



## **A Parent's Guide to Understanding Special Education Eligibility in the State of Colorado**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that a multidisciplinary Individual Education Program (IEP) team (a group of qualified professionals and the parents) determine if a student has a disability that requires special education services. Evaluation data and information from a variety of sources are used by the IEP team to determine if the student meets State eligibility criteria. All members of the IEP team, including parents, make this determination. Eligibility requires that a condition prevents the student from receiving reasonable benefit from general education alone and determines the student requires specialized instruction as well as accommodations and/or modifications to make progress.

There are 13 disability categories in Colorado in which students can be found eligible for special education. These categories are listed in the chart below.

Child with a Developmental Delay (3-8 years)
Autism Spectrum Disorder
Deaf-Blindness
Hearing Impairment, Including Deafness
Intellectual Disability
Multiple Disabilities Other Health Impaired
Orthopedic Impairment
Other Health Impaired Speech Language Impairment
Serious Emotional Disability
Specific Learning Disability Traumatic Brain Injury
Speech Language Impairment
Traumatic Brain Injury
Visual Impairment, Including Blindness

Once a student becomes eligible for special education services, IEP team develops a written plan for that student. This plan will include information about educational goals and will identify who is responsible for assisting the student in reaching each goal. Additionally, the plan will address the educational setting where the student will receive these services. Least restrictive environment (LRE) is an important concept to understand when a team is talking about how to meet the educational needs of a student. LRE means that the IEP team should design educational supports and services, to the maximum extent possible, so that the student can be educated with children who do not have disabilities. The IEP team should provide documentation and justification whenever education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Whenever you have questions about special education services, contact your child's special education case manager at the school. They are ready to assist.