



The 13 Disability Categories Under IDEA

IDEA - **The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act** requires that public schools provide special education and related services to eligible students. When kids are eligible, the next step is creating an Individualized Education Program (IEP). A child's school performance must be adversely affected by a disability to qualify in one of the following 13 categories:

1. **Specific Learning Disability (SLD)**

- SLD covers a specific group of learning challenges. SLD is the most common category under IDEA. These conditions affect a child's ability to read, write, listen, speak, reason, or do math. Here's what could fall in this category: dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, auditory processing disorder, and nonverbal learning disability.

2. **Other Health Impairment**

- Other health impairment covers conditions that limit a child's strength, energy, or alertness. One example is ADHD, which impacts attention and executive function.

3. **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**

- ASD is a developmental disability. It covers a wide range of symptoms, but it mainly affects a child's social and communication skills. It can also impact behavior.

4. **Emotional Disturbance**

- Various mental health issues can fall under "emotional disturbance". They may include anxiety disorder, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and depression. (Some of these may also be covered under "other health impairment.")

5. **Speech or Language Impairment**

- A child with speech or language difficulties- for example, stuttering. Other examples are trouble pronouncing words or making sounds with the voice. It also covers language problems that make it hard for kids to understand words or express themselves.

6. Visual Impairment (including blindness)

- A child who has eyesight problems is considered to have a visual impairment. This category includes both partial sight and blindness. If eyeglasses can correct a vision problem, then it doesn't qualify.

7. Deafness

- Kids with a diagnosis of deafness fall under this category. These are kids who can't hear most or all sounds, even with a hearing aid.

8. Hearing Impairment

- The term "hearing impairment" refers to a hearing loss not covered by the definition of deafness. This type of loss can change over time. Being hard of hearing is not the same thing as having trouble with auditory or language processing.

9. Deaf-blindness

- Kids with a diagnosis of deaf-blindness have both severe hearing and vision loss. Their communication and other needs are so unique that programs for just the deaf or blind can't meet them.

10. Orthopedic Impairment

- An orthopedic impairment is when kids lack function or ability in their bodies. An example is cerebral palsy.

11. Intellectual Disability

- Kids with this type of disability have below-average intellectual ability. They may also have poor communication, self-care, and social skills. Down syndrome is one example of an intellectual disability.

12. Traumatic Brain Injury

- This is a brain injury caused by an accident or some kind of physical force.

13. Multiple Disabilities

- A child with multiple disabilities has more than one condition covered by IDEA. Having multiple issues creates educational needs that can't be met in a program designed for any one disability.



701-837-7500



info@pathfinder-nd.org



<http://pathfinder-nd.org>



PO Box 758, Minot, ND 58702



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