



Practitioners' Task Force On Adults With Learning Disabilities



A PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE TO ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES





VISION: A comprehensive statewide interagency service delivery system that supports adults with learning disabilities and those suspected of having learning disabilities, in achieving their self-determined goals.

MISSION: To develop a statewide interagency service delivery system that maximizes access and resources for adults with learning disabilities and that enhances services and accommodations necessary to succeed.

GOAL #1: Awareness

Increase awareness, identification, and understanding of learning disabilities that will guide teachers, service providers, and employers in comprehending the impact of learning disabilities on an individual.

GOAL #2: Educational Gains

Increase the educational gains or outcomes of adult students with learning disabilities.

GOAL #3: Workforce Readiness

Increase access to the education and training necessary to prepare adults with learning disabilities for transition into the workforce.

GOAL #4: Resource Development

Increase access to resources for adults with learning disabilities using local, state, and national resources.

Source: "Creating a Statewide Delivery System for Adults with Learning Disabilities in Florida"

For more information go to <http://www.floridatechnet.org/LD/FINAL%20DRAFT%20-%20AUGUST%202005.pdf> or

<http://www.floridatechnet.org/marketplace.html#whitepapers>

A Guide to Learning Disabilities for Adult Education Practitioners and Literacy Providers

DO YOUR STUDENTS...

- Have problems recognizing sounds in words?
- Often need many repetitions to read new words?
- Take a long time to process and respond to what you say?
- Show a general disorganization in their writing?
- Mispronounce words?
- Have difficulty organizing what they want to say?

DID YOU KNOW...

- As many as 1 out of 5 people in the United States have a learning disability.
- 30-50% of the population has an undiagnosed learning disability.
- 50-80% of students in Adult Basic Education and literacy programs with low reading skills may have a suspected or diagnosed learning disability.
- 50-80% of people with Learning Disability and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder will also have some problems controlling emotion, dealing with change, interacting with others, and staying motivated.**
- 48% of those with learning disabilities are out of the workforce or unemployed.

*Source: Bridges to Practice: Florida's Focus on Adults with Learning Disabilities, Facts and Statistics on Learning Disabilities and Literacy, September 2003

**Co-Occurring Disorders, LDA of FL Newsletter, Spring 2006



What is a Learning Disability?

“A learning disability is a permanent information-processing disorder that affects the manner in which individuals with average to above average intelligence learn. LD causes deficits in areas such as reading, mathematics, and written language that are due to a central nervous system dysfunction. Learning disabilities occur regardless of gender, race, or ethnic origin and are not the result of poor academic background, mental retardation, or emotional disorders.”

Source: U.S. Office of Education



Adults with learning disabilities, are likely to experience lifelong difficulties that significantly affect their academic achievement and employment. In the course of instruction or tutoring, you are very likely to encounter adults who have been diagnosed, or who are in need of an evaluation for learning disabilities. An estimated 5-20% of the population may have a learning disability. It is estimated that 30-40% of people identified with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder also may have some form of a learning disability.

Behavioral difficulties with emotional and psychological problems may co-exist with learning disabilities.

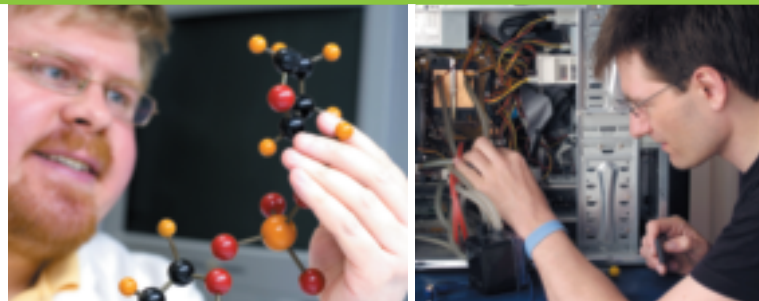
Learning disabilities are difficult to diagnose because they manifest themselves in many different ways. If an adult exhibits several of the following characteristics, he/she may benefit from an assessment by a qualified professional.

Characteristics Of A Learning Disability

- Has difficulty adopting routines
- Reads well but does not write well, or visa-versa
- Has a short attention span, is impulsive, and/or easily distracted
- Has difficulty telling or understanding jokes
- Misinterprets subtleties in language
- Has difficulty with social skills, misinterprets social cues
- Finds it difficult to memorize information
- Has difficulty following a schedule, being on time, or meeting deadlines
- Gets lost easily, driving or in large buildings
- Has trouble reading maps
- Often misreads or miscopies information
- Confuses/reverses similar numbers or letters
- Has difficulty reading the newspaper, following small print, or following columns
- Is able to explain things orally, but not in writing
- Has difficulty writing ideas on paper
- When writing, reverses or omits letters, words, or phrases
- Has difficulty completing job applications

Source: *The American Council on Education and the National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center*

It should be noted that students in your classroom may exhibit a number of the above characteristics associated with a learning disability. These characteristics may not be indicative of a learning disability unless the behaviors are persistent over time in spite of quality instruction and intervention.



