

TYPES OF DISABILITIES AND FUNCTIONAL LIMITATIONS

Physical disabilities include minor difficulties in moving or coordinating a part of the body, muscle weakness, tremors and in extreme cases, paralysis in one or more parts of the body. Physical disabilities can be congenital, such as Muscular Dystrophy; or acquired, such as tendinitis. Physical disabilities affect an individual's ability to:

- Perform manual tasks, such as hold a pen, grip and turn a key, type on a keyboard, click a mouse button, and twist a doorknob
- Move around independently, e.g., walk any distance, easily get into or out of a car, stand for an extended period
- Control the speed of or coordinate one's movements
- Experience balance and orientation
- Move one's arms or legs fully, e.g., climb stairs
- Reach, pull, push or manipulate objects
- Have strength or endurance

Hearing loss include problems distinguishing certain frequencies, sounds or words, ringing in the ears and total (profound) deafness.

A person who is deaf, deafened or hard-of-hearing may be unable to

- use a public telephone
- understand speech in noisy environments
- pronounce words clearly enough to be understood by strangers

Vision disabilities range from slightly reduced visual acuity to total blindness. A person with reduced visual acuity may have trouble reading street signs, recognizing faces, or judging distances. They might find it difficult to manoeuvre, especially in an unfamiliar place.

Smell disability is the inability to sense, or a hypersensitivity to odours and smells. A person with a smelling disability may have allergies to certain odours, scents or chemicals or may be unable to identify dangerous gases, smoke, fumes and spoiled food.

Speech disability is a partial or total loss of the ability to speak. Typical disabilities include problems with:

- Pronunciation
- Pitch and loudness
- Hoarseness or breathiness
- Stuttering or slurring

People with severe speech disabilities sometimes use manual or electronic communication devices. Individuals who have never heard may have speech that is hard to understand.

Deaf-Blind

Deaf-blindness is a combination of hearing and vision loss. It results in significant difficulties accessing information and performing activities of daily living. Deaf-blind disabilities interfere with communication, learning, orientation and mobility. Individuals who are deaf-blind

communicate using various sign language systems, Braille, standard PCs equipped with Braille displays, telephone devices for the deaf-blind and communication boards. They navigate with the aid of white canes, service animals, and electronic navigation devices.

People who are deaf-blind may rely on the services of Interveners who relay and facilitate auditory and visual information and act as sighted guides. Interveners are skilled in the communication systems used by people who are deaf-blind, including sign language and Braille.

Touch

disability alters the ability to sense surfaces and their texture or quality, including temperature, vibration and pressure. Touching sensations may be heightened, limited, absent (numbness), or may cause pain or burning.

A person with a touch disability may be unable to detect (or be insensitive to) heat, cold or changing temperatures. Alternatively, a person with a touch disability may be hypersensitive to sound, physical vibrations, or heated surfaces or air.

He or she may have a very narrow field of vision, be unable to differentiate colours, have difficulties navigating or seeing at night, or require bright lights to read. Most people who are legally blind have some vision.

There are three main kinds of **mental health** disabilities:

- **Anxiety:** a state of heightened nervousness or fear related to stress
- **Mood:** sadness or depression
- **Behavioural:** being disorganized; making false statements/ inappropriate comments; telling distorted/ exaggerated stories

People with mental health disabilities may seem edgy or irritated; act aggressively; exhibit blunt behaviour; be perceived as being pushy or abrupt; start laughing or get angry for no apparent reason.

Learning

disabilities are disorders that affect verbal and non-verbal information acquisition, retention, understanding, processing, organization and use.

People with learning disabilities have average or above-average intelligence, but take in & retain information and express knowledge in different ways. Learning disabilities affect reading comprehension and speed; spelling; the mechanics of writing; manual dexterity; math computation; problem solving; processing speed; the ability to organize space and manage time; and orientation, directions and wayfinding.

Taste

disability limits the ability to experience the four primary taste sensations: sweetness, bitterness, saltiness and sourness.

A person with a taste disability may be unable to identify ingredients in food, spoiled food, or noxious substances.

Intellectual

disability affects an individual's ability to think and reason. It may be caused by genetic factors (e.g., Downs Syndrome), exposure to environmental toxins (as in Fetal Alcohol Syndrome), brain trauma and psychiatric conditions.

A person with an intellectual disability may have difficulty with:

- Language: understanding and using spoken or written information
- Concepts: understanding cause and effect
- Perception: taking in and responding to sensory information
- Memory: retrieving & recognizing information from short/long-term memory
- Recognizing problems, problem solving and reasoning

Other

disabilities result from other conditions, accidents, illnesses, and diseases, including ALS (Lou Gehrig disease), asthma, diabetes, cancer, HIV/AIDS, environmental sensitivities, seizure disorders, heart disease, stroke, and joint replacement.