



Severe Disability

***Why was “severe disability” deleted in the 2007
state special education regulations?***

(August 13, 2009)

In the past, the term “severe disability” as a disability category was used in the state special education regulations although it is not a disability category in the federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA). The Virginia Board of Education and Department of Education identified this as an area where Virginia could align with the federal reporting requirements.

In addition to aligning with the IDEA, “severe disability” is not as specific as the other categories in the regulations and therefore caused some confusion in the identification process.

This new change in terminology should not affect the continued need for individualized supports and services for students who were previously identified as having a severe disability. It is anticipated that students currently identified with this disability will qualify as either having multiple disabilities or another specific disability.

A school division may wait until the natural progression of the re-evaluation process to revise the category of a child with a severe disability. If circumstances warrant in an individual case, based on the child’s educational needs, a school division may re-evaluate the child earlier than the triennial date in order to revise the disability category.

Therefore, the child’s free appropriate public education entitlement remains preserved by waiting until the triennial process to change the disability category, if the child continues to have a disability.

The Virginia Department of Education provides guidance designed to assist eligibility teams in accurately identifying students with disabilities for the purposes of qualifying for special education and related services. This information can be found on the Virginia Department of Education Web site.

For more information:

Virginia Department of Education Web site:
<http://www.doe.virginia.gov/> or contact staff by
phone at 804-225-2932, 1-800-422-2083, TDD
1-800-422-1098