

# MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS VS. EDUCATIONAL ELIGIBILITY



## Understanding the Difference

These terms are similar, but they serve different purposes.



| MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS                                                       |  | EDUCATIONAL ELIGIBILITY                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Made by a healthcare provider                                           |  | Determined by the eligibility team                                     |
| Based on clinical diagnostic criteria                                   |  | Based on IDEA eligibility criteria                                     |
| Helps guide medical treatment                                           |  | Determines eligibility for special education services                  |
| Can include medication or therapy recommendations                       |  | Can include specially designed instruction and school services         |
| Can be made outside of school                                           |  | Determined through a comprehensive school evaluation                   |
| Does NOT automatically qualify a student for special education services |  | Requires both eligibility criteria AND a demonstrated educational need |

IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW

- ✓ A student can have a medical diagnosis but not qualify for special education.
- ✓ A medical diagnosis is not required for a student to qualify under many IDEA eligibility categories.
- ✓ Schools consider how a disability affects educational performance.
- ✓ Medical information is valuable and is considered as part of the evaluation process.

COMMON EXAMPLES

| MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS        | POSSIBLE EDUCATIONAL ELIGIBILITY* |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Dyslexia                 | Specific Learning Disability      |
| ADHD                     | Other Health Impairment           |
| Autism Spectrum Disorder | Autism                            |
| Cerebral Palsy           | Orthopedic Impairment             |
| Hearing Loss             | Deaf or Hard of Hearing           |

*\*Educational eligibility criteria vary by state and are determined by the eligibility team.*

IMPORTANT REMINDER

Medical records, physician reports, and outside evaluations provide valuable information and are carefully considered as part of the comprehensive evaluation process. However, educational eligibility decisions are made by the eligibility team using multiple sources of data and IDEA eligibility criteria.

### HOW IS ELIGIBILITY DETERMINED?

