

Amite County School District Special Services Department

A Parent's Guide To Understanding Disabilities

"Teaching exceptional children is especially rewarding!" Emma Harness
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Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism means a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. A child who manifests the characteristics of "autism" after age 3 could be diagnosed as having autism if the criteria are satisfied. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. The term does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has a serious emotional disability.

Local Resources:

ACSD Special Services Department
(601) 657-9174

Southwest Mississippi Mental Health
(601) 249-4225

Mississippi Vocational Rehabilitation
(601) 249-3803

State Department of Education
Parent Hotline: 877-544-0408

Youth Court Counselor (Amite County)
(601) 657-4985

Amite County Attendance Office
DeeCee Carter: (601) 657-5666

Emotional Disability

An Emotional Disability involves the presence of one or more of the following characteristics and adversely affects the student's educational performance over a long period of time and to a marked degree:

- 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/or 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.

Hearing Impaired

Hearing Impaired includes both deaf and hard of hearing persons. Deaf means a hearing impairment which is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, which adversely affects educational performance. Hearing Impairment means an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, which adversely affects the child's educational performance. Children with hearing impairments have sufficient hearing to allow them to process information through the auditory channel.

Specific Learning Disability (SLD)

"Specific learning disability" means 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 to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such 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 mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.

Other Health Impairment (OHI)

Other health impairment means 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—

(i) 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

(ii) Adversely affects a child's educational performance. [§300.8(c)(9)]

What's immediately clear from this definition is that there are quite a few disabilities and disorders that fall under the umbrella of "other health impairment." And those disabilities are very different from one another. This makes it difficult for us to summarize "other health impairment" and connect you with more information and guidance on the subject.

And that's why, in a moment, we will break this discussion down into closer looks at each of the disabilities listed: ADD or AD/HD, diabetes, epilepsy, heart conditions, and so on.

We'd also like to point out that IDEA's definition uses the phrase "such as..." That's significant. It means that the disabilities listed are not the only ones that may be considered when a child's eligibility for special services under IDEA is decided. A child with another health impairment (one not listed in IDEA's definition) may be found eligible for special services and assistance. What's central to all the disabilities falling under "Other Health Impairment" is that the child must have:

- limited strength, vitality, or alertness due to chronic health problems; and
- an educational performance that is negatively affected as a result.

Multiple Disabilities

A child with multiple disabilities is one who has a combination of disabilities that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The disability must also cause such severe educational needs that the child cannot be accommodated in a special education program designed solely for one of the disabilities. The term does not include deaf-blind children.

Language/Speech

Language/Speech impaired means a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language problem, or a voice impairment, which adversely affects a child's educational performance. Children with language and/or speech impairments have disorders which interfere with or limit, to varying degrees, the child's ability to receive, interpret, formulate, or express oral language.

Intellectual Disabilities

Children who have an intellectual disability exhibit learning problems which vary in degree of severity. These children have significantly subaverage intelligence existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and in academic functioning or performance that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Delays in cognitive abilities, adaptive behavior and developmental milestones must have been evidenced during a child's developmental period, and upon entering school, such delays must have adversely affected a child's educational performance. General intellectual functioning is measured by an intelligence test. Adaptive behavior refers to a child's adjustment to everyday life. Difficulties may occur in learning, communication, social, academic, vocational, and independent living skills. Such children are classified as Educable Mentally Retarded (EMR), Trainable Mentally Retarded (TMR), or severely/Profoundly Retarded (S/Pr) based on measured functioning levels.

Developmentally Delayed

An infant or young child up to nine years of age who is not achieving new skills in the typical time frame and/or is exhibiting behaviors that are not appropriate for the age level may have a

developmental disability. These delays must be established in two of the following areas: cognitive, fine and/or gross motor, language, or social. Children who have a diagnosed medical condition or disorder which will result in a developmental delay may also be included.

Deaf-Blind

Means 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.

Orthopedic Impairment

Means 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).

Traumatic Brain Injury

Traumatic Brain Injury means 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 brain injuries induced by birthtrauma.

Visually Impaired

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