- Has persistent problems with sentence structure, writing mechanics, and organizing written work
- Experiences problems spelling the same word differently in one document
- Has trouble dialing phone numbers and reading addresses
- Has difficulty with math, math language, and math concepts
- Has difficulty balancing a checkbook
- Confuses right and left, up and down
- Has difficulty following multiple directions
- Is poorly coordinated
- Is unable to tell you what has just been said
- Hears sounds, words, or sentences incorrectly

Assessing Possible Learning Disabilities

Are you working with an adult that demonstrates characteristics of learning disabilities but has not been formally diagnosed?

In order for the student to gain maximum benefit from instruction and give practitioners and literacy providers more information about how they learn, assessment for possible learning disabilities may be appropriate. The first step is to administer a simple screening to determine whether the learner should be referred for further testing.

Screening instruments are:

- Inexpensive
- Quick to administer and score, and easy to interpret
- Appropriate for large numbers of persons and may sometimes be administered in a group setting
- Narrow in purpose
- Able to provide an assessment in such areas as language, motor, or social skills and
- Usable without extensive staff training

*There are several screening tools designed for adult learners. They are listed under **Valuable Resources**.*



Accommodations

Accommodations refer to adjustments that are made in either instruction or assessment, and enable adults with learning disabilities to fully participate in an academic setting. There should be a natural flow between instruction and periods of assessment. Most accommodations can be made with little or no expense, and ideally provided within 30-45 days. It is also recommended that a 504 Plan be developed to address the student's need for accommodations and maintained with the student's documentation.

Sample Accommodations

Presentation:

- Repeating directions for student
- Revised work sheets
- Audiotapes
- Large print/Braille
- Fewer paragraphs or math problems
- Visual aids (i.e., arrows, highlighted text)

Response:

- Use larger-spaced answer sheets
- Dictate answers to teacher
- Use of a scribe/interpreter
- Response in alternate format
- Use of a calculator

Setting:

- Locate student near minimal distractions
- Small group instruction
- Improved lighting or acoustics

Timing/Scheduling:

- Flexible scheduling
- Extended time to complete tasks
- Frequent breaks
- Change the order of tasks

Source: Creating a Statewide Delivery System for Adults with Learning Disabilities - <http://www.floridatechnet.org/LD>



Rights & Responsibilities of Adults with Learning Disabilities

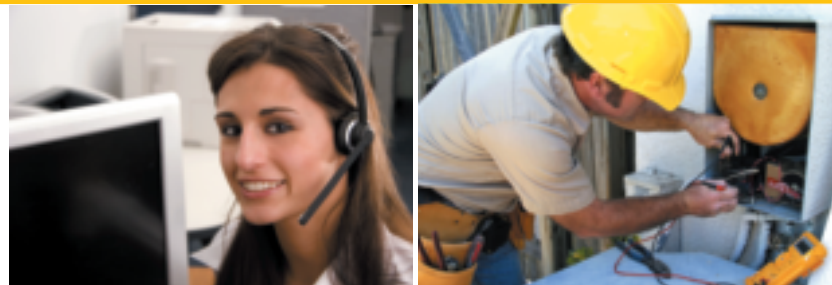
Individuals with disabilities are entitled to protections and services under federal and state laws and regulations:

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
- Florida Equity Act

These laws are implemented through policies and procedures, monitored by federal and local governances, and are upheld by the courts.

Adults with LD have the Right to:

- Participate in educational services without discrimination
- Self-disclose without discrimination
- Receive reasonable accommodations and services
- Examine their records
- File a grievance
- Have their confidentiality maintained



Adults with LD have the Responsibility to:

- Get professionally evaluated
- Self-identify and self-advocate
- Provide documentation of their disability
- Request accommodations

Provider Agencies Must:

- Refrain from discrimination based on disability
- Ensure staff is knowledgeable of students' needs and rights
- Provide accommodations and services

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Valuable Resources

Free On-Line Learning Needs Screening Tool

<http://www.floridatechnet.org/LD>

Free On-Line Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles

<http://www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles>

National Support Services/Organizations

Association on Higher Education & Disability (AHEAD)

P.O. Box 21192, Columbus, OH 43221

<http://www.ahead.org>

International Dyslexia Association (IDA)

8600 LaSalle Rd. Chester Bldg., Baltimore, MD 21286-2004

<http://www.interdys.org>

Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA)

4156 Library Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15234-1349,

<http://www.ldanatl.org>

National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD)

381 Park Avenue, South, Suite 1420, New York City, NY 10019

<http://www.nclld.org>

Literacy and Learning Disabilities

National Institute for Literacy, Bridges to Practice:

A Research-Based Curriculum for Literacy Practitioners

<http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/ld/bridges/bridges.html>

Teaching Strategies

<http://www.nichcy.org/pubs/bibliog/bib14txt.htm>

Transition

<http://www.thetransitioncenter.org>

Web-Based Training

<http://www.floridatechnet.org/bridges> (Part 1)

<http://www.floridatechnet.org/bridges/second> (Part 2)

Regional staff development training is available. For more information, contact: Practitioners' Task Force on Adults with LD at www.floridatechnet.org/ld

Intake Process and Delivery of Services

“Creating a Statewide Delivery System for Adults with Learning Disabilities in Florida” is a document prepared by the Interagency Writing Team on Adults with Learning Disabilities that describes a five-step intake process with suggested timeline for implementation.

