Types of Disability

A disability is an impairment (usually permanent) that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Accessibility Resources and Service supports students with a wide range of chronic medical conditions and disabilities including those with:

**Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder**

ADHD is a neurobiological, genetic disorder, characterized by difficulty sustaining focus and attention, hyperactivity, and/or difficulty controlling behavior. Although ADHD appears in childhood, the disorder is often lifelong.

**Autism Spectrum Condition / Disorder**

Autism Spectrum Disorders include High Functioning Autism and Asperger’s Syndrome. These conditions are thought to be neuro-biological and developmental disabilities affecting many aspects of functionality. Specific functional limitations are unique in nature and vary from person to person.

Some common limitations are difficulties with social reciprocity and friendships; social awkwardness; imaginative impairments and repetitive adherence, including concrete and literal uses of language, and a preference for routines; language impairments, including pronoun reversal, Echolalia, and late or no development of language; physical impairments, including fine or gross motor difficulties, and hyper- or hyposensitivity of the various senses; and learning impairments, including difficulty with organization, sequencing, distractibility, and slow processing.

**Chronic medical condition**

A condition that is medical in nature and currently impacts at least one major life activity, including learning. Often the impact of a medical disability is unpredictable and can change depending upon external stressors. Treatments for some medical conditions can often lead to side effects which can further impact upon the difficulties a person experiences. Furthermore, these impacts can be quite unpredictable with an individual experiencing periods of apparently good health and remission and periods of poor health.

These conditions include but are not limited to:

- Allergies
- Asthma
Learning difficulties

A learning disability is a neurological disorder where the brain works differently in how it takes in, uses, and outputs information. Although most individuals with a learning disability possess average to above average intelligence, they have difficulty with one or more areas such as math, reading, speaking, writing, spelling, visual-spatial perception, processing speed and understanding language.

Traumatic Brain Injury

A traumatic brain injury is an acquired injury to the brain. It can manifest limitations in multiple disability categories, including cognitive impairments.

Visual

A visual impairment describes vision loss, resulting in either impaired vision or a complete lack of sight. Visual impairments may be categorized as partially-sighted, low vision, legally blind or completely blind.

Hearing

A hearing impairment describes an impaired ability to hear and/or discriminate sounds. There may be a decreased ability to hear, no ability to hear at all, or a student may struggle with processing sounds, i.e. (central) auditory processing disorder. Hearing impairments can occur in different areas of the hearing pathway and may be genetic or caused by non-genetic factors.

Physical/Mobility

A mobility impairment is a broad category that includes any condition that makes it difficult for the student to move about and use their upper and/or lower limbs.

Psychological

Mental or behavioral patterns that may cause significant impairment or distress in several
aspects of a student's life, such as school, relationships, career, etc. These conditions include but are not limited to:

- anxiety
- depression
- bipolar disorder
- schizophrenia
- PTSD

Source URL: https://ars.unc.edu/faculty-staff/types-disability