



# PEPP, INC

## Parents Educating Parents and Professionals

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### **Overview of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1997)**

IDEA is the federal legislation which governs special education services, particularly funding and eligibility. Although the Student Support Team process is not mandated by IDEA, SST members must have some general knowledge about the requirements of the law in order to make informed decisions when making referrals to special education. It is important that they understand the nature of the various disabilities so that they know when to suspect that a disability may be the primary reason for a student's difficulties. However, it is not up to SST members to judge whether a student would qualify for a category before deciding to refer. That is for the multidisciplinary evaluation team to answer through a comprehensive, individualized team evaluation.

The job of the SST is to answer a basic question regarding a student with learning or behavior difficulties. That is, can this difficulty be resolved in a reasonable time with proven modifications in the regular classroom? Federal regulations for IDEA require that, in order to be referred for a special education evaluation, not only must 1) a disability be suspected as the source of the student's problem, *but* also 2) the student's identified difficulties must be documented as unable to be resolved without a special education program.

The SST is clearly appropriate for answering these questions in virtually every case. It is only when the SST has answered in the affirmative to both questions that referral for a special education evaluation becomes appropriate.

The following information outlines the basic characteristics of the most common disability areas identified in IDEA. This information is very basic and is not intended to provide all requirements for determining IDEA eligibility. Instead, its purpose is to give SST members a basic knowledge of the characteristics of the disabilities, thus helping the team make informed decisions about the appropriateness of a referral.

#### **Specific Learning Disability (SLD) –**

- Although some students with SLD may score below the average range on tests of

intelligence, typically the student with specific learning disability has average to above average intelligence

- Processing deficit in one or more of the basic psychological processes (attending, discrimination/perception, sensory integration, organization, sequencing, short-term memory, long-term memory and/or conceptualization/reasoning, etc.) and evidence that this deficit has impaired the student's mastery of the academic tasks required in the regular curriculum
- Processing strength that is commensurate with estimated cognitive ability
- Significant deficit in one of the seven areas of learning (Oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skills, reading comprehension, math calculation and math reasoning) and the current achievement is below the student's grade placement level
- Evidence from a variety of sources, including classroom functioning
- Evidence that the discrepant performance is not primarily due to intellectual disability, hearing or vision impairment, emotional and behavioral disorder, environmental disadvantage, cultural difference, economic disadvantage, atypical educational history, and/or native or primary language other than English

### **Emotional and Behavioral Disorder (EBD)**

- An emotional disability characterized by one or more of the following:
- An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and/or teachers.
- An inability to learn which cannot be adequately explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors.
- Consistent or chronic inappropriate type of behavior or feelings under normal conditions.
- Displayed pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression
- Displayed tendency to develop physical symptoms, pains or unreasonable fears associated with personal or school problems.
- Must document behaviors in a variety of settings through evaluation, observations, and social history
- Must document duration, frequency, and intensity of behaviors
- Must have emotional basis for behaviors. Should rule out juvenile delinquency and social maladjustment if possible.

### **Other Health Impairment (OHI)**

- Having limited strength, vitality, or alertness (including a heightened awareness to environmental stimuli that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment) due to chronic or acute health problems
- Conditions must adversely affect the student's educational performance to the degree that the student requires special education

### **Intellectual Disability (MIID, MOID, SID, PID)**

- IQ approximately 70 or below
- Deficits in adaptive behavior — significant limitations in an individual's effectiveness in meeting the standards of maturation, learning, personal independence or social responsibility and especially school performance that is expected of the individual's age- level and cultural group
- Deficits in academic achievement when compared with same age peers

### **Speech Language Impairment (SI)**

• Impairment in the areas of articulation, fluency, voice, or language which differs so significantly in manner or content from that of peers that it disrupts communications or affects emotional, social, intellectual, or educational growth.

### **Autism**

Developmental disability, generally evident before age three, that significantly affects the following areas:

- Developmental rates and sequences
- Social interaction and participation
- Communication (verbal and/or nonverbal)
- Sensory processing
- Repertoire of activities and interests

### **Orthopedic Impairment (OI)**

- Severe orthopedic impairment affects educational performance to the degree that the student requires special education
- Should be functioning no lower than criteria outlined for mild intellectual disabilities

### **Deaf/Hard of Hearing (D/HH)**

- Presence of a hearing loss, whether permanent or fluctuating, that interferes with the acquisition or maintenance of auditory skills necessary for the normal development of speech, language, and academic achievement
- Eligibility determined by results of audiological, otological, and education evaluations.

### **Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)**

- 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 the student's educational performance.
- Does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative in nature, brain injuries induced by birth trauma or those resulting from internal occurrences such as stroke, tumor or aneurysm.
- Verification of the injury may be documented through:
  - Medical evaluation report from a licensed doctor of medicine indicating that TBI has occurred recently or in the past, or
  - Another appropriate source, such as health department or social services reports, or parent's medical bills/records.

### **Visual Impairment (VI)**

Student's vision interferes with functioning in a regular school program. Student may have partial or total loss of vision.

**Georgia Department of Education**

Linda C. Schrenko, State Superintendent of Schools

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