

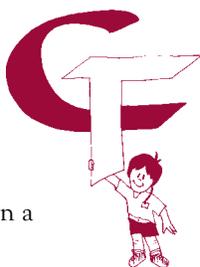


## SECTION ONE

# Key Elements of Special Education

### WHAT IS CHILD FIND?

**CHILD FIND** is a DoDDS program that actively seeks to locate and identify children and youth, ages birth through 21 years of age, who may have developmental delays or educational disabilities and may need special education and related services. Child Find activities, when conducted in the school, may include teacher observations, parent observations, and conferences to discuss your child's strengths and needs. These activities may lead to a formal process designed to further explore ways to assist your child. This process may ultimately result in a recommendation for your child to receive special education services.



If you have a concern about one of your children, you can help this child develop to his or her fullest potential by contacting your local school or the pediatric clinic in your military hospital. They can provide you with information about Child Find and can schedule a screening, if needed.

### WHAT IS SPECIAL EDUCATION?

Special education is any specially designed instruction, support, or equipment a student may need in order to reach his or her fullest potential. These services are available to eligible students, ages 3 through 21 years of age within DoDDS, and may include changes to the education program, commonly known as classroom modifications. A student may also receive services in the general education classroom, a resource room, self-contained class, or other appropriate setting. Special education services provide the additional support or assistance your child may need to be successful.

If your child requires special education services, you will be involved in decisions about what services, instruction, and equipment are to be provided, as well as where these services may take place. DoDDS will ensure that placement is made in the least restrictive environment. This means a student who receives special education services must be placed, to the greatest extent possible, in an educational setting with students his or her own age. Special education and general education are partners with you in this process.

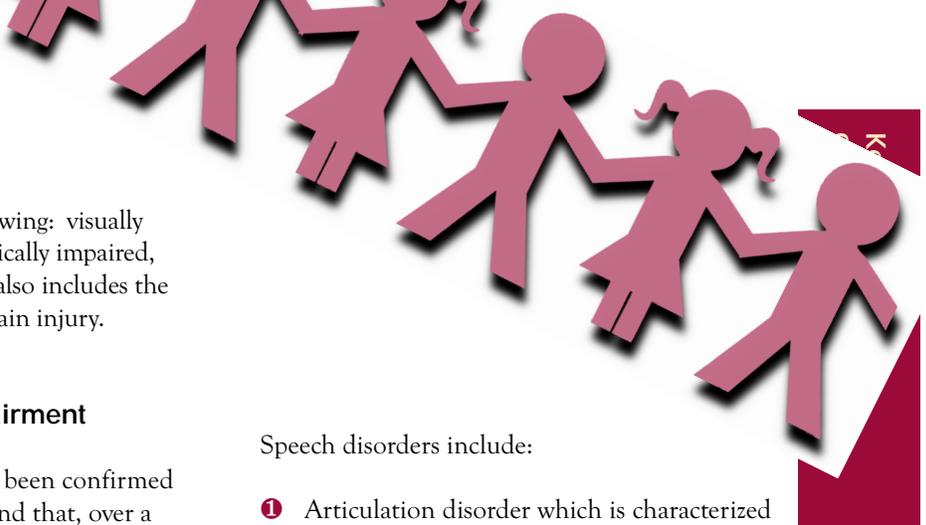
DoDDS special education services are directed by both Federal regulations, P.L. 101-476, "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)," and Department of Defense Instruction, DoDI 1342.12, "Provision of Early Intervention and Special Education Services to Eligible DoD Dependents in Overseas Areas," dated March 12, 1996. These documents ensure that DoDDS personnel and families know who is eligible and what they must do to provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE).

### WHAT ARE THE DISABILITY CATEGORIES?

Listed below are the five disability categories identified by the law that the Case Study Committee will review during the evaluation process to determine if your child is eligible for special education. It is important for you to seek as much information as you need in order to understand the meaning of the disability which may be identified for your child.

#### **CATEGORY A: Physical Impairment**

Students whose educational performance is adversely affected by a physical impairment that requires environmental and/or academic modifications



including, but not limited to, the following: visually impaired, hearing impaired, orthopedically impaired, other health impaired. This category also includes the disabilities of autism and traumatic brain injury.

### **CATEGORY B: Emotional Impairment**

An emotional condition that has been confirmed by clinical evaluation and diagnosis and that, over a long period of time and to a marked degree, adversely affects educational performance and that exhibits one or more of the following characteristics:

- ❶ An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
- ❷ An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
- ❸ Inappropriate types of behavior under normal circumstances.
- ❹ A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.
- ❺ A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.

This includes students who are schizophrenic, but does not include students who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they are seriously emotionally disturbed.

### **CATEGORY C: Communication Impairment**

Students whose educational performance is adversely affected by a developmental or acquired communication disorder to include voice, fluency, articulation, receptive and/or expressive language.

