

Disability Resources: Personal Care Attendant Guidelines

Personal Care Attendant (PCA) Responsibilities

The following information provides clarification on the responsibilities of the PCA, the student and Disability Resources (DR).

Student responsibilities:

- Informing DR of the need for a PCA and providing appropriate documentation
- Employing the PCA (hiring, training, paying, replacing, ensuring back-ups, etc.)
- Ensuring the PCA abides by all SOU policies, including but not limited to the Student Code of Conduct
- Establishing a non-disruptive mode of communication between themselves and the PCA in the learning environment
- Ensuring the PCA is acting as a non-academic participant in the learning environment

PCA responsibilities:

- Remaining available to assist the student with personal needs in the learning environment, as needed
- Acting as a non-academic participant in the learning environment
- Abiding by all SOU policies, including but not limited to, the Student Code of Conduct
- When an educational environment requires students for safety or health related reasons to meet certain criteria, such as a background check, inoculations, personal protective equipment, etc., the PCA must meet the same requirement(s)

DR responsibilities:

- Requesting appropriate documentation from the student that supports the need for a PCA in order for DR to determine eligibility for the academic accommodation allowing the PCA access to the educational environment
- Notifying faculty of PCA attendance in the learning environment
- Addressing faculty and student concerns regarding a PCA in the learning environment
- Facilitating discussion(s) between the faculty and student regarding PCA related questions and/or concerns, upon request

Best practices for interacting with a PCA in the classroom:

- Address the student directly when interacting in the learning environment, such as looking at the student when speaking.
- If the student's disability effects communication, the PCA may verbalize the students' comments. The student and the PCA will have already established a non-disruptive mode of communication between themselves prior to the class. For example, the student may use a communication board and the PCA will read out loud the students' comment or question.
- If you have been notified by DR that a student will be bringing a PCA to your class, there is a possibility that this student may also utilize a classroom assistant. A classroom assistant provides academic support in the classroom, such as scribing in-class assignments, using a calculator, etc. This may mean that there are extra people (sometimes up to 2) in the class other than the enrolled students. NOTE: DR will provide additional chairs as needed.

- A PCA is not an academic participant (auditing the class, taking the class, etc.); therefore the PCA should not be asking questions, making comments, taking notes or recording activities. A PCA should be available (in the classroom or close by) to the student as needed.

FAQ's or FYI's for Faculty:

Q: What is the difference between a PCA and a classroom/lab assistant?

A: A PCA provides personal care to the student in the classroom, such as repositioning of the student, removing materials from a backpack, assisting the student with communication, attending to the students' personal needs. A classroom/lab assistant performs only tasks that are associated with making academic activities accessible to the student (scribing, measuring, utilization of a calculator, etc.). If DR is aware, DR will provide information in advance to the faculty regarding whether a PCA or lab assistant will be present in their class.

Q: How do I know if it is the student or the PCA who is answering a question in my class?

A: If the student's disability affects communication, the student will choose an effective way to communicate. This may include technology such as a voice box, communication board, typing on a computer, etc. This could also include the PCA verbalizing the students' comments as long as it is clear it is not the PCA's own comments. Prior to attending class the PCA and the student will have established a non-disruptive mode of communication between themselves. For example, the student may use a communication board and the PCA will read out loud the students' comment or question. This could include classroom, lab, fieldtrip and testing environments.

Q: Who employs the PCA?

A: A PCA is employed by the student. A classroom/lab assistant is employed by DR.

Q: If I have any questions or concerns regarding the behavior of a PCA in my classroom, who should I talk to?

A: PCA's are held to the same standard of conduct that every SOU student is held to. If you have concerns regarding a PCA's behavior, a discussion with the student in a timely manner is recommended first. If your concerns are not resolved after this discussion, please contact DR. For violations to the Student Code of Conduct please contact the Student Conduct and Community Standards office.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____