



MEDICAL CONDITION & OR CLINICAL DIAGNOSIS



SPECIAL EDUCATION ELIGIBILITY & IDENTIFICATION

Important Distinctions for IEP Teams

Parents are often surprised to learn that their child’s medical condition or diagnosis, such as Autism, Dyslexia, Hearing Loss or muscle related disorders does not automatically qualify them for an Individualized Education Program (IEP). There are two primary types of diagnosis: clinical and medical. Clinical or medical diagnoses focus on identifying and understanding a medical condition, developmental disability, or mental health condition. These diagnoses take a holistic view of the person and are made by a qualified clinician. An educational identification of a disability focuses on a child's experience in the school setting and the impact the condition has on student learning. Special education eligibility is decided by the IEP team comprised of various school professionals and the student’s parents or guardians. Eligibility is determined by reviewing data from a variety of sources, including aptitude and achievement tests, school and outside evaluations, observations, parent input, and teacher recommendations, as well as information about the child’s physical condition, social or cultural background, and adaptive behavior. Schools do not diagnose, but they do identify students with disabilities that are in need of special education. For example, a student can be found eligible for an IEP under the Autism category even if the child does not have a formal diagnosis from a physician. Likewise, a student can have a clinical diagnosis of Autism, but might not meet the eligibility criteria to be served under the Autism disability category, or any other category at all, if the disability does not have an adverse effect on their educational performance and require special education. The school cannot diagnose your child, only a medical professional can. Clinical and medical diagnoses can be used to apply for disability services and are valid for insurance purposes, whereas an educational identification of a disability is not. There are some eligibility categories that do require medical evaluations. Understanding the differences between a medical diagnosis and an educational determination of eligibility for special education services can help families become better advocates for their children.

For a child to be eligible for an Individualized Education Program, the IEP team must determine that all three criteria below have been met:

The child meets the criteria for one or more of the 14 disabling conditions ✓

The disability has an adverse effect on their educational performance
(academic achievement & functional performance) ✓

The child is in need of specially designed instruction ✓

(see reverse side for more information)



Determination of Eligibility for Special Education

14 Disability Eligibility Categories

Autism
DeafBlindness
Deafness
Developmental Delay
Emotional Disability
Hearing Impairment
Intellectual Disability
Multiple Disabilities
Orthopedic Impairment
Other Health Impairment
Specific Learning Disability
Speech or Language Impairment
Traumatic Brain Injury
Visual Impairment (including Blindness)

Adverse Effect on Educational Performance

Adverse effect means the child's progress is impeded by the disability to the extent that some level of support is needed. The level of impact may be minimal and supportive strategies and/or accommodations may be sufficient in addressing adverse effect. The IEP Team's determination of adverse effect shall be based upon the results of assessments and/or data sources determined by the Team to be necessary to verify the effect of the disability on educational performance. The IEP Team shall consider multiple data sources for determination of adverse effect.

Need for Specially Designed Instruction

The child's progress is impeded by the disability to the extent that educational performance is significantly and consistently below the level of similar age and grade level peers. Educational performance includes not only academic performance, but also social development, functional performance, communication skills, and self-management. As a result of the disability's significant and consistent impact on educational performance, changes to the content, methodology or delivery of instruction are needed that cannot be met solely through general education.

The IEP Team, which includes school staff and parents or guardians, determines whether a child qualifies for special education services.

In order to do so, the IEP Team **must**:

- use a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional, developmental, and academic information about the child, including information provided by the parent, that may assist in determining whether they are a child with a disability.
- not use any single measure or assessment as the sole source for determining whether a child is a child with a disability and for determining an appropriate educational program for the child.
- draw upon information from a variety of sources, including aptitude and achievement tests, family input, and teacher recommendations, as well as information about the child's physical condition, social or cultural background, and adaptive behavior. (Adaptive behavior encompasses a range of practical, social, and conceptual skills needed for everyday functioning, and executive functioning skills—like planning, organizing, self-regulation, and problem-solving—are essential for adapting to daily life demands.)
- review existing evaluation data on the child, including evaluations and information provided by the child's family.

