

How to Tell If a Child May Have a Disability

Every child in this country is entitled to a free appropriate public education. This applies to all children regardless of the type or severity of their ability or disability. If your child has a disability, educational help may be available. The following checklist of common early signs has been compiled to help you recognize if a disability may be present. It is not a complete list, and it is not a professional evaluation. It is merely a guide. If you suspect that your child may have a developmental delay, the Department of Student Supports/ Special Education is eager to work with you and your child to determine eligibility for services and to explore options.

The Child at Play

- At age 1, the child does not respond to a call by looking directly at an adult, cannot figure out simple problems (finding object hidden under cup).
- At age 2, cannot identify body parts or match like objects, does not recognize self in mirror.
- At age 3, cannot recognize own name and understand use of familiar objects.
- At age 4, unable to name colors, tell the action in a picture, or count to 5.
- At age 5, cannot make a simple comparison (which is heavier, bigger), count up to 10, or understand (yesterday, "today," or "tomorrow.")

The Child in Motion

- At age 1, the child cannot sit without support, pull self to standing position, reach for objects, or pick up objects with a pincer grasp.
- At age 2, is unable to walk alone, kick a large ball, scribble or build a tower with 2 or 3 blocks.
- At age 3, cannot walk up or down stairs, pedal a tricycle, run without falling, turn the pages of a book, copy circles, or draw a cross-mark.
- At age 4, cannot balance on one foot, jump from a bottom step, catch a bounced ball, close a fist and wiggle a thumb, or trace a diamond shape.
- At age 5, is unable to turn, do somersaults, pump self on a swing, fold a paper triangle from a 4-inch square, print a few capital letters, or cut with scissors on a straight line.

The Child's Sight

- Child frequently complains that the eyes hurt.
- There is crossing of the eyes: one or both eyes may be affected.
- At age 1, child cannot focus on small objects in order to pick them up.
- Child moves eyes excessively.
- Pupils of eyes are of uneven size.

The Child's Hearing

- Child talks very loudly, even shouts during normal conversation.
- Child speaks very softly, almost in a whisper.
- When called from another room, child does not respond.
- At age 6 months, child does not turn toward the sounds of voices or noise.
- When there is a sound, the child always turns the same ear in the direction of the sound.

The Child's Speech

- At age 1, the child is unable to say such basic words as "Mama" and "Dada."
- At age 2, cannot give the names of toys or members of the family.
- At age 3, is unable to repeat simple rhymes or common television musical jingles.
- At age 4, speaks in sentence fragments, cannot say short complete sentences.
- At age 5, cannot be understood by people outside the immediate family, only by those "used to" child's speech habits.