

ABOUT THE SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS OF CHILDREN WITH BRAIN INJURIES...



Common Questions

Will my child be able to go to school

Hospital care after an injury may interrupt your child's education. Even after your child comes home, extra time may be needed before you child is able to return to school on a full schedule.

How can a brain or head injury affect my child's ability to learn?

A brain injury can affect a child's concentration, attention and ability to learn at school. Many children even those with relatively mild injuries, have one or more of the following changes:

- Tires easily and needs extra rest
- Has trouble with memory and is forgetful
- Needs help starting and finishing tasks
- Is easily distracted
- Has trouble concentrating
- Can't seem to get organized
- Has trouble following directions
- Is irritable and short tempered
- Acts on impulse
- Hits others, breaks rules, gets into arguments
- Constantly interrupts, speaks out of turn
- Acts younger than age
- Doesn't fit in with friends and students
- Makes strange and embarrassing comments

What should I know before my child returns to school?

Although traumatic brain injury (TBI) is very common, many education professionals may not realize that some difficulties can be caused by a childhood brain injury. Often, students with TBI are thought to have a learning disability, emotional disturbance, or mental retardation. As a result, they don't receive the type of educational help and support they really need. **It is important that the school is informed when a child has sustained a brain injury.**

When children return to school after a TBI, their educational and emotional needs are often very different from before the injury. Their disability has happened suddenly and traumatically. They can often remember how they were before the brain injury. This can bring on many emotional and social changes. The child's family, friends, and teachers also recall what the child was like before the injury. These other people in the child's life may have trouble changing or adjusting their expectations of the child.

(over)

GOING BACK TO SCHOOL

It is extremely important to plan carefully for the child's return to school. The school should be informed about the child's injury so that any special support can be arranged and the child's educational needs met. Your child may be eligible for special education services.

Parents will want to find out ahead of time about special education services at the school. This information is usually available from the school's principal or special education teacher. The school will need to evaluate the child thoroughly. This evaluation will help the school and parent know what the student's needs are.

What Should I Know About Special Education

The Individual's with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the federal law that guides how schools provide special education and related services to children and youth with disabilities.

The Federal Definition for Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Our nation's special education law, the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) defines traumatic brain injury as...

"...an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term applies to open or closed head injured resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as cognition; sensory, perceptual, and motor abilities; psycho-social behavior; physical functions; information processing; and speech. The term does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or to brain injuries induced by birth trauma." 34 Code of Federal Regulation § 300.7(12)

The State Definition of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Traumatic Brain Injury: Traumatic Brain Injury is an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. This term applies to open and closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as cognition, language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem-solving, sensory, perceptual, and motor abilities, psychosocial behavior, physical functions, information processing, and speech. The term does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or brain injuries induced by birth trauma.

Developmental Delay: Eligibility is limited to children aged 3 through 9 who are experiencing developmental delays. In New Mexico, the category of Developmental Delay, established by Section 6.31.2.7 (C)(5) NMAC, includes students who are 3 years old through 9 years old with documented delays in development which are at least two standard deviations or 30 percent below chronological age; or, who, in the professional judgment of the Student Assistance Team and one or more qualified evaluators, needs special education or related services in at least one of the following areas: receptive or expressive language, cognitive abilities, gross and/or fine motor functioning, social or emotional development or self-help/adaptive functioning.

Resources: NM School Boards Association (505) 983-5041: Educational Standards for Special Education <http://www.nmcpr.state.nm.us/nmac/parts/title06/06.031.0002.htm>