accommodations that allow the anxious child to be able to learn as their non-anxious peers do** — to get them to the starting line, so to speak. Without them, anxiety can be so severe that it makes learning nearly impossible.
- The expectation is that accommodations will fade out as the child manages their symptoms more effectively.

SAMPLE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR ANXIETY/ OCD



Contamination fears.

- Separate set of books for home
- Has own set of supplies (crayons, scissors, tape) vs. using community supplies
- May take hand-outs first before others have touched them
- Scheduled bathroom breaks/use of low traffic bathroom
- May leave class a minute early to avoid hallway congestion

SAMPLE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR ANXIETY/ OCD



Social Anxiety.

- Alternative assignment to oral presentations or submit previously taped presentation
- One-on-one discussions instead of in class participation
- Assign work groups instead of having students choose their own groupmates
- Address concerns in private meetings instead of in class
- Signal the student that their turn to read out loud or answer a question is coming up

SAMPLE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR ANXIETY/ OCD



Perfectionism.

- Provide class notes or study guides
- Break down larger assignments into smaller assignments with separate due dates
- Suggest time limits for assignments to use as guidelines
- Provide alternative to writing assignments (PowerPoint presentation, art project) if writing isn't necessary to demonstrate learning
- Avoid grading work on neatness and giving praise for perfect work
- Give partial credit for late work (pre-determined amount of credit for number of days late)
- Reduced homework load (do the odd number of math problems, do the even number of Spanish translations, write three short answers instead of five)

SAMPLE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR ANXIETY/ OCD



Checking.

- Use of audiobooks instead of reading written text
- Oral exams instead of written exams
- Limit number of times a teacher will answer the same question (redirection using language negotiated with the student)
- Pre-determined times to check folders or backpacks for materials

SAMPLE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR ANXIETY/ OCD

indecision/ Procrastination.

- Limit the number of choices a student has re: books to read or project topics
- Help a student write their thesis and/or develop an outline of their paper
- Regularly scheduled meetings to review progress on larger assignments
- Allow student to come in early/stay after to get started on projects (pre-determine what days and times)



Largely, the expectation is that these accommodations will fade out as the student learns to **manage** their OCD and/or anxiety symptoms more effectively.



THANK YOU.

QUESTIONS ?

International OCD Foundation

55 Court St. #310
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 973-5801
iocdf.org | info@iocdf.org

AnxietyInTheClassroom.org



International
OCD
Foundation

