

## DEFINITIONS OF FREQUENTLY USED SPECIAL EDUCATION TERMS

**ACHIEVEMENT TEST** A test that measures a student's level of development in academic areas such as math, reading, and spelling.

**ACTIVITY CENTER** A day program where staff members assist adults with disabilities with activities emphasizing community skill training (e.g., learning to grocery shop and vocational skill development).

**ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR** The extent to which an individual is able to adjust to and to apply skills to new environments, tasks, objects, and people.

**ADAPTIVE PHYSICAL EDUCATION** A physical education program that has been modified to meet the specific needs of a student with disabilities.

**ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW** A review process whereby disagreements between parents and school systems may be resolved by a committee of school system individuals not directly involved with the case. Also called a conciliatory conference.

**ADULT DAY PROGRAMS** Programs in which adults with disabilities receive training in daily living skills, social skills, recreational skills, and "pre-vocational" skills.

**ADVOCACY** Speaking or acting on behalf of another individual or group to bring about that change.

**ADVOCATE** A person who speaks or acts knowledgeably on behalf of another individual or group to bring about change.

**AGED OUT (AGING OUT)** Refers to students with special needs who have reached the maximum age limit mandated in their state for special education and related services.

**AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)** An anti-discrimination law giving individuals with disabilities civil right protection similar to those rights given to all people on the basis of race, sex, national origin, or religion.

**ANNUAL GOAL** Statement describing the anticipated growth of a student's skill and knowledge written into a student's yearly IEP.

**ANNUAL REVIEW** A meeting held at least once a year to look at, talk about, and study a student's IEP. The purpose of the review is to make decisions about changes in the IEP, review the placement, and develop a new IEP for the year ahead.

**APPROPRIATE** In free, appropriate public education provided by IDEA, 'appropriate' refers to an educational plan that meets the individual needs of a student with disabilities.

**APTITUDE TEST** A test that measures an individual's potential in a specific skill area such as clerical speed, numerical ability, or abstract thinking.

**ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY** Any item, piece of equipment, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of children with disabilities e.g., communication boards, a touch screen, or tape record books.

**AT RISK** Term used to describe children who are considered likely to have difficulties

because of home life circumstances, medical difficulties at birth, or other factors, and who may need early intervention services to prevent future difficulties.

**AUDIOLOGIST** A professional, non medical specialist, who measures hearing levels and evaluates hearing loss.

**AUDITORY DISCRIMINATION** The ability to identify and distinguish among different speech sounds e.g., the difference between the sound of "o" in *boot* and in *look*.

**AUTISM** A developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three.

**BEHAVIOR DISORDERS (BD)** Disorders characterized by disruptive behavior in school, home, and other settings. They can include attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), conduct disorder, difficulty learning, and inability to establish satisfactory relationships with others. Such behavior is considered inappropriate, excessive, chronic, and abnormal..

**BEHAVIORAL OBSERVATION** A systematic way of observing, recording, and interpreting the behavior of a student as he/she works on the job in order to gain a broad picture of the student's interests and abilities. Part of a vocational assessment.

**BLIND (BLINDNESS)** Complete loss of sight. Educationally, individuals who are severely visually impaired, or have no vision and must learn to read by Braille, are considered blind.

**BUCKLEY AMENDMENT** More commonly known name for the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974. The law gives parents and students (over age 18) the right to see, correct, and control access to school records.

**CAREER EDUCATION** A progression of activities intended to help students acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that make work a meaningful part of life. Career education has four stages: 1. Awareness/orientation, 2. Exploration, 3. Preparation including vocational education, and, 4. Job placement/follow up.

**CARL D. PERKINS VOCATIONAL AND APPLIED TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION ACT (1990)**  
A federal law stipulating that students with disabilities be guaranteed the opportunity to participate in federally funded vocational programs that are equal to those afforded to the general student population.

**CHILD FIND** A state and local program mandated by IDEA to identify individuals with disabilities between the ages of birth and twenty one and to direct them to appropriate early intervention or educational programs.

**CHILD STUDY TEAM OR SCREENING COMMITTEE** A local school based committee, whose members determine if a student should be evaluated for special education eligibility.

**COGNITION** A term that describes the process people use for remembering, reasoning, understanding, and judgment.

**COMMUNICATION DISORDER** A general term for any language and/or speech impairment.

**COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION** Activities by a person with disabilities within the community which contribute to the well being and improvement of that community, such as volunteering at the hospital, planting trees, serving on the board of a non profit agency.

**COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT** Everyday jobs with wages at the going rate in the open labor market. Jobs can be either on a part time or full time basis.

