

## Application for Sabbatical, Academic Year 2024-25

Full name as it appears on your work records Della Newlow

Number of years of continuous full-time service at VCCCD: 15

Number of years of continuous full-time service at OC: 15

Have you ever had a sabbatical at VCCCD? yes\_ (type yes or no)

How many years ago was your last sabbatical? 7

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### **Project Description:**

As a faculty member at Oxnard College, I propose a one-year sabbatical starting from August 2024 until May 2025. This sabbatical's focus is to enhance my mental health first response skills and knowledge, specifically in relation to students with disabilities in learning skills classes and assigning related accommodations to students with disabilities. During this year I will earn a Mental Health First Response Certificate from the University of San Diego.

### **Project Objectives:**

1. Gain expertise in mental health first response through the University of San Diego Mental Health First Response Certificate program.
2. Apply acquired knowledge to develop effective strategies for supporting students with mental health difficulties and disabilities in learning skills classes.
3. Enhance understanding of the intersection between mental health and learning disabilities.

**Project Methodology:**

1. Enroll in the University of San Diego Mental Health First Response Certificate program.
2. Participate in coursework, workshops, and practical exercises to develop practical skills.
3. Conduct research and literature review on mental health and learning disabilities as coursework through University of San Diego requires.
4. Collaborate with experts in the field as course requires to gain insights and guidance.

**Product of the Sabbatical:**

The product of this sabbatical will be a completed Mental Health First Response Certificate from The University of San Diego.

**Sharing Results at Oxnard College:**

I plan to share the results of my sabbatical at Oxnard College through presentations within the EAC department, workshops, and training sessions for faculty and staff. This will ensure that the knowledge and strategies gained during the sabbatical can be implemented effectively within the college community. One flex workshop will be held in the Fall semester with a follow up in the Spring semester. If attendance warrants further instruction in mental health and students with disabilities, I hope to offer these workshops in the following years. I also intend to share the results of my sabbatical more broadly by reaching out to the LD Specialists at both VC and MC. When I return to OC it is my hope that I can be the representative for the Behavior and Intervention team at OC for the EAC.

**Work Plan and Schedule:**

1. August 2024: Begin the University of San Diego Mental Health First Response Certificate program.
2. August 2024 - May 2025: Begin the University of San Diego Mental Health First Response Certificate program: complete coursework, workshops, and practical exercises.
  - a. August-mid-October: Complete Introduction to Mental Health First Response [EDU-X791J]
  - b. Mid-October-December: Complete Mental Health Prevention Programs and Process (EDU-X792J)
  - c. January-February: Complete Mental Health Triage (EDU-X793J)
  - d. March-April: Complete Mental Health Matters (EDU-X794J)
  - e. May: Complete Mental Health Re-entry (EDU-X795J)
3. May 2025: Finalize workshop presentation
4. Fall 2025: Present a flex day workshop for recommendations to faculty and the EAC staff at Oxnard College. Participate in the Behavior Intervention Team at OC.

**Value of Project:**

A Mental Health First Response Certificate would benefit my role as the LD Specialist at OC, especially considering the current context at the Oxnard College EAC. With 162 students qualifying for mental health support, for the first time surpassing the 158 students with learning disabilities in Fall 2023, it is evident that the demand for mental health services is increasing. (Accurate numbers when sabbatical was written, but the numbers change so may be different at readers present.)

By earning a Mental Health First Response Certificate, I can be available for the staff and faculty to aid in their skills and knowledge, enabling them to better understand and address the mental health needs of students. This specialized training would equip me with the tools to provide comprehensive support, identifying and addressing the intersection of learning disabilities and mental health issues.

Having a mental health first responder certified faculty member would benefit the EAC and its students. The growing number of students with mental health concerns necessitates the presence of a trained professional who can provide appropriate and effective assistance. With the expertise, I will be able to contribute to the development of policies and programs that address the mental health needs of students, ensuring they receive appropriate accommodations and resources.

Moreover, I can collaborate with other faculty members to develop effective interventions and support systems. This will allow me to provide valuable insights and strategies to help students manage their mental health while pursuing their education. By staying updated with the latest research and best practices in the field, I will be well-equipped to advocate for students with mental health concerns and provide guidance to other faculty members who may encounter such students.

Having a mental health first responder certified faculty member would enhance the overall mental health support system at the EAC, contributing to a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. It would also demonstrate the institution's commitment to holistic student well-being, enhancing its reputation and credibility in providing comprehensive support services.

Additionally, as a first responder I will be able to collaborate with external mental health professionals, further expanding the resources available to students. By leveraging this expertise, I can make a positive and lasting impact on the lives of students, empowering them to succeed academically while managing their mental health.

This sabbatical project will benefit me personally and professionally by enhancing my expertise in mental health first response and inclusive education. It will enable me to better support students with disabilities in learning skills classes, ultimately improving their academic success and overall well-being. Additionally, the project will benefit others by providing valuable insights and practical strategies that can be implemented within the college community and shared with a broader audience, contributing to the advancement of inclusive education practices.

Obtaining a mental health first responder certificate will equip me with a deeper understanding of mental health issues, enabling them to better support and address the needs of my students.

With the number of students qualifying for mental health support surpassing those with learning disabilities, (Fall 2023) it is crucial for professors to have the necessary knowledge and skills to provide effective assistance. By gaining expertise in mental health, I can identify the unique challenges faced by students and tailor their teaching methods and support strategies accordingly. Having a certified faculty member dedicated to first response mental health enhances the overall support system within the community college. With a growing number of students seeking mental health resources, it is essential to have more trained professionals who can provide comprehensive guidance and interventions. My newfound expertise can contribute to the development of policies and programs that address the mental health needs of students, fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. Additionally, I can collaborate with other faculty members to develop effective strategies and interventions, ensuring that

students with mental health concerns receive appropriate accommodations and resources. My hope is to participate on the Behavior Intervention Team with the unique knowledge of understanding learning disabilities combined with mental health.

Lastly, earning a mental health certificate elevates the reputation and credibility of the community college's mental health support services. By demonstrating a commitment to holistic student well-being, the college showcases its dedication to providing comprehensive support. As a certified mental health first response professor, I can serve as a valuable resource for both students and faculty, offering guidance and support in navigating mental health challenges. Moreover, staying updated with the latest research and best practices in the field through the certificate program enables me to provide evidence-based interventions and advocate for students with mental health concerns effectively. It enhances my ability to understand and address mental health issues, contributes to a more robust support system within the college, and elevates the reputation of the mental health services provided. This certification empowers me to make a positive and lasting impact on the lives of students, ensuring their holistic well-being and academic success. In conclusion, considering the increasing number of students with mental health concerns at the EAC, it is crucial to have a mental health first response certified faculty member. By earning a mental health first response certificate, the learning disability specialist would be well-prepared to address the evolving needs of students, contribute to the development of support systems, and provide comprehensive assistance to promote student well-being.