

CATEGORIES OF DISABILITY UNDER IDEA

Introduction

Every year, under the federal law known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), millions of children with disabilities receive special services designed to meet their unique needs. *Early intervention services* are provided through the state to infants and toddlers with disabilities under 3 years of age and their families. For school aged children and youth (aged 3 through 21), *special education and related services* are provided through the school system. These services can be very important in helping children and youth with disabilities develop, learn, and succeed in school and other settings.

Who is Eligible for Services?

Under IDEA, states are responsible for meeting the special needs of eligible children with disabilities. To find out if a child is eligible for services, he or she must first receive a full and individual initial evaluation. This evaluation is free. Two purposes of the evaluation are:

- To see if the child has a disability, as defined by IDEA; and
- To learn in more detail what special education and related services he or she needs.

Children and Youth Aged 3 Through 21

IDEA lists different disability categories under which 3-21 year olds may be eligible for services. The disability categories used in North Carolina are:

- Autism;
- Deaf-Blindness;
- Deafness;
- Developmental Delay (ages 3-9 years)
- Hearing Impairment;
- Intellectual Disability;
- Multiple Disabilities;
- Orthopedic Impairment;
- Other Health Impairment;
- Serious Emotional Disability;
- Specific Learning Disability;
- Speech or Language Impairment;
- Traumatic Brain Injury; or
- Visual Impairment (including blindness)



Under IDEA, a child may not be identified as a "child with a disability" primarily because he or she speaks a language other than English and does not speak or understand English well. A child may also not be identified as having a disability just because he or she has not had enough appropriate instruction in math or reading.