

July 13, 2009

Educational Testing Service  
Disability Service  
P.O Box 6054  
Princeton, New Jersey 08541-6054

RE: Alex J. Stiller-Shulman  
DOB: 4/9/88

Dear ETS Disability Services,

Alex Stiller-Shulman has requested I write this letter documenting his psychiatric illness of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and in support of his request for extended time accommodation under ADA on the GRE test.

Alex was first officially diagnosed as having Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, DSM: 300.3, in December of 2007 by a clinical team at the Counseling Center of Colorado College. The team consisted of Heather Horton, Ph.D., Colorado Licensed Psychologist #2810, William Dove, Ph.D. Colorado Licensed Psychologist #1569,, and Julie Sanford, M.D., psychiatrist Colorado medical license # 27976. All members of the team have been practicing mental health professionals with extensive experience diagnosing and treating major psychiatric illnesses. Dr. Dove is a specialist in the area of college students with over 25 years experience. The diagnostic process consisted of six sessions with different members of the team.

During the evaluation process, Mr. Stiller-Shulman reported that he has a history dating back to childhood of a number of obsessive thoughts, irrational beliefs, and ritualized compulsive behaviors. These behaviors included, but were not limited to, the need to repeat all questions asked of him seven times. He also described a compulsive need to present only the left side of his body to others. He described repeating thoughts in his head seven times in order to "feel okay". Alex reported a number of compulsive behaviors including keeping his keys in his left pocket, taking his keys in and out of his pocket, touching his mouth and breathing through his fingers, needing to balance any touch to the right side of his body with a touch to his left, and needing to have his shirt and underwear match. He indicated that he has the "irrational" fear that if he does not do these things, something bad will happen. Alex reported that he has had different, but similar kinds of rituals (like tapping his foot a certain number of times) throughout his life. He also becomes obsessive about the possibility of physical injury when driving or riding on a plane. He feels that his ritual behaviors have interfered with his life significantly in the areas of socialization, academics, and work. He has a difficult time finishing tests because his anxiety increases to such a point that it is all he can think about as the deadline for finishing the test approaches. He also has difficulty giving presentation or talking in class. Academically, however, he is doing well. Alex also reported social anxiety, and feels that he limits his social contacts because of it. Other than mild anxiety during his interviews, mental status was not remarkable. He did display awareness of the irrationality of his obsessions and compulsive behaviors, and expressed frustration that he could not control them through logic. He noted

that these thoughts and behaviors severely impair a number of major life activities, especially the educational process and test taking. Among his obsessive thoughts is his need to repeat each question on a standardized test seven times before responding to it. He also reports a compulsive behavior of re-writing a written question seven times prior to responding to it. This symptom of his illness directly impairs his ability to complete tests within the allotted time. He also has a ritualized behavior of removing everything from his right hand pockets and transferring the contents to his left hand pocket, and then removing it and replacing it seven times. He reports that he has often required extra time during college exams to provide him enough time to respond to all the test items. Professors have generally granted him extra time without formal disability accommodations. His family history is reported to have a number of people with various types of anxiety disorders, and some depression, but he was not aware of anyone with obsessive compulsive disorder.

In addition, the anxiety caused by a variety of stressful situations causes Mr. Stiller-Shulman OCD symptoms to worsen. This has included verbal presentations in class, many different social situations, and high stakes testing. The impairment caused to Mr. Stiller-Shulman's major life activity of education is moderate to severe. He typically requires more time to complete academic tasks.

Treatment has included a brief trial on Prozac in December of 2007. He was then switched to Luvox, 50 mgm, which he reports helps him decrease his obsessive compulsive symptoms, except when he is under stress. He currently continues on this medication. When not under stress, and when doing solitary academic tasks, Alex usually receives very good grades. He has expressed a desire to continue his academics in graduate school upon graduation from Colorado College. He has attended psychotherapy only sporadically. Most improvement has been attributed to his Luvox which he reports taking consistently. His symptoms appear to be moderate with exacerbation to more severe levels when under stress.

Functional limitations have been most noticeable in social contexts as well as academic. He has difficulty leaving his residence to attend a purely social event. He will often leave and return to his apartment a number of times, usually not attending the function. Work history I has not been significant enough to draw conclusions about impairment or limitations.

Diagnosis: 300.3 Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

Obsessions include intrusive catastrophic thoughts about an unidentified horrible consequence if the repetitive behaviors are not accomplished. The repeated thoughts are seen by the client as being irrational and anxiety increases when he tries to logically think his way through his obsessions and compulsions. There is no evidence of psychosis or delusional material. His repetitive behaviors include re-writing questions seven times, repeating questions seven times, removing articles from his pockets and placing them in another pocket seven times. He also reports a compulsion to touch a doorknob seven times before he can go through the door or close it. The behaviors cause the client distress and he is embarrassed by them in front of others. He attempts to disguise the compulsive behaviors and avoids situations where they will be noticed. There is no evidence to indicate another etiology of the presenting symptoms other than

obsessive compulsive disorder. No known medical problems other than self-reported history of asthma.

Extended time on the GRE Exam is appropriate and is requested for Mr. Stiller-Shulman. Time and a half is appropriate for his condition. His Obsessive Compulsive Disorder has a very direct impact on his ability to complete the test within the allotted time. He has had informal accommodations from high school and college teachers in the past, who have allowed him to take extra time on exams. He reports that he is always the last person to finish exams because of his ritualized test-taking behaviors. His symptoms worsen through the exam time. He reports that he has signed up for accommodations at Colorado College and has been granted extended time on exams.

Please call me at 719-389-6389 or email at [wdove@coloradocollege.edu](mailto:wdove@coloradocollege.edu) , if you require any further information.

Sincerely,

Bill Dove, Ph.D.  
Licensed Clinical Psychologist/Counseling Supervisor