

Technical Assistance on Multiple Disabilities Educational Classification in Utah Public Schools

October 22, 2015

The purpose of this Technical Assistance (TA) document is to:

- Clarify the role of a medical diagnosis when determining eligibility for the IDEA educational classification of Multiple Disabilities.
- Clarify the role of individual licensed professionals when providing information for eligibility evaluation.
- Clarify the Utah State Board of Education Special Education Rules (USBE SER) eligibility evaluation requirements to acquire prior medical and developmental history.

IDEA Eligibility and the role of medical diagnosis (USBE SER II.J.7.c. (3))

An IDEA educational eligibility classification of Multiple Disabilities (MD) is determined by the eligibility team, which includes a group of qualified professionals and the student's parent(s). The eligibility team should carefully consider information from a variety of sources in order to determine eligibility. This information may include medical history from a qualified health professional. A medical diagnosis is not required to be eligible for special education services under IDEA under the Multiple Disabilities classification, and similarly, having multiple medical diagnosis does not guarantee IDEA eligibility if the disability does not adversely affect the student's educational performance. However, information provided from a qualified health professional can assist the eligibility team in determining that the student with a disability fits the Multiple Disabilities criteria according to the USBE SER.

A student may be eligible for special education services under the Multiple Disabilities classification if the eligibility team determines that the student has concomitant impairments that cause such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely designed to address one of the impairments. The team must identify the specific disability categories, ensure that the student meets eligibility criteria for each of the disabilities, and determine that

- (1) The multiple disabilities adversely affect the student's educational performance, and
- (2) The student with multiple disabilities must require special education and related services.

The student does not have to demonstrate an intellectual disability to be considered for a Multiple Disabilities classification.

Role of Licensed Professionals (USBE SER I.E.22)

The role of each licensed educational professional/team member providing information to determine eligibility with a Multiple Disabilities classification should be understood and documented. Each individual who provides evaluation information should provide information consistent with the parameters of his or her Utah professional licensure.

For example, a school psychologist, who must hold a Utah Professional Educator license (USBE SER IX.H), may administer psychological and educational tests and interpret the assessment results, consult with the eligibility team regarding information indicated by psychological tests, conduct interviews, conduct direct observations, and/or administer a behavioral evaluation (USBE SER I.E.34.c.(10)). A school psychologist may not provide prior medical history as this information must come from a qualified healthcare professional. A speech-language pathologist (SLP) must hold a Utah Professional Educator License (USBE SER IX.H) and may conduct an appraisal of and diagnose specific speech or language impairment (USBE SER I.E.34.c.(15)), including

pragmatic language deficits. An SLP is not licensed to provide information regarding specific medical syndromes or medication.

Prior Medical and Developmental History (USBE SER II.J.7.c. (3))

As part of the evaluation for determining student eligibility for special education services under the Multiple Disabilities classification, the student's prior medical history from a qualified health professional must be on record if specific syndromes, health concerns, medication, and long-term medical diagnosis are a concern for the individual. While a medical diagnosis of any one disability is not specifically required for eligibility under Multiple Disabilities, the LEA may determine that information from a variety of professionals should be gathered.

Prior Medical History. If the IEP team determines and documents that there are no health related concerns, a prior medical history is not required. However, if the team has concerns about the student regarding specific syndromes, special health problems, medication, and long-term medical diagnosis, then a prior medical history from a qualified health professional, must be on record. If the team determines that additional medical information can only be provided by a physician, the LEA must ensure that the information is acquired in a timely manner and at no cost to the parent(s). A medical information release form such as the one found at <http://www.schools.utah.gov/sars/> may be used to request the necessary information from the student's healthcare professional.

Qualified Health Professional. A qualified health professional is an individual who has the requisite training and functions in the role of providing medical information to the school evaluation team consistent with his/her professional license. This person could be the student's physician, nurse, or other healthcare professional.

For further information regarding IDEA Multiple Disabilities classification eligibility see the Utah State Board of Education Special Education Rules located at:

<http://www.schools.utah.gov/sars/Laws,-State-Rules-and-Policies/Rules-and-Regulations.aspx>.

For questions, please contact Jessica Bowman at Jessica.bowman@schools.utah.gov.

Reference

Utah State Board of Education (USBE). (2013). *Special education rules*. Utah State Office of Education. SLC, UT.