

Multiple Disabilities



What is Multiple Disabilities?

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“Concomitant [simultaneous] impairments (such as intellectual disability-blindness, intellectual disability-orthopedic impairment), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. The term does not include deaf-blindness.”

Causes of Multiple Disabilities



Prenatal (before birth) causes:
Chromosomal abnormalities, viral infections, drug/alcohol intake (especially during early months of pregnancy), malnutrition, and physical trauma to the mother.

Perinatal (during birth) causes:
Lack of oxygen supply to the baby's brain (prolonged labor, disconnect of umbilical cord, cord wrapped around baby's neck), physical injury to the brain during birth, contracted infections during birth.

Postnatal (after birth) causes:
Infections, traumatic brain injury (fall, car accident, near drowning, child abuse), lead poisoning, reaction to medication, environmental conditions (exposure to toxins)

Prevention of Multiple Disabilities

Prevention of Multiple Disabilities include:

Prenatal diagnosis

Maternal education and healthcare



Instructional Strategies

The planning process should be a multidisciplinary process, including parents, teachers, physical therapists, assistive technology teachers, and any number of additional support staff, at the center of the planning process should be the student, and the strengths and desires of the student should guide the entire process. Specific steps to success need to be identified, and timelines set for each educational objective. In addition, resources and supports needed for the student to achieve his goals should be defined and addressed.

One area of support that can be particularly effective for all involved is peer tutoring. Peer tutoring has been proven to have positive results for students with multiple disabilities in a number of separate research studies. However, care must be taken that the tutoring is not a one-way relationship, but is reciprocal. The student with multiple disabilities should also be able to provide something to the tutoring process, even if it is a simple social behavior.

Characteristics

Children with multiple disabilities will typically share deficits in five distinct areas of development: intellectual functioning, adaptive skills, motor skills, sensory functioning, and communication skills. Children may have any combination of disability listed under IDEA's disability categories.

Effects of Disability on Adolescents:

Adolescents may have difficulties with communication skills, self help skills, and literacy and oral language difficulties while in school, along with possible behavior challenges due to lack of communication skills.



Effects of Disability on Adults:

Adults with multiple disabilities will need transition services to help connect them with supported employment and community based instruction after they leave the public school setting.



Current Trends

An accountability of academic performance for all students, not just those without disabilities, and integrated service delivery-services to students are integrated into the regular education classroom to include the student in the social learning opportunities within the school and with their peers.



Online and Book Resources

<http://projectidealonline.org/multipleDisabilities.php>

Friend, M. P. (2008). *Special education, contemporary perspectives for school professionals*. Allyn & Bacon.

Notes: