



IDEA Disability Category Tip Sheet

An Overview of the Disability Categories



This tip sheet introduces and provides an overview of the 13 disability categories that students may be eligible for an individualized education program (IEP) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). To learn more, review the additional resources and check with state law for state specific eligibility requirements.

What Does IDEA Say?

According to IDEA Sec. 300.8(a)(1) ...

“Child with a disability means a child evaluated..... as having an intellectual disability, a hearing impairment (including deafness), a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment (including blindness), a serious emotional disturbance (referred to in this part as “emotional disturbance”), an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, an other health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities, and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services.”

Disability Category

IDEA Definition Sec. 300.8(c)

Where can I learn more?

Autism

Autism means a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three...



IDEA Regulations Sec. 300.8(c)(1)



IDEA Disability Category Tip Sheet Autism

Deaf-Blindness

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.



IDEA Regulations Sec. 300.8(c)(2)



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Developmental Delay

...children aged three through nine (or any subset of that age range, including ages three through five)...who is experiencing developmental delays, as defined by the State and as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures, in one or more of the following areas: physical development, cognitive development, communication development, social or emotional development, or adaptive development...















IDEA Regulations Sec. 300.8(b)











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Disability Category	IDEA Definition Sec. 300.8(c)	Where can I learn more?
Emotional Disturbance	Emotional disturbance means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics...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. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems...	 IDEA Regulations Sec. 300.8(c)(4)  IDEA Disability Category Tip Sheet Emotional Disturbance
Hearing Impairment (Including Deafness)	Hearing impairment means an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating...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...	 IDEA Regulations Sec. 300.8(c)(3) Sec. 300.8(c)(5)  IDEA Disability Category Tip Sheet Hearing Impairment (including Deafness)
Intellectual Disability	Intellectual disability means significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period...	 IDEA Regulations Sec. 300.8(c)(6)  IDEA Disability Category Tip Sheet Intellectual Disability
Multiple Disabilities	Multiple disabilities means concomitant impairments (such as intellectual disability-blindness or intellectual disability-orthopedic impairment), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments...	 IDEA Regulations Sec. 300.8(c)(7)  IDEA Disability Category Tip Sheet Multiple Disabilities
Orthopedic Impairment	Orthopedic impairment means a severe orthopedic impairment...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).	 IDEA Regulations Sec. 300.8(c)(8)  IDEA Disability Category Tip Sheet Orthopedic Impairment
Other Health Impairment	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 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...	 IDEA Regulations Sec. 300.8(c)(9)  IDEA Disability Category Tip Sheet Other Health Impairment



Disability Category	IDEA Definition Sec. 300.8(c)	Where can I learn more?
Specific Learning Disability	<p>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 the 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....</p>	 IDEA Regulations Sec. 300.8(c)(10)  IDEA Disability Category Tip Sheet Specific Learning Disability
Speech or Language Impairment	<p>Speech or language impairment means a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment...</p>	 IDEA Regulations Sec. 300.8(c)(11)  IDEA Disability Category Tip Sheet Speech or Language Impairment
Traumatic Brain Injury	<p>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...</p>	 IDEA Regulations Sec. 300.8(c)(12)  IDEA Disability Category Tip Sheet Traumatic Brain Injury
Visual Impairment	<p>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.</p>	 IDEA Regulations Sec. 300.8(c)(13)  IDEA Disability Category Tip Sheet Visual Impairment

Where can I learn more?



PROGRESS Center Website. The PROGRESS Center website offers a wealth of information, including disability tip sheets, to support the development and implementation of high-quality IEPs that ensure students with disabilities have access to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.