

THE DISABILITY CATEGORIES IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Federal law and state regulations set out categories of disability. Your child may have more than one disability. The evaluation will help to decide which one is the “primary” disability, but the IEP may also list other disabilities. Your child has a right to the services he or she needs to succeed in school.

Although school districts/agencies must use the legal definitions, the following descriptions of disabilities are not as complicated as those definitions. They are written to give you a basic idea of what these terms mean.

AUTISM (AU)

Autism is a condition that causes severe problems with a child’s ability to communicate and relate to others. Typically, children with this disability will have delayed language, poor eye contact, and often do the same thing over and over. They have difficulty dealing with change, and may not want to be touched. It usually starts in very young children, and it interferes with learning.

DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING (D/HH)

The term “deaf” refers to a hearing difficulty that, even with a hearing aid, interferes with learning. “Hard of hearing” refers to a hearing difficulty that comes and goes but nonetheless interferes with learning.

DEAFBLINDNESS (DB)

Deafblindness is a severe disability involving both seeing and hearing. It makes a child fall behind in development and have a hard time learning and communicating.

DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY (DD)

Children aged three through nine experiencing developmental delays include a child who is experiencing developmental delays in one or more of the following areas: physical development, cognitive development, communication development, social or emotional development, or adaptive development; and needs special education and related services.

EMOTIONAL DISABILITY (ED)

An emotional disability is an emotional difficulty that has lasted for a long time and interferes with learning. Students with this disability may appear to be unable to learn, but there does not seem to be an intellectual, physical, or health reason for that. They may not be able to “connect” with teachers or other students. In a normal situation, students with this disability may behave or feel very differently from most of the other students. They may often feel unhappy or depressed. They may manifest severe physical symptoms or fears when they have personal or school problems.

INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY (ID - MID, MOD, AND SID)

Intellectual Disability is a term used when a person has certain limitations in mental functioning and in skills such as communicating, taking care of him or herself, and social skills. These limitations will cause a child to learn and develop more slowly than a typical child. Children with intellectual disabilities may take longer to learn to speak, walk, and take care of their personal needs such as dressing or eating. They are likely to have trouble learning in school. They will learn, but it will take them longer. There may be some things they cannot learn.

An intellectual disability is a difficulty in the student’s general ability to think and reason that makes it hard for him or her to adapt to change or to solve problems. It may be mild, moderate or severe.

MULTIPLE DISABILITIES (MD OR MH)

The term “multiple disabilities” refers to two or more difficulties, such as deafness and severe problems with bones, that affect the same individual.

ORTHOPEDIC IMPAIRMENT (OI)

The term “orthopedic impairment” means a severe difficulty with bones, muscles, or joints that interferes with learning. The student may have been born with the condition, or it could have been caused by an accident or illness.

OTHER HEALTH IMPAIRMENT (OHI)

The term “other health impairment” refers to a health difficulty or medical condition that affects a student’s strength or alertness—such as asthma, attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), a heart problem, sickle cell anemia, and tuberculosis—or another condition that interferes with learning.

SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY (SLD OR LD)

A specific learning disability is a problem in the way a student can listen, think, speak, write, read, spell, or do math. The problem is caused by the way the student learns and processes information—not by problems in seeing, hearing, or using muscles and not by anything related to his or her environment, culture, or economic level.

SPEECH OR LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT (SLI)

A speech or language impairment is a difficulty in communicating that interferes with learning. A student with this impairment may not be able to understand what she/he hears (even though he/she doesn’t have a hearing problem), speak in age-appropriate phrases/sentences and use age-appropriate vocabulary, pronounce words accurately, speak fluently or smoothly, or use adequate voice.

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI)

A traumatic brain injury is a head injury that occurs after birth and that severely interferes with thinking, judgment, physical functions, speech, or other skills needed for learning.

VISUAL IMPAIRMENT (VI)

A visual impairment is a problem that interferes with learning, even when the student wears glasses. A “visually impaired” student may have some sight or may be blind.

*Sited from <https://ed.sc.gov/agency/programs-services/173/documents/ParentGuideNov12.pdf>