
Appendix seven – The Department's disability criteria (2003)

The Department advises that the following criteria will be replaced with updated criteria from term four, 2024.

Language

Students must have an assessed receptive or expressive language disorder which is documented within a current speech pathologist's report (in general, the report should be less than 12 months old). The report must include the results of at least one relevant standardised language test that allows for the reporting of both receptive and expressive language skills. At least one of the scales (either receptive or expressive) must indicate a standard score of 70 (second per centile) or less. The report must indicate that the disorder significantly affects communication and diminishes the capacity to achieve academically. There must also be documented evidence of the development and delivery of an intensive learning program assisted by a support teacher, or relevant specialist in the prior-to-school setting in the case of a student entering kindergarten. Difficulties in communication and academic achievement must be the direct result of the disorder.

Physical Disability

The student must have a current physical condition involving the motor system that significantly limits the student's level of functioning and independence in mobility, personal care, and/or ability to physically undertake essential learning tasks. A report is required from a specialist medical practitioner, which details the nature of the condition. The educational impact of the condition must not be due to absences from school.

To meet the criteria for severe physical disability there must also be evidence that the student is highly dependent on others for mobility and personal care and requires an augmentative or alternative communication system or constant supervision to avert harm.

Intellectual Disability

To meet criteria for mild intellectual disability, students must have a full-scale IQ score of approximately two to three standard deviations below the mean on an approved individual test of intelligence. There must be information on the assessment of adaptive skills and school performance (where applicable) consistent with, or below this range of scores.

To meet criteria for moderate intellectual disability, students must have a full-scale IQ score of approximately three to four standard deviations below the mean on an approved individual test of intelligence. There must be information on the assessment of adaptive skills and school performance (where applicable) consistent with, or below this range of scores.

To meet criteria for severe intellectual disability students must have a full-scale IQ score of approximately four standard deviations or more below the mean on an approved individual test of intelligence. There must be information on the assessment of adaptive skills and school performance (where applicable) consistent with, or below this range of scores.

Hearing Impairment

Students must have a current audiogram and report from Australian Hearing which indicates a sensorineural or permanent conductive hearing loss of 30 decibels or more in both ears. A report is required from the AP/ET Hearing which outlines an assessment of the student's communication and auditory skills, and describes the educational impact of the student's hearing impairment.

Vision Impairment

Students must have a current diagnosed vision impairment, which details a permanent vision loss that is 6/24 or less in the better eye corrected, or less than 20 degrees field of vision. A report is required from the AP/ET Vision which indicates that the student requires additional support to access the curriculum in alternative formats or with significant modification of materials. There must also be information on the student's ability to access the physical environment and daily living, orientation, mobility and social skills.

Deaf/Blind

Students must have a vision and hearing impairment, both at levels that severely impact on their ability to learn, and which result in unique educational needs. In particular, these students will require an alternative means of communication (generally a tactile system) and/or highly specialised technology to facilitate their communication.

There must also be evidence that the combined impact of the dual sensory impairment requires an intensive educational provision beyond that provided for students solely with hearing or vision impairment, or severe intellectual disability.

Identification of a student as deafblind, for the purpose of specialist provision of educational services, will be undertaken by a team comprising a Co-ordinator Student Counselling and Welfare and a Co-ordinator Special Education, a senior officer from State office with expertise in the area of sensory impairment, and a staff member from Seven Hills School, for Sensory Education (nominated by the principal).

Mental Health Problems

Students must exhibit behaviour(s) that is characteristic of mental health problems at a level of frequency, duration and intensity that seriously affects their educational functioning and emotional well-being. The behaviour(s) must be evident in the home, school and community environments. Students must have a current report from a specialist medical practitioner or registered psychologist with appropriate clinical experience which details the nature of the behaviour(s). There must also be documented evidence of ongoing individual intervention by a mental health practitioner or school counsellor. The school must also provide documentation and evaluation of strategies used to address the student's needs within the school setting.

Autism

Students with autism must have a current report from a specialist medical practitioner or registered psychologist with appropriate clinical experience. The report must detail the nature of the student's disorder. Documented evidence must indicate a developmental disability affecting verbal and non-verbal communication and social interaction, that significantly affects the child's ability to learn. There must be information of a functional assessment consistent with the student's disorder.

General Notes

Where there is evidence that a student has a significant disorder or malfunction that is not adequately described by one or more of the above criteria and the condition is impacting greatly on educational outcomes, the Coordinator Student Counselling and Welfare together with the Coordinator Special Education will consider all available documentation and make a determination on a case by case basis.

When considering support class placement for students with more than one disability, it is important to ensure that the disability having the most significant impact on educational outcomes is addressed and any other disability supported in an appropriate manner.