



Fast Fact (April 2010)

Severe Disability: Why “severe disability” was removed from the 2009 state special education regulations.

In the past, the term “severe disability” as a disability category was used in Virginia’s 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 and revise the disability category.

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: www.doe.virginia.gov or contact Division of Special Education and Student Services at 804-225-2932, 1-800-422-2083, Text users dial 711 (Virginia Relay)