NSW Department of Education

Disability criteria

2024

The NSW Department of Education Disability Criteria (2024) are used to identify students who are eligible for the department's targeted support provisions.

The disability criteria categories are:

Intellectual

Note: To confirm any level of intellectual disability in school-aged children, information about school performance consistent with the level of functioning is required. School based information may include school records such as NAPLAN results, information from teacher / Learning and Support Team / Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on Students with Disability (NCCD), and/or standardised assessment of academic attainment where applicable.

Mild intellectual disability

Students must have a current assessment using an individual test of intelligence with appropriate psychometric properties indicating a Full-Scale IQ score of approximately two to three standard deviations below the mean and assessment of adaptive skills with an approved test of adaptive behaviour that is consistent with this range of scores.

Moderate intellectual disability

Students must have a current assessment using an individual test of intelligence with appropriate psychometric properties indicating a Full-Scale IQ score of approximately three to four standard deviations below the mean and assessment of adaptive skills with an approved test of adaptive behaviour that is consistent with this range of scores.

Severe intellectual disability

Students must have a current assessment of adaptive skills on a test of adaptive behaviour with appropriate psychometric properties that indicates scores of approximately four or more standard deviations below the mean. Where possible cognitive assessment using an individual test of intelligence or developmental assessment using a test with appropriate psychometric properties should also be administered.

For Early Intervention and Preschool students

Eligibility for the department's targeted disability provisions for intellectual disability may be confirmed on the results of an assessment report of developmental functioning where there is evidence of intellectual delay, and it is not possible to administer a cognitive assessment due to factors such as the age of the child. The administered developmental assessment must have been conducted using an assessment tool with appropriate psychometric properties. A disability confirmation of mild, moderate or severe should be applied, consistent with the level of impairment described in the report. Confirmation can be for up to 2 years.

Autism Spectrum

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Students must have a report diagnosing autism spectrum disorder from a specialist medical practitioner or registered psychologist with relevant clinical experience.

Evidence should be provided that indicates:

- deficits in social communication and social interaction across contexts
- restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests or activities
- symptoms limit and impair everyday functioning, including educational functioning

For students who have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder prior to Year 2, as well as evidence of significant impact on their learning and wellbeing, the disability should be confirmed until the end of Year 2.

From Year 2 on, the disability should be confirmed until the end of the year the student will be in Year 12 as long as relevant evidence such as review minutes and Learning and Support Team minutes indicate the student requires ongoing targeted support. No further external assessment for autism spectrum disorder is required.

Language

Severe expressive language disorder

Severe receptive language disorder

Both receptive and expressive language disorder in the severe range

Students must have a severe receptive and/or expressive language disorder which is documented by a current speech pathologist's report (in general less than 24 months old). The report should include details of at least one standardised language test that allows for the

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reporting of both receptive and expressive language skills. The report must indicate that difficulties in communication are the direct result of the disorder.

Note: The department's language criteria are primarily used to determine eligibility for Support Class Early Intervention.

Physical

Physical conditions affecting the motor system

Students must have a current physical condition involving the motor system that significantly limits functioning and independence in mobility, personal care, and/or the ability to physically undertake essential learning tasks in the school setting. There must be a report from a specialist medical practitioner detailing the nature of the condition.

Evidence of significant impact on the student's ability to physically access learning opportunities must be provided.

Medical conditions not affecting the motor system

Students must be diagnosed with a medical condition requiring a health support procedure/s to be performed regularly at school for which the student needs assistance from another person.

Note: Students with conditions such as anaphylaxis and asthma generally have their health support needs met through whole-of-school emergency management and student health and wellbeing procedures and systems.

There must be a current report from a specialist medical practitioner detailing the nature of the medical condition.

There must also be information about the health support needs required at school, the emergency response if indicated and any other information that might impact on the school providing support for the child during school hours and school activities.

The length of confirmation will depend on the condition. In some cases, targeted support provision is appropriate only for a short time until the student develops independence to manage their own health support needs.

Students who meet this criterion will be eligible to be considered for Integration Funding Support only.

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Mental Health

Mental health conditions

Students must exhibit behaviour(s) characteristic of mental health problems at a level of frequency, duration and intensity that significantly impacts their educational functioning and emotional well-being. The behaviours must be evident across home and school settings. For confirmation based on external clinician reports, students must have a report from a specialist medical practitioner or a registered psychologist with relevant clinical experience that is dated within the last 12 months. In addition, evidence of strategies used to address the student's needs within the school setting must be provided.

In circumstances where an external report from a specialist medical practitioner or a registered psychologist with relevant clinical experience is not able to be obtained, school counselling staff may provide the assessment and report for students to be considered eligible for the Department's targeted disability support provisions for mental health. School counselling staff undertaking mental health assessments, must provide a report outlining the results of standardised assessment using an appropriate clinical instrument along with evidence of strategies used to address the student's needs within the school setting.

Hearing

Hearing loss

Students must have a confirmed sensorineural or permanent conductive hearing loss of an average of 30dB or more in the better ear. The average loss is based on a four-frequency threshold: 500Hz, 1000Hz, 2000Hz, and 4000Hz. There must be an unaided audiogram including audiologist report from an appropriately qualified audiologist (for example from a hospital, Hearing Australia, NextSense, The Shepherd Centre). The audiogram and report should have been completed within 12 months of the application.

Students with sensorineural hearing loss that meets criteria and/or bilateral cochlear implants should be confirmed until the end of Year 12.

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Vision

Vision impairment

Students must have a current report from an ophthalmologist or orthoptist. The report must indicate a visual acuity of 6/24 or less in the better eye corrected, or a visual field of 20 degrees or less.

Students with a visual acuity of 6/48 or less in the better eye corrected, or a visual field of 20 degrees or less, may be confirmed until the end of Year 12.

Deafblind

Deafblind

Students must have a diagnosis of functional Level 4 permanent vision loss and bilateral profound hearing loss from a registered orthoptist or ophthalmologist and an appropriately qualified audiologist (for example from a hospital, Hearing Australia, NextSense, The Shepherd Centre).

The student's vision and hearing losses must be at levels that significantly impact learning ability, communication, socialisation, mobility and daily living.

Documented evidence based on individual assessment must indicate that extensive adjustments beyond those generally provided for students with a hearing and/or vision loss or severe intellectual disability are required in the educational setting.

Approval for the provision of a Deafblind disability confirmation will be undertaken by a team, comprising the Principal Psychologist and Inclusion and Disability Coordinator, and considered on a case-by-case basis.

General Note

Where there is evidence that a student has a significant disorder that is not adequately described by one or more of the above criteria and the condition is impacting greatly on educational outcomes, key school counselling and delivery support staff will together consider all available documentation and make a determination on a case-by-case basis.

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