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| **Definitions of Disability Categories** | **as Defined in 200.1 (zz) – Student with a Disability** | **Effects and component characteristics of the Disability** |
| **Autism** | Defined as: a developmental disability **significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction**, generally evident before age 3, that adversely affects a student’s educational performance.  Other characteristics often associated with autism are: | Each of the disorders on the autism spectrum is a neurological disorder that affects a child’s ability to communicate, understand language, play, and relate to others. They share some or all of the following characteristics, which can vary from mild to severe:   * engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, * resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, * and unusual responses to sensory experiences (e.g., loud noises, bright lights, certain textures of food or fabrics) * Communication problems (for example, nonverbal; limited range of topics in speech; echolalia or repeating words/phrases, etc…) * Difficulty relating to people, things, and events; limited social skills * Playing with toys and objects in unusual ways; repetitive play * Difficulty adjusting to changes in routine or to familiar surroundings; and * Repetitive body movements or behaviors |
| **Deafness** | Defined as: a hearing impairment that is so severe that the student is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, that adversely affects a student’s educational performance. | Students who are deaf or hard of hearing vary widely in terms of the cause and the degree of hearing loss, the age of onset of hearing loss, educational background, language and communication methods, and how individual members within the community feel about their hearing loss.  Across the United States, several languages and communication forms are used commonly by students who are deaf or hard of hearing, including American Sign Language (ASL), communication systems for visually encoding English such as Manually Coded English (MCE), Cued Speech, speech reading, total communication, and bilingual-bicultural approaches. In addition, some students use residual hearing and hearing devices, or may have surgically placed cochlear implants which receive signals from an external device which stimulates electrodes in the cochlea. Children with cochlear implants who were born with severe to profound hearing loss are not as likely to achieve the kind of proficiency in spoken language as their hearing peers, but can focus on developing skills that enable them to take full advantage of the sound they are able to access . |
| **Deaf-Blindness** | Defined as: concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and education needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for students with deafness or students with blindness. | The National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness observes that the “key feature of deaf-blindness is that the combination of losses limits access to auditory and visual information.” [[3](http://nichcy.org/disability/specific/deafblindness#ref3)] This can severely limit an individual’s natural opportunities to learn and communicate with others. |
| **Emotional Disturbance** | 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 student’s educational performance:   1. An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; 2. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; 3. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; 4. A generally pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or 5. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.   The term includes Schizophrenia. The term does not apply to students who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance. | Mental illnesses are medical conditions that disrupt a person’s thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others and daily functioning. Just as diabetes is a disorder of the pancreas, mental illnesses are medical conditions that often result in a diminished capacity for coping with the ordinary demands of life.  Some of the characteristics and behaviors seen in children who have an emotional disturbance include:   * Hyperactivity (short attention span, impulsiveness); * Aggression or self-injurious behavior (acting out, fighting); * Withdrawal (not interacting socially with others, excessive fear or anxiety); * Immaturity (inappropriate crying, temper tantrums, poor coping skills); and * Learning difficulties (academically performing below grade level).   Children with the most serious emotional disturbances may exhibit distorted thinking, excessive anxiety, bizarre motor acts, and abnormal mood swings.  Many children who do not have emotional disturbance may display some of these same behaviors at various times during their development.  However, when children have an emotional disturbance, these behaviors continue over long periods of time. Their behavior signals that they are not coping with their environment or peers. |
| **Hearing Impairments** | Defined as: an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects the child’s educational performance but that is not included under the definition of *deafness*. | See deafness above |
| **Learning Disability –** | Defined as: a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which manifests itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions 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 Intellectual Disability, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage. | When a child has a learning disability, he or she:   * may have very messy handwriting or hold a pencil awkwardly; * may struggle to express ideas in writing; * may learn language late and have a limited vocabulary; * may have trouble remembering the sounds that letters make or hearing slight differences between words; * may have trouble understanding jokes, comic strips, and sarcasm; * may have trouble following directions; * may mispronounce words or use a wrong word that sounds similar; * may have trouble organizing what he or she wants to say or not be able to think of the word he or she needs for writing or conversation; * may not follow the social rules of conversation, such as taking turns, and may stand too close to the listener; * may confuse math symbols and misread numbers; * may have trouble learning the alphabet, rhyming words, or connecting letters to their sounds; * may not understand what he or she reads or hears * may not be able to retell a story in order (what happened first, second, third); or * may have real trouble with spelling; * may not know where to begin a task or how to go on from there.   If a child has unexpected problems learning to read, write, listen, speak, or do math, then teachers and parents may want to investigate more. The same is true if the child is struggling to do any one of these skills. The child may need to be evaluated to see if he or she has a learning disability. |
