



Understanding Disabilities

An Overview



Objectives

- Define the 13 eligibility categories in Special Education
- Analyze the characteristics of the disabilities
- Determine what the disabilities may look like in the school setting

Developmental Delay (DD)

Children in the age range of birth through nine who are experiencing significant delays (at least 25%) in two or more developmental areas:

Cognitive

Fine and/or Gross Motor

Communication

Social/Emotional/Behavioral

Adaptive



DD may be considered when the eligibility criteria are clearly not met for one of the other 12 disability categories

DD eligibility may be maintained up to the child's tenth birthday

*A re-evaluation must be conducted before the tenth birthday to determine if delays still exist and the child meets eligibility criteria for one of the 12 disability categories

Signs or Characteristics of DD

Cognitive

Difficulty remembering tasks

Delays in basic reasoning skills and play (stacking, sorting, puzzles, etc.)

Shorter attention span



Communication



May not respond to own name

Does not use nonverbal communication or gestures

Delayed or no speech at all

Difficulty labeling people, places, objects

Difficulty following directions

Physical

Difficulty using large muscle groups

Difficulty grasping , pinching, eating, dressing

Coordination and balance is poor

Difficulty focusing or making eye contact



Social/Emotional/Behavioral

Difficulty interacting with others

Difficulty understanding social cues

Does not know how to play with toys

No interest in other children



Adaptive



Difficulty bathing, dressing, feeding one's self

Difficulty seeing the consequences of actions

Seems immature

Difficulty following rules and routines

Sensitivity to sounds, textures, visual stimuli



Intellectual Disability (ID)

A 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

Common Causes of ID

Genetic conditions: Down syndrome, fragile X syndrome, phenylketonuria (PKU)

Problems During Pregnancy: Fetal Alcohol syndrome, infection of the mother, birth defects

Problems at Birth: Oxygen deprivation

Health Problems: Diseases such as whooping cough, measles, meningitis, exposure to lead, extreme malnutrition

Signs or Characteristics of ID

Delayed in sitting, crawling, walking

Persistence in child-like behavior

Trouble understanding social cues

Failure to appreciate and avoid dangerous situations

Lack of curiosity

Difficulty learning new skills despite significant practice

Poor frustration tolerance

Impulsivity

Specific Learning Disability (SLD)

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 an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia.



A specific learning disability can be described as a discrepancy between a child's intellectual ability and academic achievement



Subcategories of SLD

Basic Reading (BR)

Reading Comprehension (RC)

Reading Fluency (RF)

Math Problem Solving (MPS)

Math Calculation (MC)

Oral Expression (OE)

Written Expression (WE)

Listening Comprehension (LC)

A Few Facts about SLDs

- 1 in 7 Americans has some type of LD according to National Institutes of Health
- Difficulty with basic reading and language skills are most common
- Often run in families
- ADD/ADHD and SLDs often occur at the same time
- The DSM-IV mentions that low self-esteem, demoralization, and social skill deficits as associated with LDs.
- The school dropout rate is significantly higher for students with LDs.

Basic Reading

SLD, BR affects one's ability to read words in isolation and in passages.

SLD, BR causes difficulty in understanding the relationship between letters and sounds (phonological awareness).

Reading is physically and psychologically draining for students with reading learning disabilities.

Signs of SLD, BR

poor memory

low self-esteem

need for constant, step by step guidance

omission of words, phrases

word substitutions

disinterested attitude

sloppy work

clowning and disruptive

possible aggression



Reading Fluency

SLD, RF causes an inability to process groups of words as meaningful phrases.

Acts as a bridge between basic word decoding and comprehension.

3 factors: rate, accuracy, and prosody

Signs of SLD, RF

Laborious, expressionless reading

Expend more cognitive energy trying to identify individual words

Difficulty retaining text in memory

Affects comprehension

Math Calculation

An inability to understand the meanings of numbers and their quantities, basic operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, and real world math applications.



Signs of SLD, MC

Difficulty writing numbers on paper

Difficulty organizing by number and quantity

Often ignore decimal points

Unable to memorize basic number facts

Difficulty telling time and measuring

Multiple Disabilities (MD)

Concomitant [simultaneous] impairments (such as mental retardation-blindness or mental retardation-orthopedic impairment), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that children cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. Multiple disabilities do not include Deaf-Blindness, Specific Learning Disability, Developmental Delay, or Language or Speech Impairment.

Characteristics of MD

Typically share deficits in 5 distinct areas:

intellectual functioning

adaptive skills

motor skills

sensory functioning

communication skills



Most have some level of cognitive impairment

Ability levels widely vary

Motor development may impact independence and access to the environment

Challenges with developing age appropriate adaptive skills

Orthopedic Impairment



A severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by a congenital anomaly (e.g. clubfoot or absence of one or more members), impairments caused by disease (e.g. poliomyelitis or bone tuberculosis), and impairments resulting from other causes (e.g. cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns causing contractures).

Three main areas of impairment

Neuromotor impairments: abnormality of, or damage to, the brain, spinal cord, or nervous system. They are acquired at or before birth. (Cerebral Palsy and Spina Bifida are 2 most common)

Degenerative diseases: composed of various diseases that affect motor development. Most common in Muscular Dystrophy which is an inherited disease characterized by progressive muscle weakness from degeneration of muscle fibers.

Musculoskeletal disorders: composed of various conditions that can result in various levels of physical limitations such as juvenile rheumatoid arthritis and limb deficiency.

Characteristics of OI

The impact on learning is contingent upon the disease, its severity, and individual factors

Each individual is different in terms of capabilities

Many students with OI have no cognitive, learning, perceptual, language, or sensory issues

Children with neuromotor impairments have a higher incidence of additional impairments

Autism (AU)

A neurological or developmental disability that impairs a person's sensory processing, verbal and nonverbal communication, social interaction, problem solving, and development.

