

SEVERE AND/OR MULTIPLE DISABILITIES



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DEFINITION:

Individuals with severe and/or multiple disabilities have two or more disabilities that, in combination, cause severe educational problems.

POSSIBLE SIGNS, SYMPTOMS, AND CHARACTERISTICS:

Students with severe and/or multiple disabilities may exhibit a wide range of behaviors depending on the combination and severity of the disabilities. However, there are some general characteristics that are representative students with severe and/or multiple disabilities.

- Limited speech and/or communication
- Difficulty with basic physical mobility
- Generalization of skills may not occur without intervention
- Maintenance of skills may not occur without intervention and frequent use
- Need for support in major life activities (e.g., domestic, leisure, community, and vocational)

TEACHING TIPS AND SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

- Simplify, demonstrate, positively reinforce, and use multisensory approaches.
- Early intervention may lesson or prevent secondary problems such as posture and fitness deficiencies.
- Program for generalization with the use of different people, equipment, environments, and times.
- Generalize to community-based settings by teaching skills that the students can use frequently and apply to settings other than school.
- Check often for skill retention.
- Provide a well-rounded program of fitness and motor activities based on each student's present level of performance and developmental psychomotor needs.
- Design activities to increase the student's skill and independence in performing routine activities in life.

**** Due to the diversity of characteristics possible within this classification, it is difficult to provide specific instructional strategies for students with severe and/or multiple disabilities. Programming should involve the combining of instructional strategies appropriate for each student's unique needs.**

Information on this sheet contains only suggested guidelines. Each student must be considered individually, and in many cases, a physician's written consent should be obtained.