

## **Learning Disabilities - Diagnosis and Support**

This is a very exciting time for your child as they begin their academic careers. They will be learning and developing so quickly over the next few years. Every year, the demands on your child will continue to grow, and in some children, subtle clues indicating an underlying learning problem may become apparent. Learning disabilities can present in a myriad of ways including issues with writing/spelling, math, reading and processing information. Learning disabilities are actually fairly common and can comprise “up to 4.5% of the total school population.”

If your child is struggling in school or you have concerns for a learning disability, it is important that you arrange testing as soon as possible. If your child attends a public school, the school is mandated to provide educational testing to investigate an underlying problem. If your child attends a private school or is homeschooled, there are several local psychologists who can provide this service. A private evaluation may also be appropriate if your child is in a public school, but you would like a second opinion.

As your pediatrician, we will help provide community resources to assist with your child’s learning deficiencies and ensure that no other underlying medical issues are complicating the picture such as ADHD. Once a learning disability is diagnosed, it is imperative to work with your child’s school to create an Individualized Education Plan and a 504 Plan to help them to succeed in school. This plan is created using a multi-disciplinary approach with the input of your child’s pediatrician, teacher, counselor, and various ancillary staff to help develop a unique system for your child to succeed in the classroom. Please see our IEPs/504 document on the next page for more details.

Early detection is key, which is why yearly checkups are so important, as they help us to catch subtle changes and so proactive intervention is possible.

References:

[https://www.uptodate.com/contents/specific-learning-disabilities-in-children-clinical-features?source=search\\_result&search=learning%20disorders%20children&selectedTitle=1~134](https://www.uptodate.com/contents/specific-learning-disabilities-in-children-clinical-features?source=search_result&search=learning%20disorders%20children&selectedTitle=1~134)

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/104/1/124.full.pdf>

<http://ldnavigator.nclld.org/#/education-related/evaluation-process>

## **School Accommodations for Children with Learning Disabilities**

### **504 Plan**

1. Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act requires the school to make modifications such as extra time on tests, preferential seating, or help with note taking.
2. Notify your child's schoolteacher and/or guidance counselor that your child has a learning disability and request a 504 Plan to receive this assistance.
3. If your school is not helping you obtain a 504 Plan, contact Duval County's Exceptional Education and Student Services Department, which can be found at:  
<http://www.duvalschools.org/site/Default.aspx?PageID=9318>

### **Individualized Educational Plan (IEP)**

1. The Individuals With Disabilities Act (IDEA) is a law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation.
2. If your child has a learning disability, speech and language difficulties, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, or other conditions that might affect him at school, he may qualify for special services through IDEA. Children that qualify for an IEP can often receive a broad range of assistance at the school level.
3. If you believe your child with learning disability is in need of more services than a 504 Plan offers, you may request an IEP. Make your child's schoolteacher and/or guidance aware of your concerns and request an IEP.
4. If your school is not helping you obtain an IEP, contact Duval Country's Exceptional Education and Student Services Department, which can be found at:  
<http://www.duvalschools.org/site/Default.aspx?PageID=9318>

### **What to do if your child may need Special Educational Services but is in Private School or Homeschool**

1. If your child is in private school or homeschool and qualifies for special education, he may be able to receive special services that are paid for by the school district.
2. The decision to make an evaluation of your child is made by the local public school where your child would normally attend.
3. If you feel your child might need these services, contact your local school and request an IEP (see above for explanation).
4. It is a good idea to discuss this with your child's teachers before you request an evaluation. It is likely the school district will discuss your child with his teachers before initiating an evaluation.
5. If the district agrees to evaluate, it will pay for the entire evaluation and offer supportive services based on the results.
6. Some students that are found to have severe learning issues might be better served in a local public school where there are supportive services for persons with disabilities.

References:

<http://idea.ed.gov>

<https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/choosing-starting-school/finding-right-school/6-things-to-know-about-private-schools-and-special-education>

<http://www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/711.html>