**COMPLIANCE FILE** School records containing all reports of meetings, correspondence, and other contacts between parents and school officials.

**CONFIDENTIAL FILE** A file having restricted access and containing records of a child's evaluation and other materials related to special education (medical reports, independent evaluations, reports of eligibility meetings, etc.)

**CONFIDENTIALITY** The limited access to a child or family's records to personnel having direct involvement with the child.

**CONGENITAL** A term referring to a condition present or existing at birth.

**CONSENT** Parental permission, usually given by signing a letter or form, agreeing to let the schools take an action which affects a child's education. Consent is required before a child can be evaluated or receive special education services under **IDEA**.

**CONTRACT SERVICES** Services provided to students with disabilities by private service providers (private schools, institutions, therapists, etc.) when the school system is unable to provide the needed service.

**CUMULATIVE FILE** A file containin report cards, standardized achievement test scores, teacher reports, and other records of a student's school progress.

**DEAF (DEAFNESS)** A hearing impairment so severe that an individual can not process sounds even with amplification such as hearing aids.

**DEAF-BLIND** A combination of visual and hearing impairments causing such severe communication and other developmental and educational problems that a child can not adequately served in a special education program solely for deaf or blind children.

**DEVELOPMENTAL** Having to do with the steps or stages ingrowth and development before the age of 18.

**DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY** Term used to describe slower than normal development of an infant or child in one or more areas.

**DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY (DD)** Any severe disability, mental and/or physical, which is present before an individual becomes eighteen years old, which substantiall limits his activities, is likely to continue indefinitely, and requires life long care, treatment, or other services. Examples of developmental disabilities include Downs Syndrome, autism, and cerebral palsy.

**DISABILITY** A problem or condition which makes it hard for a student to learn or do things in the same way as most other students. A disability may be short term or permanent.

**DUE PROCESS** A system of procedures ensuring that an individual will be notified of, and have opportunity to contest, decisions made about him. As it pertains to early intervention (Part H) and special education (Part B) of IDEA, due process refers to the legal right to appeal any decision regarding any portion of the process (evaluation, eligibility, **IEP**, or **IFSP**, placement, etc.)

**DUE PROCESS HEARING** A formal session conducted by an impartial hearing officer to resolve special education disagreements between parents and school systems.

**EARLY INTERVENTION** Providing programs and services to infants and toddlers (under age

three) with disabilities in order to minimize or eliminate the disability as they mature.

**EDUCATION OF THE HANDICAPPED ACT (EHA)** Enacted in 1975 EHA is the forerunner of **IDEA** which was enacted in 1990.

**EDUCATIONAL ADVOCATE** An individual who speaks or acts knowledgeably for the educational needs of another.

**EDUCATIONAL DIAGNOSTICIAN** A professional who is certified to conduct educational assessments and to design instructional programs for students.

**ELIGIBILITY** The determination of whether or not a child qualifies to receive early intervention or special education services based on meeting established criteria.

**EMOTIONAL DISORDERS (ED)** Disorders characterized by their effect on an individual's emotional state. They may cause anxiety, such as separation anxiety, phobias, and post traumatic stress disorder. Other emotional disorders are affective or mood disorders, such as childhood depression, or bi-polar disorder.

**EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS** Personal habits and traits such as cleanliness, dependability, and punctuality that are necessary for successful employment sometimes called "work adjustment skills".

**EVALUATION** The process of collecting information about a student's learning needs through a series of individual tests, observation, and talks with the student, the family, and others. Also, the process of obtaining detailed information about an infant or toddler's developmental levels and needs for services. May also be called **Assessment**.

**EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE** The ability to communicate through speech, writing, augmentative communication, or gestures.

**EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR** Special education provided during summer months to students found to require year round services to receive an appropriate education.

**FAMILY CARE** Care provided by individuals who are licensed by the state to provide family-like settings for adults with disabilities.

**FINE MOTOR SKILLS** Body movements which are used for small movements like picking up an object, writing or eating.

**FREE APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION (FAPE)** The words used in **IDEA** (Federal Law) to describe a student's right to a special education program that will meet his or her individual special learning needs at no cost to the family.

**GENERAL EDUCATION DIPLOMA (GED)** A method for obtaining a diploma for adults who did not complete high school. GED test, which measure achievement in writing skills, social studies, science, literature, and mathematics, enable individuals to demonstrate that they have acquired a level of learning comparable to that of traditional high school graduates.

**GROSS MOTOR SKILLS** Body skills which use large muscles; for example sitting, walking, or climbing, jumping.

**HABILITATION** The process of helping an individual develop specific skills and abilities in order to become as independent and productive as possible.

