

Eligibility Criteria Checklist for a Classification of an Emotional Disturbance

In order to be eligible for a classification as a student with an Emotional Disturbance under IDEA, the following standards should be met:

Determine whether the student exhibits one or more of the following (a-e):

A. _____ **An inability to learn at a rate commensurate with the student’s intellectual, sensory motor, and physical development.** This characteristic requires documentation that a student is not able to learn, despite appropriate instructional strategies and/or support services. A comprehensive and differential assessment is performed to establish an “inability to learn.” The assessment should rule out any other primary reasons for the suspected disability, such as mental retardation, speech and language disorders, autism, learning disability, hearing/vision impairment, multi-handicapping conditions, traumatic brain injury, neurological impairment or other medical conditions. If any of these other conditions is the primary cause, then the student may be deemed eligible for special education under that category of disability.

B. _____ **An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.** This characteristic requires documentation that the student is unable to initiate or to maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers. Satisfactory interpersonal relationships include the ability to demonstrate sympathy, warmth and empathy toward others; establish and maintain friendships; be constructively assertive; and work and play independently. These abilities should be considered when observing the student’s interactions with both peers and teachers. This characteristic does not refer to the student who has conflict with only one teacher or with certain peers. Rather it is a pervasive inability to develop relationships with others across settings and situations.

C. _____ **Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.** This characteristic requires documentation that the student’s inappropriate behavior or feelings deviate significantly from expectations for the student’s age, gender and culture across different environments. The IEP Committee must determine whether the student’s inappropriate responses are occurring “under normal circumstances.” When considering “normal circumstances,” the IEP Committee should take into account whether a student’s home or school situation is disrupted by stress, recent changes, or unexpected events.

D. _____ **A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.** This characteristic requires documentation that the student’s unhappiness or depression is occurring across most, if not all, of the student’s life situations. The student must demonstrate a consistent pattern of depression or unhappiness in keeping with the criterion, “long period of time” (i.e., several months). In other words, this pattern is not a temporary response to situational factors or to a medical condition.

The characteristics should not be a secondary manifestation attributable to substance abuse, medication or a general medical condition (e.g., hypothyroidism). The characteristics cannot be the effect of normal bereavement.

E. _____ **Physical symptoms or fears associated with the student’s personal or school life.**

Physical symptoms that qualify under the ED characteristic should adhere to the following four conditions:

a - _____ symptoms suggesting physical disorders are present with no demonstrable medical findings.

b - _____ positive evidence or strong presumption exists that these symptoms are linked to psychological factors/conflict.

c - _____ the person is not conscious of intentionally producing the symptoms.

d - _____ the symptoms are not a culturally sanctioned response pattern.

Determine whether the student’s educational performance is adversely affected. Indicators of educational performance include present and past grades, achievement test scores and measures of ongoing classroom performance (e.g., curriculum-based assessment and work samples). Adverse effect on educational performance implies a marked difference between the student’s academic performance and reasonable (not optimal) expectations of performance. The appropriateness of the school district’s educational goals, as reflected in the curriculum and in the formal grading report, should be considered in determining whether the student’s performance meets reasonable expectations.

Determine that the student does NOT meet the criteria for a “socially maladjusted” student

A social maladjustment is a persistent pattern of violating societal norms, such as multiple acts of truancy, or substance or sex abuse, and is marked by struggle with authority, low frustration threshold, impulsivity, or manipulative behaviors. A social maladjustment unaccompanied by an emotional disturbance is often indicated by some or all of the following:

_____ Unhappiness or depression that is not pervasive.

_____ Problem behaviors that are goal-directed, self-serving and manipulative.

_____ Actions that are based on perceived self-interest even though others may consider the behavior to be self-defeating.

_____ General social conventions and behavioral standards are understood, but are not accepted.

_____ Negative counter-cultural standards or peers are accepted and followed.

_____ Problem behaviors have escalated during pre-adolescence or adolescence.

_____ Inappropriate behaviors are displayed in selected settings or situations (e.g., only at home, in school or in selected classes), while other behavior is appropriately controlled.

_____ Problem behaviors are frequently the result of encouragement by a peer group, are intentional, and the student understands the consequences of such behaviors.