

Role of P/HD Teacher in ECSE Setting

As a licensed specialist, the Physical/Health Disabilities (P/HD) teacher must be included as a member of the evaluation team when an infant, toddler, or preschool –aged child with a documented physical impairment is being considered for special education. In addition, the P/HD teacher is also a required member of the IFSP/IEP team when the child has qualified for services under the Physically Impaired category (MN Rule 3525.2350). As a member of the team, the P/HD teacher can assist in addressing educational needs related to the child’s physical impairment, such as collaboratively working with the team on identifying:

- Adaptations to materials & equipment, including modifications to toys, materials, furniture, books, etc.
- Assistive technology to compensate for motor and perceptual deficits
- Modifications to curriculum and instructional methods that are based on current evidence-based practices
- Environmental accommodations and supports to address accessibility in educational and community settings, including emergency evacuation planning
- Resources and information about the child’s medical diagnosis

The local/regional P/HD Specialist for your area is:

Regional and Statewide Resources

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Meeting The Needs of Children With Physical Impairments In Early Childhood Special Education Settings



Educational Services and Supports



Serving learners with low incidence disabilities.

Website: www.mnlowincidenceprojects.org

Serving the Very Young Child with a Physical Impairment

The special education category, “Physically Impaired” (PI) is considered a low incidence disability area and is defined in MN Rule 3525.1337 as a medically diagnosed chronic physical impairment, either congenital or acquired, that may adversely affect physical or academic functioning and result in the need for special education and related services. Medical conditions commonly identified as physical impairments include cerebral palsy, spinal muscular atrophy, spina bifida, muscular dystrophy, osteogenesis imperfecta, and arthrogyrosis.

In Minnesota, children and youth with physical impairments represent approximately 1.5 percent of the total population of students who receive special education services. Children aged birth to five years who have met Physical Impairment criteria represent 10% of all students under this low incidence category.

There is great variability among physical disabilities and related educational needs, ranging from very mild (requiring minimal support) to more severe (requiring a significant level of support). Educational needs related to a physical impairment are typically addressed through specialized equipment and materials, technology, and/or materials, technology, and instruction.

Considerations for PI Eligibility

When evaluating an infant, toddler, or preschool-aged child with a physical impairment, the Minnesota Physical Impairment criteria should be interpreted in such a way that it applies meaningfully to the child’s age and unique educational environments.

The evaluation should address whether there is a lack of functional level in developmentally age-appropriate independent play skills; and/or the child displays an inability to manage or complete motoric portions of developmentally age-appropriate milestones, including learning and play tasks at the rate and pace of same-aged peers.

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Common Educational Needs

Most students from birth to 5 years of age who meet criteria for Physically Impaired (PI) have difficulty with functional motor skills, which can impact learning and play skills in their home, school and community environments. Accompanying neurological impairments may also be present, which can further interfere with the acquisition of age-appropriate developmental skills. Some common areas of need include:

- Positioning & mobility
- Object manipulation & fine motor control
- Social play
- Expressive & receptive communication
- Information & sensory processing
- Self-care skills

Contact Us

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