The term “spectrum” is used because no two people have exactly the same symptoms.

Symptoms range from mild to severe.

Signs or Characteristics of AU

Social skills deficits

Communication deficits

Engagement in repetitive activities

Resistance to change

Unusual responses to sensory experiences

Preoccupation with one or more areas of interest



Emotional Disability (EMD)

Emotional Disability (EmD) exists when a student exhibits one (1) or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and/or to a marked degree, adversely affecting educational performance:

- An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors;

- An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers;

- Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances;

- A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; and/or

- A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

who me?



Emotional Disability includes schizophrenia. The term does not refer to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an Emotional Disability.

Signs or Characteristics of EMD

Refusal to follow directions

Use of inappropriate language

Failure to interact with peers and teachers

Unprovoked aggressive behaviors

Skewed sense of reality

Other Health Impairment (OHI)

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:

Is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder (ADD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, or Tourette Syndrome; and

Adversely affects a child's educational performance.

OHI:ADHD (most common subcategory)

Signs or Characteristics of ADHD, Inattentiveness

Difficulty paying attention to details and tendency to make careless mistakes in school or other activities; producing work that is often messy and careless

Easily distracted by irrelevant stimuli and frequently interrupting ongoing tasks to attend to trivial noises or events that are usually ignored by others

Inability to sustain attention on tasks or activities

Difficulty finishing schoolwork or paperwork or performing tasks that require concentration

Forgetfulness in daily activities (for example, missing appointments, forgetting to bring lunch)

Failure to complete tasks such as homework or chores

Frequent shifts in conversation, not listening to others, not keeping one's mind on conversations, and not following details or rules of activities in social situations

Procrastination or disorganized work habits

Frequent shifts from one uncompleted activity to another

Hyperactivity

Fidgeting, squirming when seated

Getting up frequently to walk or run around

Running or climbing excessively when it's inappropriate
(in teens this may appear as restlessness)

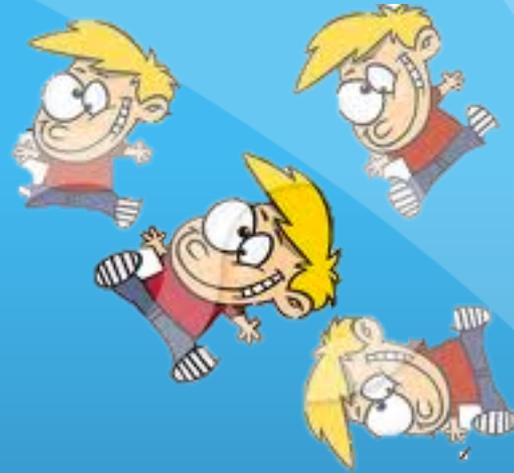
Having difficulty playing quietly or engaging in quiet leisure activities

Always being 'on the go'

Often talking excessively



Impulsivity



Impatience

Difficulty delaying responses

Blurting out answers before questions have been completed

Difficulty waiting one's turn

Frequently interrupting or intruding on others to the point of causing problems in social or work settings

Initiating conversations at inappropriate times

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

An acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force resulting in total or partial disability and/or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely impacts a child's educational performance

TBI does not include congenital, degenerative, or birth trauma induced injuries

TBI can include impairments in cognition, language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem-solving, physical functions, speech, motor abilities, and/or behavior

Characteristics vary in degree and severity

Signs or Characteristics of TBI

No two students with TBI function the same way due to the location of the injury and to the extent of the brain damage

TBI can cause intellectual disabilities, behavior problems, motor problems, sensory issues...

May require a Seizure Plan and/or a Medical Plan

May require full-time medical care or a personal care assistant

Deaf-Blind (D/B)

Concomitant [simultaneous] hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness. [§300.8(c)(2)]

Visually Impaired (VI)

A child with a vision impairment is one who has an impairment in vision even with correction, that adversely affects a child's educational performance and includes:

Blind: has little remaining vision that the child must use Braille as their reading medium;

Partially Sighted: has a significant loss of vision but who are able to use regular or large print as their reading medium. Child may have a visual acuity between 20/70 & 20/200 in the better eye after correction;

Legally Blind: has a visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye after correction &/or peripheral field so contracted that the widest diameter subtends an arc no greater than twenty (20) degrees;

D. Other severe visual problems



Hearing Impaired (HI)



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

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

Eligibility Requirements for HI



Audiometric Evaluation

A description of how the examination results might interfere with educational testing and performance and recommendations for accommodations, modifications, and educational programming

An audiogram that defines the hearing loss

How the hearing loss impacts educational performance

Communication abilities and needs, including the need for assisted communication

Characteristics of HI

Delayed language impairment (Grammar and Syntax)

Difficulty with writing skills

Social isolation

Articulation disorder



Language Impaired (LI)

Impaired comprehension and/or use of spoken or written symbols including:

- The form of language (phonology, morphology, syntax)

- The content of language (semantics)

- The function of language in communication (pragmatics)

Eligibility is confirmed when a standardized measure of language score is at least 1.5 standard deviations below the mean of the test (ex: CELF) in the area of expressive and/or receptive language.

Characteristics of LI

Inability to express ideas clearly (words on the tip of their tongue)

Use of vague words like “thing” and “stuff” to replace words that cannot be remembered

Use of filler words like “um”

Improper use of words and their meanings

Difficulty learning new vocabulary

Difficulty understanding questions and following directions heard or read

Difficulty recalling numbers in sequence

Difficulty retaining details of a story or lecture