Language disorders are characterized by an impairment/delay in receptive and/or expressive language including semantics, morphology/syntax, phonology and/or pragmatics. This impairment does not include students whose language problems are due to English as a second language or dialect difference.

Speech disorders include:

- ❶ Articulation disorder which is characterized by substitutions, distortions, and/or omissions of phonemes which are not commensurate with expected developmental age norms, which may cause unintelligible conversational speech and are not the result of limited English proficiency or dialect.
- ❷ Fluency disorder which is characterized by atypical rate, rhythm, repetitions, and/or secondary behavior(s) which interferes with communication or is inconsistent with age/development.
- ❸ Voice disorder which is characterized by abnormal pitch, intensity, resonance, duration, and/or quality which is inappropriate for chronological age or gender.

### **CATEGORY D: Learning Impairment**

This category includes two disabilities. They are:

- ❶ Information Processing Deficit - A disorder in a student's ability to effectively use one or more of the cognitive processes (i.e., discrimination, association, retention, reasoning) in the educational environment. The term does not apply to students who have learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation or emotional disturbance or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.
- ❷ Intellectual Deficit - A significantly subaverage intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period that adversely affects a student's educational performance.

## CATEGORY E: Developmental Delay

*The category of developmental delay is specific only to children ages birth through 5* and refers to a condition which represents a significant delay in the process of development. It does not apply to a condition in which a child is slightly or momentarily lagging in development. The presence of a developmental delay is an indication that the developmental processes are significantly impacted and that, without special intervention, it is likely that the educational performance will be affected when the child reaches school age. The five developmental areas which are investigated in this category are:

- ❶ Physical Development;
- ❷ Communication Development;
- ❸ Cognitive Development;
- ❹ Social/Emotional Development; and
- ❺ Adaptive/Self-Help Development.

### WHAT IS AN IEP?

The Individual Education Program (IEP) is the heart of the planning process for the special education student. It is a plan that is developed by you and the other members of the Case Study Committee (CSC) to address your child's strengths and needs. You will meet together to discuss areas of concern and to develop annual goals and short-term instructional objectives based on your child's strengths and current skills. The IEP includes the methods and tools the school will use to determine if your child has made progress in reaching the goals selected by the team. It will include the related services and any classroom modifications or assistive technology needs. The IEP will also include dates when services are expected to begin and end as well as the amount of time the student will participate with other students who do not have special education needs.

The IEP program will go into effect only after you agree to the specific services to be provided and sign the IEP form. The program must be reviewed at least once each year, and may be reviewed by parents and/or school personnel at any time concerns arise.

Remember, the IEP is more than just a written document. It is a planning process in which you are an integral part. You have a great deal of knowledge and information about your child that the other members of the team need in order to plan. It is only when all partners are involved and sharing their information that an effective program can be developed. This partnership is vital to the whole process.

### WHAT ARE RELATED SERVICES?

Related services are specific support services provided to special education students to help them benefit and be successful in their instructional program. The need for these services is assessed through the evaluation process, with the involvement of individuals who have specialized knowledge in the areas of concern. A Case Study Committee (CSC) determines whether the need for a related service exists, based on information from the evaluation. If it is determined there is a need for a specific related service, this service will be included in the IEP.

Related services are provided at no cost to the family and may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ▲ Speech/language therapy
- ▲ Psychological counseling
- ▲ Social work services
- ▲ Audiology
- ▲ Occupational therapy
- ▲ Physical therapy
- ▲ Transportation

For some students, support will also include certain types of assistive technology. Assistive technology is a type of related service which allows for the use of equipment which will aid the student's functioning in his special education program. The need for such assistance is determined through assessment and recommendations from the CSC. The use of such equipment will be entered on the student's IEP.

Your role as parent is very important in determining if related services are necessary for your child. You can help by providing information from medical records, developmental information, and information about your child's family relationships, behavioral patterns, and routines at home.



## WHAT ARE DUE PROCESS PROCEDURES?

“Due Process” is a term used for a legal procedure that seeks to ensure the rights of citizens to be treated fairly. Due process procedures in special education are often used when parents or educational professionals disagree about a child’s identification, evaluation, eligibility, individualized education program (IEP), or placement.

Under Department of Defense Instruction, DoDI 1342.12, “Provision of Early Intervention and Special Education Services to Eligible DoD Dependents in Overseas Areas,” dated March 12, 1996, you have a right to a hearing regarding identification, evaluation, placement, or educational program of your child. If you disagree with the findings of a hearing officer, you may appeal that decision to the Assistant Secretary of Defense.

Another option is **MEDIATION**. This process provides a means by which you and school officials can resolve problems through consensus. It is an informal discussion between parents, school personnel, and an impartial third party. Either parents or DoDDS may initiate mediation.

It is advisable that parents and educators seek other ways to resolve their differences prior to a formal due process hearing or mediation. Some suggestions are offered in the section on “How Do We Resolve Concerns And Problems” in this handbook.