**HANDICAPPED CHILDREN'S PROTECTION ACT** The law providing for reasonable attorney's fees to parents who win their cases in administrative proceedings under IDEA.

**HARD OF HEARING** Impaired hearing which can be corrected sufficiently with a hearing aid to enable an individual to hear and process sounds.

**HEARING IMPAIRED** This term includes both individuals who are deaf and who are hard of hearing. The difference between deafness and hard of hearing is defined by the amount of hearing loss.

**HOMEBASED SERVICES** Early intervention services provided to a child and family in their own home.

**HOMEBOUND INSTRUCTION** Educational instruction given in a student's home when he is unable to attend school for medical or other reasons.

**IMPARTIAL HEARING OFFICER** Individual presiding over a due process hearing, appointed by the state education agency, and not connected in any way with either party in a dispute.

**INCLUSION** Ensuring that necessary supports and services are provided so that children with disabilities can participate with children who do not have disabilities in school, community, and recreation activities.

**INDEPENDENT EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION** An evaluation/assessment of a student conducted by one or more professionals not employed by the school system. The person(s) doing the evaluation must be fully trained and qualified to do the kind of testing required.

**INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS** Basic skills needed by people with disabilities to function on their own, with as little help as possible. Skills include self-help (e.g., oral hygiene, bathing, dressing), housekeeping, community living (e.g., using public transportation, shopping).

**INDIVIDUALIZED DETERMINATION PLAN** A plan written for each student who receives services, modifications, and accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. In some schools it is referred to as the 504 Plan.

**INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN (IEP)** A written plan for each student in special education describing the student's present levels of performance, annual goals including short term objectives, specific special education and related services, dates for beginning and duration of services, and how the IEP will be evaluated.

**INDIVIDUALIZED FAMILY SERVICE PLAN (IFSP)** A written statement for each infant or toddler receiving early intervention services that includes goals and outcomes for the child and family. It also includes a plan for making the transition to services for children over age 2.

**INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA)** The authorizing federal legislation which mandates a free, appropriate public education for all children with disabilities. Formerly known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. Part B of the act refers to special education services for children age three through twenty one. Part refers to the early intervention program for infants and toddlers with disabilities from birth through age two and their families.

**INFANT STIMULATION** A program designed to provide specific activities that encourage growth in developmental areas such as movement, speech and language, etc., in infants with developmental delays.

**INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT (IQ)** A measurement of thinking (cognitive) ability that compares an individual with others in his age group.

**INTERAGENCY COORDINATING COUNCIL (ICC)** Federal, state, or local group consisting of parents, advocates and professionals who serve in an advisory capacity to plan and implement early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.

**INTERMEDIATE CARE FACILITY** Licensed facilities operating under strict regulations and providing intensive support for people with disabilities in the areas of personal care, communication, behavior management, etc.

**ITINERANT TEACHER** A teacher who provides services to students in a variety of locations.

**JOB COACH** A service agency professional who works with an individual with disabilities at the job site, providing support by helping the employee to improve job skills, interpersonal relationships, or any job related needs.

**LEAD AGENCY** State agency which has been designated by the governor to administer and implement a statewide comprehensive, coordinated, multidisciplinary, interagency service delivery system for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.

**LEARNING DISABILITY** A disorder in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, resulting in difficulty with listening, thinking, speaking, writing, spelling, or doing mathematical calculations. This term does not include children with learning problems related to other disabilities such as mental retardation.

**LEARNING STYLE** The unique way that an individual learns best, for example, by playing games, imitating, reading a book, listening to a lecture, or handling materials. Most children learn through a combination of processes.

**LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT (LRE)** Placement of a student with disabilities in a setting that allows maximum contact with students who do not have disabilities, while appropriately meeting the student's special education needs.

**LEGALLY BLIND** An individual is considered to be legally blind if his vision, even with corrective lenses, is 20/200 or less, which means being able to see at 20 feet what a person with normal vision sees at 200 feet.

**MAINSTREAMING** The concept that students with disabilities should be educated with non disabled students to the maximum extent possible.

**MAJOR LIFE ACTIVITY** Such activities as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, learning, and working.

**MEDIATION** A formal intervention between parents and personnel of early intervention or school systems to achieve reconciliation, settlement, or compromise.

**MEDICAID** A federal/state program that provides medical services primarily to individuals with low incomes.

**MENTAL RETARDATION** A broad term describing delayed intellectual development resulting in delays in other areas such as academic learning, communication, social skills, rate of maturation, and physical coordination.

