

Definitions of Disability Terms

- * **Specific learning disability** – Is defined as follows:
 - a. *General.* The term 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, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.
 - b. *Disorders not included.* 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.

- * **Speech or language impairment** – Means a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance.

- * **Mental retardation** – Means 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.

- * **Serious emotional disturbance (referred to generally as *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 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
 - f. 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.

Definitions of Disability Terms (continued)

- * **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
 - 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, and sickle cell anemia; AND
 - b. Adversely affects a child’s educational performance.

- * **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).

- * **Hearing impairment** – Means an 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, and that adversely affects a child’s educational performance.

- * **Visual impairment, including blindness** – Means an impairment in vision, that even with correction, adversely affects a child’s educational performance.

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

Definitions of Disability Terms (continued)

- * **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. The term does not apply if a child’s educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance. A child who manifests the characteristics of autism after the age of 3 could be diagnosed as having “autism” if the above criteria are met.

- * **Traumatic brain injury** – Means an acquired injury to the brain by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairments, 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, or 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.

- * **Multiple disabilities** – Means concomitant impairments (such as mental retardation-blindness, mental retardation, orthopedic impairments, 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.

