

ED291203 1987-00-00 Disabilities: An Overview. ERIC Digest #420. Revised.

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ERIC Identifier: ED291203

Publication Date: 1987-00-00

Author:

Source: ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children Reston VA.

**Disabilities: An Overview. ERIC Digest #420.
Revised.**

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TEXT: WHAT DISABILITIES ENTITLE A CHILD TO SPECIAL EDUCATION?

As considered in the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142), handicapped children must meet two criteria. The child must have one or more of the disabilities listed in the next section, and he or she must require special education and related services. In other words, not all children who have a disability require special education; many are able to and should attend school without any program modification. Following are the disabilities included in the definition.

--Deaf: A hearing impairment so severe that the child cannot understand what is being said with or without a hearing aid. --Deaf-Blind: A combination of hearing and visual

impairments causing such severe communication, developmental, and educational problems that the child cannot be accommodated in either a program just for the deaf or one that is specifically for the blind. --Hard of Hearing: A hearing impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance but is not as severe as deafness. --Mentally Retarded: Both significant subaverage general intellectual functioning and deficits in adaptive behavior. These deficits should have been observable throughout the child's development. --Multiply Handicapped: A combination of impairments, other than deaf-blindness, that causes such severe problems that the child cannot be accommodated in a special education program for any one of the impairments. --Orthopedically Impaired: A severe physical disability that adversely affects educational performance. The term includes impairments such as club foot, absence of a limb, cerebral palsy, poliomyelitis, and bone tuberculosis. --Other Health Impaired: Limited strength, vitality, or alertness due to chronic or acute health problems such as rheumatic fever, asthma, hemophilia, and leukemia, which adversely affect the child's educational development. --Seriously Emotionally Disturbed: Schizophrenic children and others who have a marked degree of one or more of the following characteristics, displayed over a long period of time: An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. This term does not include students who are socially maladjusted, unless they are also seriously emotionally disturbed. --Specific Learning Disability: A disorder affecting the child's understanding or use of spoken or written language. The student's ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations may be affected. Conditions such as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia are included in this category. This term does NOT include children who have learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps; mental retardation; or environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage. --Speech Impaired: A communication disorder such as stuttering or impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance. --Visually Handicapped: A visual impairment that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partially seeing and blind children.

HOW MANY CHILDREN IN THE U.S. REQUIRE SPECIAL EDUCATION?

Estimates of the proportion of school-aged children requiring special education range from 10% to 15%. The actual number of children under age 19 served in school year 1984-1985 was 4,363,031.

WHAT ARE THE EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF DISABILITIES?

Children suspected of having a handicap are evaluated by a multidisciplinary team that

includes at least one teacher or other specialist with knowledge in the area of the suspected disability. Following a full and individual evaluation of the child's educational needs, the team determines whether or not the child requires special education and related services.

If the evaluation confirms that a child has one or more disabilities and because of the disabilities special education and related services are required, then states and localities must provide a free, appropriate public education for that child.

Public Law 94-142 has fueled a trend toward teaching more exceptional students in the regular classroom. A variety of approaches have been developed to implement this mainstreaming effort, including resource rooms and consultation services by special education teachers. Regular classrooms are being changed to provide for a wider diversity of students and educational services. For those students with problems too severe to be served in a regular class, provision must be made for the most normal, or least restrictive, setting possible.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Ballard, J., B. Ramirez, and K. Zantal-Wiener. PUBLIC LAW 94-142, SECTION 504, AND PUBLIC LAW 99-457: UNDERSTANDING WHAT THEY ARE AND ARE NOT. 1987. Available from The Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091.

Jordan, J.B., and B.A. Ramirez. 1986 SPECIAL EDUCATION YEARBOOK. 1987. Available from The Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091.

Meyer, D.J., P.F. Vadasy, and R.R. Fewell. LIVING WITH A BROTHER OR SISTER WITH SPECIAL NEEDS. A BOOK FOR SIBS. 1985. Available from University of Washington Press, P.O. Box C50096, Seattle, WA 98145.

Schleifer, M.J., and S.D. Klein. THE DISABLED CHILD AND THE FAMILY: AN EXCEPTIONAL PARENT READER. 1985. Available from Exceptional Parent, 605 Commonwealth Avenue, Third Floor, Boston, MA 02215.

Shore, K. THE SPECIAL EDUCATION HANDBOOK. A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND EDUCATORS. 1986. Available from Teachers College Press, 1234 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY 10027.

THE EXCEPTIONAL PARENT. A journal published 8 times a year. Available from Psy-Ed Corporation, 605 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215.

RESOURCES

Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf, Inc. 3417 Volta Place, N.W.
Washington, DC 20007

American Association on Mental Deficiency 5101 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., Suite 405
Washington, DC 20016

American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities 1012 Fourteenth Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20005

American Foundation for the Blind 15 W. Sixteenth Street New York, NY 10011

American Speech, Language, and Hearing Association 10801 Rockville Pike Rockville,
MD 20852

Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities 4156 Library Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15234

Association for Retarded Citizens of the United States 2501 Avenue J Arlington, TX
76011

Clearinghouse on the Handicapped Room 3132 Switzer Building Washington, DC
20202

National Association of the Deaf 814 Thayer Avenue Silver Spring, MD 20910

National Easter Seal Society 2023 W. Ogden Avenue Chicago, IL 60612

National Information Center for Handicapped Children and Youth 155 Wilson Boulevard,
Suite 508 Arlington, VA 22209

National Society for Children and Adults with Autism 1234 Massachusetts Avenue,
N.W., Suite 1017 Washington, DC 20005

Rehabilitation International 432 Park Avenue, S. New York, NY 10016

United Cerebral Palsy Association 66 East 34th Street New York, NY 10016

This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under OERI contract. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or the Department of Education.

Title: Disabilities: An Overview. ERIC Digest #420. Revised.

Document Type: Information Analyses---ERIC Information Analysis Products (IAPs) (071); Guides---Non-Classroom Use (055); Information Analyses---ERIC Digests (Selected) in Full Text (073);

Target Audience: Parents

Available From: ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children, 1920 Association Dr., Reston, VA 22091 (one copy free; please enclose self-addressed envelope).

Descriptors: Disabilities, Early Childhood Education, Educational Needs, Elementary Secondary Education, Incidence, Resources, Special Education

Identifiers: ERIC Digests

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