

What classifies a person for an IEP?

There are thirteen categories that are considered for an IEP. Here are short explanations of each category:

- **Autism:** This disability is categorized as a developmental disability affecting verbal and non-verbal communication and social interaction. A screener for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) characteristics can be given by the school psychologist if a medical diagnosis has not been given. In this category, verbal/non-verbal communication and social interactions must be considered and needed to be addressed in order for the student to make progress in the general curriculum. A student may have a medical diagnosis of Autism, but not need IEP services because their educational progress is not impeded. Often these classifications have goals for social interaction and speech and language related services.
- **Blind/Visually Impaired:** This category has a legal as well as educational definition. Legal blindness is based on visual acuity (the ability to clearly to distinguish and discriminate details using sight). Legally blind is 20/200 or less after sight correction. The educational definition emphasizes the correlation between the visual impairment and education.
- **Communication Disorder:** Also known as Speech and Language Impairment, these students struggle with communication and are often serviced by a Speech and Language Pathologist. Speech impairments are articulation or errors in the production of speech sounds, fluency or difficulties in the flow or rhythm of speech, and voice disorders problems in the quality or use of one's voice. Language impairments are any impairment in comprehension or use of spoken and/or written systems of communication. Language looks at the phonology (speech patterns), morphology (inflection), syntax (grammar rules and patterns) , semantics (content) and pragmatics (function) of language.
- **Deaf and Blind:** For this category, think Helen Keller. This disability provides a severe communication and learning developmental needs due to concurrent disabilities.
- **Developmental Delay:** This category is only for children ages 3-7 who manifest a significant delay or deficit in one or more areas of development like communication, motor, cognition, social-emotional, or adaptive skills. Before the student turns seven, a new classification must be met through evaluations and team determination.
- **Deaf/Hearing Impaired:** This category indicates a hearing loss that adversely affects educational performance and ranges from mild to profound. Not all students who are deaf or hard of hearing will receive services.
- **Emotional/Behavioral Disorder:** Students who display long-term inability to learn, build and maintain interpersonal relationships, express inappropriate types of behaviors or feelings under normal circumstances, have medical diagnoses of depression or anxiety



that adversely affect their ability to perform educationally enter into this category. Often teams will look at medical diagnoses given by doctors. Oppositional Defiance Disorder, Selective Mutism, and Extreme Anxiety and/or Depression are examples of medical diagnoses that may qualify a student in this area.

- **Intellectually Disabled:** The definition is significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior that are manifested during the developmental period and adversely affects educational performance. When looking at cognitive scores, these students have GIA or Full-Scale scores two standard deviations below the average range of 85-115. Mild disabilities fall in the 50-70 range, Moderate falls in the 35-50. Severe falls in the 20-35. Profound scores fall below 20. Adaptive skills are how well a student is able to care for their daily living needs. These include washing, dressing, directions, walking and moving the physical body. When looking at this classification it is not unusual to have an occupational therapist do assessments to look at muscle strength and ability.
- **Multiple Disabilities:** Multiple disabilities that provide a combination of impairments that cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one impairment. Often these include intellectually disabled and severe orthopedic impairments but can include other combinations except deaf and blind.
- **Orthopedic Impairment:** An severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a student's educational performance includes impairments caused by congenital anomaly (e.g., clubfoot, absence of some member, etc.), impairment caused by disease (e.g. Poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis, etc.), and impairments from other causes (e.g. cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contractures).
- **Other Health Impairment:** Students who have physical and health conditions caused by congenital, diseases, or generative anomalies may have this classification. Often students in this category have limited strength, vitality, or alertness due to their health problems. These students may need assistive technology, such as a wheelchair, walker, feeding tube, pump, inhaler, etc. in order to function in their daily life. Examples of disabilities in this area include (but are not limited to) ADHD, Cancer/Leukemia, Brain tumors, Cerebral Palsy, Cystic Fibrosis, Diabetes, and Epilepsy.
- **Specific Learning Disability:** These are a severe discrepancy between the intellectual ability and academic achievement where there is no other condition that causes the problems. Listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, and mathematical abilities are considered when looking at this category. Medical diagnoses in this category are dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia.
- **Traumatic Brain Injury:** A traumatic brain injury is an injury to the brain caused by an external force that results in a functional disability or psychosocial impairment that adversely affects the student's educational performance. It doesn't include injuries that are congenital, generative, or induced by birth trauma.