**MINIMUM COMPETENCY** In order to receive a regular high school diploma, many states require students to pass a minimum competency test, demonstrating their academic skills to be at a state defined level of achievement.

**MULTIDISCIPLINARY EVALUATION** The testing of a child by a group of professionals including psychologists, teachers, social workers, speech therapists, nurses, etc.

**MULTIPLE DISABILITIES** An educational label given to students having a combination of impairments such as mental retardation and blindness or orthopedic impairments and deafness which cause such educational problems that they can not be accommodated in programs for any one impairment. This term does not involve deaf-blind children.

**NATURAL HOMES** Places that are generally thought of as dwellings for people, such as apartments, houses, townhouses, trailers.

**NON-CATEGORICAL** Term relating to programs based on instructional needs rather than on categories of disabilities. Many states have only non-categorical programs.

**NONDISCRIMINATORY EVALUATION** An evaluation in which the materials and procedures used are not racially or culturally biased. In addition, an individual's disability must be accommodated such as by allowing more time, using a computer etc.

**OBJECTIVE** An objective is a short term step taken to reach an annual goal. **IEP** objectives are the steps taken between a student's present level of performance and an annual goal.

**OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY (OT)** Activities focusing on fine motor skills and perceptual abilities that assist in improving physical, social, psychological, and or intellectual development.

**ON THE JOB TRAINING (OTJ)** Short term training that enables a person to work on a job site while learning the job duties.

**ORTHOPEDIC IMPAIRMENT** A physical disability severe enough to affect a child's educational performance. Orthopedic impairments can be congenital, or caused by disease or injury.

**OTHER HEALTH IMPAIRMENT(OHI)** Term used in **IDEA** to describe conditions that adversely affect a child's educational performance and are not covered by other disability definitions, for example Mental Retardation or Learning Disabilities. This term is frequently used for various medical conditions such as a heart condition, diabetes, cystic fibrosis or leukemia.

**PHYSICAL THERAPY** Activities or routines designed to increase gross motor skills.

**PLACEMENT** The setting in which a child with disabilities is educated, Placement includes the school, the classroom, related services, community based services, and the amount of time a student will spend with peers and others who do not have disabilities.

**POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION** Education programs for students who have completed high school, such as community and junior colleges, four year colleges, and universities.

**PSYCHIATRIST** A medical doctor with advanced training in the diagnosis, treatment, and pharmaceutical (drug) management of emotional, behavioral, and mental disorders.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION** The portion of a child's overall evaluation/assessment for special education that tests his or her general aptitudes and abilities, eye-hand coordination, social skills, emotional development, and thinking skills.

**PSYCHOLOGIST** A mental health professional, not a medical doctor, with advanced training in psychological testing. School psychologists conduct various evaluations including aptitude

and ability tests, and may work with students, classroom teachers, parents, and school administrators on behavior assessments and behavior management programs.

**REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION** The modification of programs in ways that permit students with disabilities to participate in educational programs that receive federal funding. The concept also applies to the modification of job requirements and equipment for workers with disabilities.

**RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE** The process of receiving and understanding written, gestured, or spoken language.

**REFERRAL** A formal notification to the early intervention system or local school that a child is experiencing difficulties which may require a full evaluation for early intervention or special education. A referral may be made by a family member, teacher, or other professional.

**REHABILITATION ACT AMENDMENTS OF 1992** Federal legislation that requires state vocational rehabilitation agencies to work cooperatively with local agencies, including schools to create a unified system to serve people with disabilities.

**REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 (SECTION 504)** A nondiscrimination statute. Section 504 of the Act stipulates that individuals with disabilities may not be excluded from participating in programs and services receiving federal funds. It also prohibits job discrimination against people with disabilities in any program receiving federal financial assistance.

**RELATED SERVICES** Those services a student must receive to benefit from special education. Some examples are transportation, social work services, and occupational therapy.

**RESIDENTIAL SERVICES** The placement of a student in a setting that provides educational instructional and 24 hour care.

**RESOURCE ROOM** A setting in a school where a student receives instruction for a part of the school day from a special education teacher.

**SCREENING** A brief examination of a child designed to pick up potential difficulties and to identify children who need further evaluation and diagnosis.

**SCREENING COMMITTEE** A local school based committee, whose members determine if a student should be fully evaluated for special education eligibility.

**SELF ADVOCACY** The abilities required to take primary responsibility for one's life and to make choices regarding one's actions free from undo interference. Also called self determination.

**SELF CONTAINED CLASSROOM** A classroom in which a group of students with disabilities receive their entire instructional program with little or no interaction with nondisabled students.

**SERVICES COORDINATOR** Someone who acts as a coordinator of a child's and family's services and works in partnership with the family and other service providers.

