



MEDIA RELEASE

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Lack of Standards in Accessing Accommodations Results in Discrimination

(The Plight of Some Post-Secondary Students With a Common Mental Health Disorder).

This is the topic addressed in a paper authored and recently published by the Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada (CADDAC). The paper, titled: “**Understanding ADHD as a Disability in the Post-Secondary Environment**”, highlights the inequity in access to post-secondary education caused by the current LACK of understanding, by some post-secondary learning institutions. Heidi Bernhardt, CADDAC’s President and co-author of the paper, notes that students, parents and medical professionals expressing their extreme frustration over this issue have contacted CADDAC. *“The lack of national or provincial standards backed by medical research is resulting in some post-secondary institutions demanding that expensive and unnecessary testing be done before students with ADHD can qualify for appropriate learning accommodations. This is causing significant inconsistencies in the medical documentation required of students with ADHD by post-secondary schools resulting in discriminatory practices potentially leaving colleges and universities open to legal challenge.”*

Approximately 4% or 150,000 young adult Canadians suffer from ADHD symptoms, which often impair their success in post-secondary education. Recent success, in ADHD Awareness and support, has allowed more students with ADHD to access post-secondary education allowing them to reach their academic and career potential. ADHD is a recognized disability, and unfortunately the resulting impairments most often continue throughout the lifespan continuing into the post-secondary environment.

Research has shown that standardized psychological tests, more suited for detecting learning disabilities and brain injuries, which are being demanded by some schools, do not accurately quantify the nature of impairments that characterize ADHD. When used, such tests may unfairly bar students from qualifying for accommodations, causing inequity in access to post-secondary education. Esteemed professor, Dr. Rosemary Tannock: *“Neuropsychological testing plays no role in the diagnosis of ADHD and cannot capture accurately the type of functional impairment associated with ADHD. This is because there are no known cognitive deficits that are specific to or universal in ADHD, and scores on clinical neuropsychological tests do not*

accurately reflect the person's level of impairment in everyday life." (Dr. Rosemary Tannock, a co-author of the paper, is a Professor Emerita, Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, University of Toronto; & Senior Scientist, Neurosciences & Mental Health Research Program, Research Institute of the Hospital for Sick Children)

Learning accommodations for students with disabilities do not give these students an unfair advantage rather they create a level playing field, allowing them equal access to post-secondary education. Angus Ferguson, currently a student at an Ontario University sums it up this way, *"I am very fortunate to be attending a university that embraces and accommodates ADHD. Their willingness to offer the targeted assistance I require has (in all honesty) made all the difference in the world. During my years in high school I received what can only be called baseline informal assistance, but now I can only wonder what this level of help would have meant to me then. Furthermore, how the caliber of assistance available to me would mean to others in less informed universities being denied resources and accommodations."*

Solutions:

CADDAC agrees that detailed medical reporting, by an ADHD medical expert, should be required to meet Canadian government requirements. Reports should provide post-secondary institutions with the necessary information required to understand the student's unique impairments and needs for specific accommodations.

This report should,

- ⊙ Identify the permanent disability and list specific impairments
- ⊙ Indicate how these impairments would negatively impact functioning of the student in the post-secondary academic setting
- ⊙ Link requested accommodations to existing impairments of the student

CADDAC has also produced a [resource](#) for physicians and psychologists to assist them in developing a detailed report that would meet government requirements and provide the necessary information for post-secondary institutions.

To access English documents:

- [The paper](#)
- [Accompanying resources](#)
- [Paper's key messages](#)
- [Chart of post-secondary ADHD documentation requirements](#)

To access French Documents:

[Media Release in French](#)
[Paper in French](#)

[Accompanying resources in French](#)

[Paper's key messages in French](#)

[Chart of Post-secondary ADHD documentation requirements in French](#)

Launching ADHD Awareness Month:

On October the 1st MPP Soo Wong will be reading a members' statement in the Ontario legislature to launch this year's ADHD Awareness Month.

For more information on ADHD Awareness Month, government proclamations and advocacy visit www.adhdawareness.ca and for more information on ADHD Awareness Month, ADHD and CADDAC, visit www.caddac.ca.

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