

Learning Disabilities (LD)

"Learning disabilities" has become a general term for a variety of specific disabilities including dyslexia, developmental aphasia, dysgraphia or perceptually impaired, expressive dysgraphia and oral receptive dysphasia. A common misconception among those not familiar with learning disabilities is that the student with learning disability is retarded. The learning disabled student is not retarded or developmentally disabled.

The learning disabled student's needs center around information processing. Students with learning disabilities have trouble taking information in through one or more of the senses and expressing that information accurately. The information often gets "scrambled". The students may have difficulty with discriminating differences between two like sounds, symbols or objects. Because the information may not reach the brain accurately, the brain often does not do a good job of storing the information. The results appear to be poor memory. Thus, it is important that the learning disabled students receive and transmit information in a format that works best for them.

Learning disabilities are neurologically-based conditions that interfere with the acquisition, storage organization and use of skills and knowledge. They are identified by deficits in academic functioning and in processing memory, auditory, visual and linguistic information. The diagnosis of a learning disability in an adult requires documentation of at least average intellectual functioning along with a deficit in one or more of the following areas:

- auditory processing
- visual processing
- information processing speed
- abstract and general reasoning
- memory (long-term, short-term, visual, auditory)
- spoken and written language skills
- reading skills
- mathematical skills
- visual spatial skills
- motor skills
- executive functioning (planning)

Some considerations:

- A learning disability is not a disorder that a student "grows out of." It is a permanent disorder affecting how students with normal or above-average intelligence process incoming information, outgoing information or both.
- Learning disabilities are often inconsistent. They may be manifested in only one specific academic area, such as math or foreign language. There might be problems in grade school, none in high school and again in college.
- Learning disabilities are not the same as mental retardation or emotional disorders.
- Common accommodations for students with learning disabilities are alternative print formats, taped lectures, note-takers, alternative ways of completing assignments, course substitutions, early syllabus, exam modifications and study skills and strategies training.

Instructional Strategies

Learning disabilities often require instructional strategies similar to those listed for disorders of attention. The use of such strategies will depend on how the disability is manifested.

Documentation for this disability, as with all disabilities, is required before services can be provided.