

## Definitions of Disabilities - Chapter 14

A child can qualify for special education services under any of the following categories as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act when the disability adversely affects the child's educational performance.

**Autism** means 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 engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences.

**Deaf-Blindness** means concomitant 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.

**Deafness** means a hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification.

**Emotional disturbance** is defined as a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree:

- Inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
- Inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
- Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
- General pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
- Tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. This term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted.
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**Hearing impairment** means an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, but that is not included under the definition of deafness.

**Intellectual Disability** means significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period.

**Multiple disabilities** means concomitant impairments (such as mental retardation-blindness, mental retardation-orthopedic impairment, etc., the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. The term does not include deaf-blindness.

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

**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 education environment, that 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, and sickle cell anemia.

**Specific learning disability** is defined as 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.

**Speech or language impairment** means a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment.

**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. The term applies to open or closed head injuries. The term does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or to brain injuries induced by birth trauma.

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

**Developmental Delay** for children from birth to age three (under IDEA Part C) and children from ages three through nine (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.