

Exceptional Categories

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) provides definitions for each of the disability categories. West Virginia also provides services to gifted students as another exceptional category.

1. Autism

Autism is a developmental disability, generally evident before age three, significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction and adversely affecting educational performance. A student who manifests the characteristics of autism after age three could be diagnosed as having autism if the criteria in this section are satisfied. Other characteristics often associated with autism include, but are not limited to, engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. Characteristics vary from mild to severe as well as in the number of symptoms present.

2. Blindness and Low Vision

Blindness and low vision refers to an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a student's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness and includes students ages three through twenty-one.

3. Deafblindness

Deafblindness 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 designed solely for students with deafness or blindness or students who are hard of hearing or partially sighted. This category includes students ages three through twenty-one.

4. Deafness

Deafness is a hearing impairment that is so severe that the student is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, which adversely affects a student's educational performance.

5. Developmental Delay

Developmental delays occur in students, ages three through five, who are functioning at, or lower than, 75% of the normal rate of development in two or more of the following areas:

- Cognition;
- Physical development including gross motor and/or fine motor skills;
- Communication;
- Social/emotional/affective development; and/or
- Self-help skills.

6. Emotional/Behavioral Disorder

An emotional/behavioral disorder means a condition in which a student exhibits 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 general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or
5. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems; or
6. Schizophrenia.

The term does not include students who are socially maladjusted unless it is determined they have an emotional/behavioral disorder.

7. Gifted

Giftedness is exceptional intellectual abilities and potential for achievement that requires specially designed instruction and/or services beyond those normally provided in the general classroom instruction.

8. Hard of Hearing

Hard of hearing is an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a student's educational performance but that is not included under the definition of deafness.

9. Intellectual Disability

Intellectual disability is defined as significantly subaverage intellectual functioning that exists concurrently with deficits in adaptive skill areas. These deficits are manifested during the developmental period and adversely affect the student's educational performance.

10. Orthopedic Impairment

Orthopedic impairment means a severe physical limitation that adversely affects a student's educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by congenital anomaly (e.g., spina bifida, congenital amputation, osteogenesis imperfecta), an impairment caused by disease (e.g., poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis), or an impairment from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputations, fractures or burns that cause contracture).

11. Other Health Impaired

Other health impairment means having limited strength, vitality or alertness, including 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. These health problems may include, but are not limited to, asthma, attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), cancer, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, Tourette syndrome and stroke to such a degree that it adversely affects the student's educational performance.

12. Specific Learning Disability

Specific learning disability (SLD) 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 calculation, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

13. Speech/Language Impairment

A speech/language impairment means a speech/language impairment such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment or a voice impairment that adversely affects a student's educational performance. See Appendix B for Documentation of Adverse Effects on Educational Performance for Students with Speech/language Disorders.

14. Traumatic Brain Injury

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, that adversely affects a student's educational performance. Traumatic brain injury 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 and motor abilities, psychosocial behavior, physical functions, information processing, and speech. The term does not apply to congenital or degenerative brain injuries or to brain injuries induced by birth trauma.

