

# Orthopedic Impairment Fact Sheet



## Potential Challenges

Considering the diversity in conditions that are embodied by the orthopedic impairments category, educational challenges will differ case by case, and the strategies used in each case should focus on a student's unique needs. Possible academic barriers include:

- Non-accessible transportation
- Trouble maneuvering around the classroom
- Difficulty navigating school hallways
- Earning mandated physical education credit
- Communicating effectively

Adapted from NICHY (2011)

## What are Orthopedic Impairments?

The IDEA category of orthopedic impairments contains a wide variety of disorders. Cerebral Palsy (CP) affects the largest group of students with orthopedic impairments in public schools. The specific characteristics of an individual who has an orthopedic impairment will depend on both the specific disease and its severity and additional individual factors. Other examples of orthopedic impairments include muscular dystrophy, spinal cord injuries, multiple sclerosis and rheumatoid arthritis.

## Definition of Orthopedic Impairment under IDEA

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), defines Orthopedic Impairment as...

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.), and impairments from other causes (e.g.;

## Orthopedic Impairments and School

Many students with orthopedic impairments have no cognitive, learning, perceptual, language, or sensory issues. However, individuals with neuromotor impairments have a higher incidence of additional impairments, especially when there has been brain involvement. For most students with orthopedic impairments, the impact on learning is focused on accommodations necessary for students to have access to academic instruction.

Tips for success in school include:

- Seating arrangements to ensure the student is comfortable
- Ensuring access and training with assistive technology devices as needed
- An IEP can assert that a student's schedule should be arranged to eliminate excessive walking back and forth.
- Students can be granted access to the school's elevator to allow them to travel safely between floors.
- Ensure school staff have awareness of medical condition and its affect on the student (such as getting tired quickly)
- Encourage participation at all times
- Always presume competence
- Encourage independence where possible
- Assume your child can learn!