

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act



AUTISM

Autism is a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age 3, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engaging in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines and unusual responses to sensory experiences.

DEAF-BLINDNESS

Deaf-blindness involves simultaneous hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that students cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.

DEAFNESS

Deafness is a hearing impairment so severe that a child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY

For children from birth to age 3 (under IDEA Part C) and children from ages 3 through 9 (under IDEA Part B), the term developmental delay, as defined by each state, means a delay in one or more of the following areas: physical development; cognitive development; communication; social or emotional development; or adaptive (behavioral) development.

EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE

Emotional disturbance is a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance:

- (a) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors.
- (b) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
- (c) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
- (d) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
- (e) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

The term includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance.

HEARING IMPAIRMENT

Hearing impairment is an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's educational performance but is not included under the definition of deafness.

INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

Intellectual disability is significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

(Note: "Intellectual Disability" is a new term in IDEA. Until October 2010, the law used the term "mental retardation." In October 2010, Rosa's Law was signed into law by President Barack Obama. Rosa's Law changed the term to be used in future to "intellectual disability." The definition of the term itself did not change and is what is written above.)

CATEGORIES OF DISABILITY

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MULTIPLE DISABILITIES

Multiple disabilities are simultaneous impairments (such as intellectual disability-blindness, intellectual disability-orthopedic impairment, etc.), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in a special education program solely for one of the impairments. The term does not include deaf-blindness.

ORTHOPEDIC IMPAIRMENT

Orthopedic impairment is a severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by a congenital anomaly, impairments caused by disease (e.g., poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis) and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputations and fractures or burns that cause contractures).

OTHER HEALTH IMPAIRMENT

Other health impairment involves having limited strength, vitality or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that

- (a) is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia and Tourette syndrome; and
- (b) adversely affects a child's educational performance.

SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY

Specific learning disability is a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia. The term does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing or motor disabilities; of intellectual disability; of emotional disturbance; or of environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT

Speech or language impairment includes communication disorders such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment or a voice impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

Traumatic brain injury is an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term applies to open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as cognition; language; memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problem-solving; sensory perceptual and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior; physical functions; information processing; and speech. (The term does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative or to brain injuries induced by birth trauma.)

VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS INCLUDING BLINDNESS

Visual impairments including blindness are impairments in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.

Source: National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY), September 2013, www.nichcy.org/disability/categories

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