



IDEA: Categories of Disabilities -- Emotional Disturbance

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) defines **Emotional Disturbance** as:

a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance: (A) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors. (B) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers. (C) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances. (D) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression. (E) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

What is Emotional Disturbance?

We refer to mental disorders using different "umbrella" terms such as **emotional disturbance**, behavioral disorders, or mental illness. Mental illnesses are medical conditions that disrupt a person's thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others and daily functioning.

Emotional disturbances can affect an individual in areas beyond the emotional. Depending on the specific mental disorder involved, a person's physical, social, or cognitive skills may also be affected. There is actually a wide range of specific conditions that differ from one another in their characteristics and treatment.

These include (but are not limited to): anxiety disorders; bipolar disorder; conduct disorders; eating disorders; obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD); and psychotic disorders.

What are the signs of Emotional Disturbance?

Some characteristics/behaviors in children who have an emotional disturbance include:

- Hyperactivity
- Aggression
- Withdrawal
- Immaturity
- Excessive anxiety
- Abnormal mood swings

This information is not meant to diagnose any child and should not take the place of consultation with a qualified healthcare professional.

Where to call for a free evaluation from the state depends on your child's age:

Under Three (3) Years Old

Contact SoonerStart Early Intervention Services at 405-521-3351

<http://sde.ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/2013%20Referral%20Guide%20back.pdf>

Three (3) Years Old and Older

Contact your local public school system.

www.ok.gov/sde/state-school-directory

Even if your child is not yet old enough for kindergarten or enrolled in a public school, call your local elementary school and ask to speak with someone who can help you have your child evaluated.

If you're not sure who to contact, call the **Oklahoma Parents Center** toll-free at 877-553-4332 and we can help you!

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Source:

Emotional Disturbance, Oklahoma State Department of Education.

Emotional Disturbance, Parent Center Hub.



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