**SHELTERED WORKSHOP** A work setting in which employees with disabilities do contract work, usually on a piece-rate basis, such as preparing bulk mailings or refinishing furniture.

**SOCIAL WORKER** A mental health professional who may provide services to the family including: arranging or attending parent-student conferences; providing family counseling, family education, information and referral writing social developmental histories; conducting behavioral assessments. Social workers sometimes conduct parent education in the school

and community.

**SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY** The portion of a child's overall evaluation/assessment for special education that describes a child's background and behavior at home and at school. It is usually completed by a social worker.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION** Specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, as defined in **IDEA**.

**SPECIAL NEEDS** A term to describe a child who has disabilities, chronic illness, or is at risk for developing disabilities and who needs educational services or other special treatment in order to progress.

**SPECIALIZED NURSING HOME** Licensed facility operating under strict regulations and providing intensive support for people with disabilities in the areas of personal care, communication, behavior management, etc.

**SPEECH IMPAIRED** A communication disorder involving poor or abnormal production of the sounds of language.

**SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST** A professional who evaluates and develops programs for individuals with speech or language problems.

**SPEECH THERAPY** Activities or routines designed to improve and increase communication skills.

**STANDARDIZED TESTS** In a vocational assessment, standardized tests are used to predict how a student is likely to perform in jobs calling for certain interests and skills.

**SUBSTANTIALLY LIMITS (A MAJOR LIFE ACTIVITY)** Refers to a disability that restricts the conditions, manner, or duration under which activities can be performed in comparison to most people, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

**SUPERVISED LIVING ARRANGEMENTS** Homes or apartments for persons with disabilities that are managed by public or private agencies. Paid staff supervise the residents and assist them with budgeting, food preparation, transportation, etc.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME (SSI)** A federal program administered through the Social Security Administration that provides payments to individuals who are elderly and/or have disabilities. Children may be eligible for SSI if they have disabilities and are from families with low income. In addition, children who are hospitalized for 30 days or more and have a disability expected to last 12 months or more may receive SSI.

**SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT** Paid employment for workers with disabilities in settings with people who are not disabled. A job coach provides support by helping the employee to improve job skills, interpersonal relations, or any other job related needs.

**TRADE & TECHNICAL SCHOOLS** Schools which prepare students for employment in recognized occupations (as compared to professions) such as secretary, heating technician, beautician, plumber, welder, carpenter.

**TRANSITION** The process of moving from one situation to another. Frequently used to mean moving from preschool to elementary school or elementary school to high school.

**TRANSITION COORDINATOR** School personnel chosen to manage transition services for students with disabilities.

**TRANSITION PLANNING** Careful preparation by the student, parents, educators, and other service providers, for the time when the student leaves high school. The plan is written in the **IEP**.

**TRANSITION PLANNING TEAM** The people who are involved in transition planning for a student, including the student, parents and school personnel, and adult service agency representatives.

**TRANSITION SERVICES** A coordinated set of activities for a student that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.

**TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT** A relatively short term program designed to help an individual obtain a job, or to develop the work habits and learn the skills needed for a particular job.

**TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY** An acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force causing a disability which affects a child's educational performance e.g., motor abilities cognition, language.

**TRIENNIAL REVIEW** Every three years, a student in special education must be given a completely new evaluation/assessment to determine the student's progress and to make a new determination of eligibility for continued special education services.

**VISUAL MOTOR INTEGRATION** The extent to which an individual can coordinate vision with body movements or parts of the body; e.g. being able to copy an assignment from the blackboard.

**VISUALLY IMPAIRED** Having a mild to severe vision disorder, which adversely affects a child's educational performance.

**VOCATIONAL ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION** A systematic process of evaluating an individual's skills, aptitudes, and interests as they relate to job preparation and choice. Assessments include work sampling, standardized tests, and behavioral observations.

**VOCATIONAL EDUCATION** Formal training designed to prepare individuals to work in a certain job or occupational area, such as construction, cosmetology, food service, or electronics. Also called vocational training and vocational program.

**VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION** A comprehensive system that assists individuals with temporary or permanent disabilities in the areas of assessment, counseling, training, physical rehabilitation, and job placement.

**WORK ACTIVITY CENTERS** Programs for adults with disabilities providing training in vocational skills, as well as daily living skills, social skills, and recreational skills.

**WORK SAMPLING TEST** The portion of a vocational assessment which tests a student's hands on performance in certain simulated and actual work environments.

**WORK STUDY PROGRAM** Education programs in which the student receives employment

training and earns credit toward graduation through employment.