



## Emotional Disturbance

### What is Emotional Disturbance (ED)?

Conditions that generate behavioral issues fall under the category of emotional disturbance. When it comes to special education, emotional disturbance is associated with mental health or severe behavior issues.

“Emotional disturbance” means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child’s educational performance: (1) an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; (2) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; (3) inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; (4) a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or (5) a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

The term includes schizophrenia, but shall not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance (K.A.R. 91-40-1(v)).

### Types of Emotional Disturbance

Center for Parent Information and Resources lists 6 types of emotional disturbances:

- anxiety disorders,
- bipolar disorder,
- conduct disorders,
- eating disorders,
- obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and
- psychotic disorders.

### Characteristics of Emotional Disturbance

- physical symptoms or fears which are different from peers and are correlated with school problems;
- inappropriate behaviors or feelings under normal circumstances;
- inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers;
- pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression;
- characteristics have been exhibited over a long period of time;
- characteristics are exhibited to marked degree; and
- behavior affects educational performance.



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### Educational Considerations

Educating students with ED can be very challenging. This challenge stems from potential classroom disruptions.

Preventative measures are often the best solution when working with these students. Conducting a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) will help to identify what leads a student to act so that an effective Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP) can be developed. Behavior modification can involve strategies such as positive reinforcement and incentives to assist students in learning less disruptive and more socially acceptable ways to behave. It is important to provide emotional and behavioral support, as well as, help the student to master academics, develop social skills, and increase self-awareness, self-control, and self-esteem.

It is important to collaborate with the family and other professionals who work with the student to determine specific ways to effectively educate the student.

### Resources

Kansas Special Education Process Handbook  
<http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=598>

KSDE Eligibility Indicators  
<https://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/SES/misc/iep/EligibilityIndicators.pdf>

KSDE SETS  
<http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=506>

Kansas Technical Assistance System Network (TASN) <https://ksdetasn.org/>

Center for Parent Information and Resources  
<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/emotionaldisturbance/>

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY) Disability Fact Sheet #5  
<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/emotional-disturbance.pdf>

The Special Education Guide <https://www.specialeducationguide.com/disability-profiles/emotional-disturbance/>

For more information, contact:

Special Education and Title Services Team  
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