

The Special Education IDEA Categories

If your child attends a public school, to qualify for special education services, they must qualify for one or more of the disability categories defined by the U.S. Department of Education through the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), and it must **adversely affect the student's educational performance** and be determined that **specialized instruction** would be beneficial.

- **Specific learning disability (SLD)** - a disability that covers one or more of the basic psychological processes that impact a child's ability to read, write, listen, speak, reason and do math.
- **Speech or language impairment (SLI)** - a communication disorder such as stuttering, impaired articulation, language impairment or voice impairment.
- **Other health impairment (OHI)** - conditions that limit a child's strength, energy, or alertness, including ADHD and other chronic or acute health problems.
- **Autism (Au)** - a developmental disorder that involves a wide range of symptoms, but mainly affects a child's social and communication skills. It can also impact behavior.
- **Emotional disturbance (ED)** - conditions related to inappropriate behavior, difficulties maintaining interpersonal relationships with adults or peers, general mood of unhappiness or depression, psychosomatic, schizophrenic and other disorders.
- **Visual impairment (VI)** - a child with vision loss or blindness that, even with correction, impacts educational performance.
- **Deafness (D/Hh)** - a student who cannot hear most or all sounds, even with a hearing aid.
- **Hearing impairment (HI)** - a child with hearing loss not covered under deafness. The type of hearing loss may be permanent or fluctuating and is differentiated from auditory or language processing issues.
- **Deaf-blindness (DB)** - a child who has severe hearing and vision loss and unique communication needs that cannot be met by programs solely for children with deafness or blindness.
- **Orthopedic impairment (OI)** - a severe orthopedic impairment that impacts educational performance. Orthopedic impairment includes congenital anomalies, impairments caused by disease, and impairments from other causes, such as cerebral palsy, amputations and fractures.
- **Intellectual disability (ID)** - a child who has below average intellectual ability. These children may also struggle with communication, self-care, and social skills. Intellectual disability occurs concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifests during the developmental period.
- **Traumatic brain injury (TBI)** - a brain injury caused by an accident or some kind of physical force resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that impacts educational performance.
- **Multiple disabilities** - a child who has multiple disabilities covered under IDEA and who has educational needs that cannot be met by a program in a singular category.