

# 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.