

Schools Seek Disabled Students

The Alleghany County System Special Education Advisory Committee continues to search for unserved or inadequately served students with disabilities. The Advisory Committee meets four times yearly and advises the school board and superintendent of service concerns. If you would like to contact a member of the Advisory Committee, please call the Alleghany County School Board office at 863-1809.

Both school divisions welcome parents of students with disabilities and other interested citizens. Students with disabilities are entitled to a free public education which is appropriate to their needs. Although testing by the school systems is available for children below the age of two, direct services are enlisted from other providers at this time. Primary service providers for the 0-2 population with disabilities are those of Project Impact which is under the jurisdiction of Mental Retardation Services of the Community Services Board.

Not all students with disabilities need special education and related services. Special education testing and programming are necessary when the disability interferes with learning. Listed are types of disabling conditions which may unfavorably affect learning.

Intellectually Disability

(A) The definition formerly known as “mental retardation” means significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period that adversely affects a child’s education performance.

Multiple Disabilities

“Multiple disabilities” means simultaneous impairments (such as intellectual disability with blindness, intellectual disability with orthopedic impairment), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. The term does not include deaf-blindness.

Orthopedic Impairment

“Orthopedic impairment” means a severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child’s educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by congenital anomaly, impairments caused by disease (e.g., poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis, etc.), and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contractures).

Visual Impairment

“Visual impairment” means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child’s educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.

Hearing Impairment

“Hearing impairment” means an impairment in hearing in one or both ears, with or without amplification, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance but that is not included under the definition of “deafness”.

Specific Learning Disability

“Specific learning disability” means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

Specific learning disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; of intellectual disabilities; of emotional disabilities; of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. Dyslexia is distinguished from other learning disabilities due to its weakness occurring at the phonological level. Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

Emotional Disability

“Emotional disability” means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child’s educational performance;

1. An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors;
2. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers;
3. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances;
4. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or
5. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with the personal or school problems.

Emotional disability includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disability as defined in this section.

Speech or Language Impairment

“Speech or language impairment” means a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, expressive or receptive language impairment, or voice impairment that adversely affects a child’s educational performance..

Other Health Impairments

“Other health impairments” means having limited strength, vitality, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, and sickle cell anemia and Tourette syndrome that adversely affects a child’s educational performance..

Deafness

“Deafness” means a hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, that adversely affects the child’s educational performance.

Deaf-blindness

“Deaf-blindness” means simultaneous hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.

Autism

“Autism” means a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual response to sensory experiences. Autism does not apply if a child’s educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance. A child who manifests the characteristics of autism after age three could be identified as having autism if the criteria in this definition are satisfied.

Traumatic Brain Injury

“Traumatic brain injury” means an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance. Traumatic brain injury applies to open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as cognition, language,

memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem-solving, sensory, perceptual and motor abilities, psychosocial behavior, physical functions, information processing, and speech. Traumatic brain injury does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or to brain injuries induced by birth trauma.

Developmental Delay

“Developmental delay” means a disability affecting a child age two by September 30 through six, inclusive:

- 1: (i) Who is experiencing developmental delays, as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures, in one or more of the following areas: physical development, cognitive development, communication development, social or emotional development or adaptive development, or (ii) who has an established physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay.
2. The delay(s) is not primarily a result of cultural factors, environmental or economic disadvantages, or limited English proficiency; and
3. The presence of one or more documented characteristics of the delay has an adverse affect on educational performance and makes it necessary for the student to have specially designed instruction to access and make progress in the general education activities for this age group.

Visual Impairment including Blindness

“Visual impairment including blindness” means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child’s educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.

Related Services

“Related services” means transportation, and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education and includes speech-language, pathology, and audiology services; interpreting and transliterating, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation, including therapeutic recreation; early identification and assessment of disabilities in children; counseling services, including rehabilitation and psychological counseling; orientation and mobility services; medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes; school health services; social work services in schools; and parent counseling and training.

Occupational Therapy

“Occupational therapy” means services provided by a qualified occupational therapist or services provided under the direction of supervision of a qualified occupational therapist and includes:

- 1) Improving developing, or restoring functions impaired or lost through illness, injury, or deprivation; 2) Improving ability to perform tasks for independent functioning when functions are impaired or lost; and 3) Preventing, through early intervention, initial or further impairment or loss of function.

Physical Therapy

“Physical therapy” means services provided by a qualified physical therapist upon medical referral and direction.

Psychological Counseling

Counseling performed by a qualified psychologist, licensed therapist, or school guidance counselor in order to enhance education.

Available in Allegheny County School System/Covington City School System are special education programs and related services to provide appropriate educational plans to students with the previously listed disabling conditions. All services are provided at public expense. Parents, guardians, or other interested citizens are encouraged to refer for screening and/or testing any child from birth through 21 who they suspect of having a disability and in need of special education and related services. These services are also available to children who are district residents who are currently in private schools. The importance of early intervention in regard to a student with disabilities cannot be overstated.

Early warning signs of possible disabilities include the following examples:

1. Delayed in the development of speech and or language which are significantly greater than normal.
2. Delays in gross motor function. Apparent inability to turn over, sit erectly, pull-up, crawl and walk at 6 months, 18 months respectively.
3. Delays in fine motor control. Extreme difficulty with puzzle pieces, cutting, zipping, snapping, following forms and lines at age 3, 4, 5, and 6.
4. Inappropriate behavior that greatly exceeds normal amounts of misbehavior for age or pervasive sadness, difficulty with authority figures, with peers and other relationships that is evidenced over a long period of time.
5. At school age. Difficulties with developmental academic tasks that adversely affect the ability to read, write, communicate and perform arithmetic calculations.
6. Sensory indicators include:
Apparent failure to detect certain sounds or to see with desired perception.

Information will be provided in the person’s native language or primary mode of communication as appropriate. Please contact the special education office if information is needed in a language other than English. Referrals may be made to the child’s school if applicable or to the Special Education Offices of the Allegheny County School System and the Covington City School System. The number for referral is 863-1809 (Allegheny County Public Schools) or you may contact the principal at any of the division schools.