| **Intellectual Disability** | Defined as: significantly **sub-average general intellectual functioning,** **existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior** and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a student’s educational performance.  (formerly known as “mental retardation”) | There are many signs of an intellectual disability. For example, children with an intellectual disability may:   * sit up, crawl, or walk later than other children; * learn to talk later, or have trouble speaking, * find it hard to remember things, * not understand how to pay for things, * have trouble understanding social rules, * have trouble seeing the consequences of their actions, * have trouble solving problems, and/or * have trouble thinking logically.   Intellectual disabilities are diagnosed by looking at two main things. These are:   * the ability of a person’s brain to learn, think, solve problems, and make sense of the world (called IQ or intellectual functioning); and * whether the person has the skills he or she needs to live independently (called adaptive behavior, or adaptive functioning). |
| **Multiple Disabilities** | Defined as: concomitant impairments (such as intellectual disability-blindness, intellectual disability-orthopedic impairment, etc.), the combination of which cause such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in a special education program solely for one of the impairments. The term does not include deaf-blindness. | People with severe or multiple disabilities may exhibit a wide range of characteristics, depending on the combination and severity of disabilities, and the person’s age. There are, however, some traits they may share, including:   * Limited speech or communication; * Difficulty in basic physical mobility; * Tendency to forget skills through disuse; * Trouble generalizing skills from one situation to another; and/or * A need for support in major life activities (e.g., domestic, leisure, community use, vocational). |
| **Orthopedic Impairment** | Defined as: severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a student’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, amputation, and fractures or burns which cause contractures). |
| **Other Health-Impairment** | Defined as: 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, including but not limited to: heart condition, tuberculosis, rheumatic fever, nephritis, asthma, sickle cell anemia, hemophilia, epilepsy, lead poisoning, leukemia, diabetes, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or tourette syndrome, which adversely affects a student’s educational performance. | There are quite a few disabilities and disorders that fall under the umbrella of “other health impairment.” **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 of the health impairment |
| **Speech or Language Impairment** | Defined as: a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a student’s educational performance. | The characteristics of speech or language impairments will vary depending upon the type of impairment involved. There may also be a combination of several problems.   * ***articulation disorder***, he or she has difficulty making certain sounds, which makes it hard for people to understand the child. * ***fluency disorder*** means that something is disrupting the rhythmic and forward flow of speech—usually, a stutter. * ***voice disorder*** involves problems with the pitch, loudness, resonance, or quality of the voice.   People with voice problems often notice changes in pitch, loss of voice, loss of endurance, and sometimes a sharp or dull pain associated with voice use. * ***language disorder*** refers to an impaired ability to understand and/or use words in context.   + an ***expressive language*** disorder (difficulty in expressing ideas or needs),   + a ***receptive language*** disorder (difficulty in understanding what others are saying),   + or a ***mixed language*** disorder (which involves both).   Some characteristics of language disorders include:   * improper use of words and their meanings, * inability to express ideas, * inappropriate grammatical patterns, * reduced vocabulary, and * inability to follow directions. ([10](http://nichcy.org/disability/specific/speechlanguage#ref10)) |
| **Traumatic Brain Injury** | Defined as: **an acquired injury** to the brain caused by an external physical force or by certain medical conditions such as stroke, encephalitis, aneurysm, and anoxia or brain tumors with resulting impairments that adversely affect education performance. The term includes open or closed head injuries from certain medical conditions resulting in mild, moderate or severe impairments in one or more areas, including 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 include injuries that are congenital or caused by birth trauma. | Physical disabilities: Individuals with TBI may have problems speaking, seeing, hearing, and using their other senses. They may have headaches and feel tired a lot. They may also have trouble with skills such as writing or drawing. Their muscles may suddenly contract or tighten (this is called spasticity). They may also have seizures. Their balance and walking may also be affected. They may be partly or completely paralyzed on one side of the body, or both sides.  Because the brain has been injured, it is common that the person’s ability to use the brain changes. For example,   * children with TBI may have trouble with short-term memory (being able to remember something from one minute to the next, like what the teacher just said) or their long-term memory (being able to remember information from a while ago, like facts learned last month). * People with TBI may have trouble concentrating and only be able to focus their attention for a short time. They may think slowly. They may have trouble talking and listening to others. * They may also have difficulty with reading and writing, planning, understanding the order in which events happen (called sequencing), and judgment. * Social, behavioral, or emotional problems: These difficulties may include sudden changes in mood, anxiety, and depression. Children with TBI may have trouble relating to others. They may be restless and may laugh or cry a lot. They may not have much motivation or much control over their emotions. |
| **Visual Impairment (including Blindness)** | Defined as: an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a student’s educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness. | The degree of a student’s visual impairment, along with the impact of potential additional disabilities, has varying implications for instruction, accommodations, and testing. Most students in this category have low vision, which includes tunnel vision and partial vision. Some students with visual impairments can read print efficiently without accommodations. Other students may use some tactile and auditory adaptations, but many can read print with magnification. |