

THE CENTER FOR SPEECH EXCELLENCE

The Warning Signs of Learning Disabilities in Preschool Children

Although children's growth patterns vary among individuals and within individuals, uneven development or significant delays in development can signal the presence of LD. It is important to keep in mind that the behaviors listed below must persist over time to be considered warning signs. Any child may occasionally exhibit one or two of these behaviors in the course of normal development.

Language

- Slow development in speaking words or sentences
- Pronunciation problems
- Difficulty learning new words
- Difficulty following simple directions
- Difficulty understanding questions
- Difficulty expressing wants and desires
- Difficulty rhyming words
- Lack of interest in story telling

Motor Skills

- Clumsiness
- Poor balance
- Difficulty manipulating small objects
- Awkwardness with running, jumping, or climbing
- Trouble learning to tie shoes, button shirts, or perform other self-help activities
- Avoidance of drawing or tracing

Cognition

- Trouble memorizing the alphabet or days of the week
- Poor memory for what should be routine (everyday) procedures
- Difficulty with cause and effect, sequencing, and counting
- Difficulty with basic concepts such as size, shape, color

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Attention

- High distractibility
- Impulsive behavior
- Unusual restlessness (hyperactivity)
- Difficulty staying on task
- Difficulty changing activities
- Constant repetition of an idea, inability to move on to a new idea (perseveration)

Social Behavior

- Trouble interacting with others, playing alone
- Prone to sudden and extreme mood changes
- Easily frustrated
- Hard to manage, has temper tantrums

Because early intervention is so important, federal law requires that school districts provide early identification and intervention services. The special education department of the local school district can direct families to the agency that provides these services. Families may also want to consult the child's doctor, who should also be able to refer the family to appropriate resources.

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