



# Specific Learning Disability

## What is a Specific Learning Disability?

A specific learning disability (SLD) is a neurological disorder. In simple terms, a learning disability results from a difference in the way a person's brain is "wired." Some individuals, despite having an average or above average level of intelligence, have real difficulty acquiring basic academic skills. These skills include those needed for successful reading, writing, listening, speaking and/or math.

**"Specific learning disability" means a disorder in one of more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term shall not include learning problems that are primarily the result of any of the following: (1) visual, hearing, or motor, disabilities; (2) intellectual disability; (3) emotional disturbance; or (4) environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage (K.A.R. 91-40-1(mmm)).**

## Common Learning Disabilities

- Dyslexia is a language-based disability in which a person has trouble understanding written words. Dyslexia may also be referred to as reading disability or reading disorder.
- Dyscalculia is a mathematical disability in which a person has a difficult time solving arithmetic problems and grasping math concepts.
- Dysgraphia is a writing disability in which a person finds it hard to form letters or write within a defined space.
- Auditory and Visual Processing Disorders are sensory disabilities in which a person has difficulty understanding language despite normal hearing and vision.
- Nonverbal Learning Disabilities are neurological disorders which originate in the right hemisphere of the brain, causing problems with visual-spatial,

intuitive, organizational, evaluative and holistic processing functions.

## Identification of Specific Learning Disabilities

There are two different categories for identification of a Specific Learning Disability, clinical and educational. Educators, service providers and care providers need to be aware of the differences between a clinical diagnosis and an educational identification of SLD, particularly with regard to Dyslexia. An educational identification may be given by a multidisciplinary team of professionals in collaboration with the parent or caregiver for the student. A clinical licensed health care professional may only give a clinical diagnosis of SLD or Dyslexia. Having one does not guarantee the other diagnosis. It is important to note that a child may have a clinical diagnosis and not be eligible for special education services, or the child may be identified as being eligible for special education services under the IDEA definition of Specific Learning Disability and not have a clinical diagnosis of SLD. Any evaluation needed as part of the initial evaluation process for special education and related services must be provided at no cost. If a district desires a clinical evaluation as part of the initial evaluation process, the district must pay for any evaluation needed. A district cannot require a parent to obtain a clinical evaluation, at their own expense, prior to requesting an initial evaluation for special education and related services. Use of aptitude-achievement discrepancy is **not** an appropriate model for the educational identification of a specific learning disability.

## Evaluation of Specific Learning Disabilities

Comprehensive assessment and evaluation for students with learning disabilities is vital. A comprehensive evaluation should include:

- use of multiple measures, assessments, and information provided by parents, including:



- direct observations that yield informal or data-based information in multiple settings and on more than one occasion;
- tests that are reliable and valid, as well as culturally, linguistically, developmentally, and age appropriate;
- curriculum-based assessments, portfolios, and continuous progress monitoring repeated during instruction and over time; and
- when the area of concern is reading, assessment of the five basic areas of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension;
- an examination of functioning levels across the domains of motor, sensory, cognition, communication, and behavior; and
- information which describes the student's current levels of academic achievement and functional performance.

### Facts and Characteristics of Specific Learning Disabilities

- Fifteen percent of the U.S. population, or one in seven Americans, has some type of learning disability.

### 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>

KSDE CSAS (Dyslexia) <https://www.ksde.org/Agency/Division-of-Learning-Services/Career-Standards-and-Assessment-Services/Content-Area-A-E/Dyslexia>

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

Kansas LETRS Training Cadre <https://www.ksdetasn.org/letrs>

Dyslexia Resource Center <http://www.dyslexia1n5.com/>

Dyslexia within MTSS [https://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/SES/misc/Dyslexia-Within\\_MTSS.pdf](https://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/SES/misc/Dyslexia-Within_MTSS.pdf)

International Dyslexia Association <https://dyslexiaida.org/>

LD online <http://www.ldonline.org/>

National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) <https://www.nclld.org/>

For more information, contact:

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### Specific Learning Disability

- Difficulty with basic reading and language skills are the most common learning disabilities.
- Learning disabilities often run in families.
- Learning disabilities should not be confused with other disabilities such as autism, intellectual disability, deafness, blindness, and behavioral disorders. None of these conditions are learning disabilities. In addition, learning disabilities should not be confused with lack of educational opportunities, such as frequent changes of schools or attendance problems.
- Attention disorders, such as Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and learning disabilities often occur at the same time, but the two disorders are not the same.
- A learning disability should not be confused with language acquisition. Students with a primary language other than English should be assessed in their native language or a combination of English and their native language, depending on the individual student's language competency.

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