

The Lancaster County School System offers a variety of free special education programs serving children from age 2 through 21. To locate those who are suspected of having a disability, the school system conducts an annual Child Find Campaign. Children with a disability who turn two on or before September 30, and who have not reached their 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday by that date, can be considered for these programs.

Disabilities which may adversely affect a child's educational progress include the following:

- Developmental delay among children ages 2 through 6 who experience a significant delay in physical, cognitive, communication, social, emotional, or adaptive development.
- Autism is a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social integration, generally evident before age 3. Other characteristics are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or changes in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences.
- Deaf-blindness
- Deafness so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification.
- Hearing impairment, whether permanent or fluctuating.
- Intellectual Disability: means the definition formerly known as "mental retardation" and means significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period that adversely affects a child's educational performance.
- 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; including those caused by congenital anomaly, disease and other causes such as cerebral palsy.
- Other Health impairment, such as limited strength, vitality, or alertness due to chronic or acute health problems.
- Emotional disability; with one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree: an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; an inability to build and maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; inappropriate behavior or feelings; a pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression or a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted unless other serious emotional disturbances exist.
- Specific learning disability, a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, that may manifest in an imperfect ability to listen, write, spell, or do math calculations.

- Speech and Language impairment, a communication disorder such as stuttering, impaired articulation, language or voice.
- Traumatic brain injury, an injury to the brain caused by an external physical force resulting in total or partial functional disability, psycho-social impairment, or both. This can apply to head injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or brain injuries induced by birth trauma.
- Visual impairment

Early warning signs of these disabilities include delays in reaching developmental milestones in early childhood such as trouble sitting, standing, walking, talking, seeing, hearing, learning or paying attention. Early intervention helps children with disabilities have a better chance to develop.

Special services for identifying and treating children suspected of having disabilities are free and available through Lancaster County public schools. In order to identify and place a child with a disability, the county follows an evaluation process. A child is referred by a teacher, parent, physician, or outside agency to a special education administrator and/or child study committee which then gathers information about the child from teachers and the person who made the referral.

The committee reviews the information and determines if there is a need to have a formal evaluation and if so, written consent is sought from the parent/guardian. Parents are informed of their rights and procedural safeguards including due process. A formal evaluation, which is free to the parents, may include educational and psychological assessments, medical and social histories, vision and hearing screenings, and speech and language screening. A committee, including parents and school personnel meet to consider the results of the evaluations. If a child meets eligibility criteria, then a free appropriate public education of special services is provided.

Those who think they may know a child with a disability should phone Beverly Oliver, Coordinator of Special Education, at 435-1681.