

Special Education is a supplementary program that addresses the provision of a free and appropriate education to students with special needs, which includes students with a variety of disabilities that require additional services or assistance in order to make educational progress. Federal and State legislation define the specific disabilities to be served and the services provided to eligible students.

### **Eligibility**

To be eligible for services, a student must have one or more of the disabilities as defined by the Texas Education Agency, and must need specialized services, which cannot be provided through general education alone. Students are eligible from ages 3 through 21. Those with visual or auditory impairments are eligible at birth.

**A Full Individual Evaluation (FIE), including evaluation of language and physical and emotional factors, is done in order to determine eligibility and the need for services. This assessment includes sociological information, individually administered tests of intelligence and educational achievement, and specialized tests of specific areas of concern.**

**Assessments are done by individuals with specialized training and skills in each area of disability. Educational impact is a primary consideration in the determination of whether a student is eligible to receive services. There must also be a clear and specific need.**

### **List of Disabilities**

**The following are specific disabilities that are identified through an evaluation and for which services are provided:**

- **Auditory Impairment (AI)** - a student experiences hearing loss after corrective medical treatment or use of amplification.
- **Visual Impairment (VI)** - a student experiences no vision or a serious visual loss after correction and, as a result, needs specialized services which include a functional vision evaluation and a learning media assessment or adaptive materials.
- **Deaf-Blind (DB)** - a student has a combination of severe hearing and visual losses after the best correction and is eligible both as auditorily impaired and visually impaired.
- **Autism (AU)** - a student has a developmental disability which affects verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, which has been evident before age three, and which adversely affects educational performance; also includes students with pervasive development disorder.
- **Orthopedic Impairment (OI)** - a student has a severe orthopedic impairment.
- **Other Health Impairment (OHI)** - a student who has limited strength, vitality, or alertness due to chronic or acute health problems.
- **Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)** - a student has an injury to the brain caused by an external physical force resulting in total or partial functional disability and/or psychosocial impairment, which impacts educational performance.
- **Learning Disability (LD)** - a student, with average or above average intelligence, performs significantly below their intellectual potential in specific academic skill areas; not caused by visual, hearing, or motor impairment, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. To be eligible, a student must have had appropriate instruction in each area of concern.
- **Speech Impairment (SI)** - a student has difficulty articulating sounds clearly or has vocal problems that interfere with communication and adversely affect educational performance.
- **Intellectual Disability (ID)** - a student is determined to function below a specified level in verbal and performance or nonverbal ability, and who exhibit deficits in adaptive behavior.
- **Emotionally Disturbed (ED)** - a student with a condition which, over a long period of time and to a marked degree, seriously affects educational performance; may be related to an inability to learn not caused by intellectual, sensory, or health factors, or an inability to build or maintain relationships; may

also be inappropriate behaviors, feelings, a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression, or a tendency to develop symptoms or fears related to school.

- **Multiple Disabilities (MD)** - a student has a combination of disabilities that will continue indefinitely and impair performance in psychomotor, self-care, communication, cognition, social, and emotional development.

## Services Provided

Students who are eligible for services through Special Education may have assistance in the general education classroom. The teacher may make instructional accommodations incorporating specialized equipment or materials or provide specialized instruction based on the child's unique educational needs.

For some students, instruction may be provided in a special education classroom, usually a smaller-group setting with specially trained teachers. This may be a short period of instructional time, or may involve much of the day being spent in special education classes. Related services such as counseling, occupational therapy, or physical therapy may be provided if those services are necessary for a student with disabilities to benefit from instruction.

An important component of special education planning is transition beyond school, to work or to appropriate services that will assist the student following completion of public school education. The primary goal is to prepare all students to be as independent as possible.

Special education services are developed through a team effort. This team includes parents, school administrators, teachers, and individuals with specialized knowledge in assessment and those with training in the provision of services to students. An individual program is designed for each student.