



Practitioners' Task Force On Adults With Learning Disabilities

WHAT IS A LEARNING DISABILITY?

"A learning disability is a permanent information-processing disorder that affects the manner in which individuals with average to above average intelligence learn. LD causes deficits in areas such as reading, mathematics and written language that are due to a central nervous system dysfunction. Learning disabilities occur regardless of gender, race, or ethnic origin and are not the result of poor academic background, mental retardation or emotional disorders."

Source: U.S. Office of Education

CHARACTERISTICS OF A LEARNING DISABILITY

- Has difficulty adopting routines
- Reads well but does not write well, or visa-versa
- Has a short attention span, is impulsive, and/or easily distracted
- Has difficulty telling or understanding jokes
- Misinterprets subtleties in language
- Finds it difficult to memorize information
- Has difficulty following a schedule, being on time, or meeting deadlines
- Gets lost easily, driving or in large buildings
- Has trouble reading maps
- Often misreads or miscopies information
- Confuses/reverses similar numbers or letters
- Has difficulty reading the newspaper, following small print, or following columns
- Is able to explain things orally, but not in writing
- Has difficulty writing ideas on paper
- When writing, reverses or omits letters, words, or phrases
- Has difficulty completing job applications
- Has persistent problems with sentence structure, writing mechanics, and organizing written work
- Experiences problems spelling the same word differently in one document
- Has trouble dialing phone numbers and reading addresses
- Has difficulty with math, math language, and math concepts
- Has difficulty balancing a checkbook
- Has difficulty following multiple directions
- Is poorly coordinated
- Is unable to tell you what has just been said
- Hears sounds, words, or sentences incorrectly

Source: The American Council on Education and the National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Accommodations refer to adjustments that are made, in either instruction or assessment, that enable adults with documented learning disabilities to fully participate in an academic setting. There should be a natural flow between instruction and periods of assessment. Most accommodations can be made with little or no expense, and ideally provided within 30-45 days. It is also recommended that a 504 Plan be developed to address the student's need for accommodations and maintained with the student's documentation.

SAMPLE ACCOMMODATIONS

Presentation:

- Repeating directions for student
- Revised work sheets
- Audiotapes
- Large print/Braille
- Fewer paragraphs or math problems
- Visual aids (i.e., arrows, highlighted text)

Response:

- Use larger-spaced answer sheets
- Dictate answers to teacher
- Use of a scribe/interpreter
- Response in alternate format
- Use of a calculator

Setting:

- Locate student near minimal distractions
- Small group instruction
- Improved lighting or acoustics

Timing/Scheduling:

- Flexible scheduling
- Extended time to complete tasks
- Frequent breaks
- Change the order of tasks

Source: Creating a Statewide Delivery System for Adults with Learning Disabilities in Florida. The Interagency Writing Team on Adults with Learning Disabilities, 2005