

Commonly Asked Questions About Learning Disabilities

What is a Learning Disability?

A learning disability is a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, read, write, spell or to do mathematical calculations.

The term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia.

The term DOES NOT include persons who have learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.

Joe Torgensen, Professor of Psychology at Florida State University, writes, “The core of learning disabilities is a biologically-based problem that occurs across cultural and socio-economic groups. If you’re an adult with a learning disability, you’ve had it your whole life. It has nothing to do with levels of general intelligence. It only affects a small group of things, but sometimes that range of things can be devastating, like reading problems.”

Who are Adult Learners with Learning Disabilities?

The National Adult Literacy Survey indicates that

- 43% of Learning Disabled adults live at or below the poverty level as compared to 18% of the general population
- 12.1% of Learning Disabled adults are on TANF (Welfare) as compared to 5.8% of the general population
- 17.5% of Learning Disabled adults are entering post-secondary education as compared to 43% of the general population
- 48% of Learning Disabled adults are out of the workforce or unemployed as compared to 26% of the general population
- Less than 16% of adults with Learning Disabilities report receiving special services for learning disabilities.

The U.S. Department of Labor’s report on “The Learning Disabled in Employment and Training Programs” indicates that:

- 50 - 80% of adults with reading skills below 5-7th grade level probably have a learning disability
- 15 - 23% of the total population in federally funded job training programs may have a learning disability
- 25 - 40% of people on welfare may have learning disabilities, although they have never been identified or made aware of any disabilities.

How may learning disabilities manifest themselves in the classroom?

Adults with learning disabilities may:

- have had restricted educational/training opportunities in the past
- have experienced limited vocation options

- feel isolated at work and in the community
- exhibit a poor self-concept
- experience an inferior quality of life
- be caught in a cycle of failure, lack of motivation, frustration and fear of risk-taking.

On the other hand, adults with learning disabilities may have:

- **Superior problem-solving skills.** Since successful adults with learning disabilities must often seek creative solutions that are “outside the box”, they develop skills to construct imaginative answers to difficult problems.
- **An out-going personality.** As a result of their history of failure, many adults with learning disabilities develop gregarious personalities to help hide their learning problems.
- **Strong compensatory skills.** Individuals with learning disabilities often compensate for literacy deficits by developing strong skills in other areas.
- **Empathy.** Because they can relate to the pain of failure, adults with learning disabilities can often provide strong emotional support to others going through crisis.
- **Persistence.** Persistence is the hallmark of many adults with learning disabilities who have refused to give up despite their difficulties and frustrations. If channeled appropriately, this experience can contribute to an active sense of dedication and purpose.

What makes adults with learning disabilities successful?

Research indicates that the factors that increase the likelihood of success focus on the following conditions:

- Being informed that they have the disability
- Accepting the disability
- Developing approaches to education and employment that acknowledge the disability and do not attempt to avoid the problems or label them as “learning differences” or “learning difficulties”
- Desire to succeed
- Goal orientation
- Reframing past learning disability experiences in more positive and productive manners

How do I decide if one of my students has a learning disability?

The National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center recommends that all adults who suspect they may have a learning disability should have an assessment by a qualified professional. An adult is assessed because of problems in employment, education and/or life situations. It is important for the adult to be fully involved in the assessment process.

The first stage of an evaluation is a screening. Screening tools use abbreviated, informal methods to determine if an individual is “at risk” for a learning disability. When conducting the evaluation, a qualified professional may first refer to the results of the screening in order to plan which tests to administer. Teachers may screen their own students. A screening tool is included on pages (18-23) in this Resource Guide.

Teachers should consult their principals to locate professionals qualified to administer and interpret assessments for learning disabilities.

What should I know about assessment to share with my student?

Teachers of students waiting to be assessed may want to ask the professional the following questions about the process:

Have you tested many adults with learning disabilities?

How long will the assessment take?

What will the assessment cover?

Will there be a written and an oral report of the assessment?

Will the results help this student understand both why he/she is having trouble and give instruction on how to compensate for the disability?

Is there a fee? Who is responsible for paying the fee? (Student, insurance, county, etc.)

What should I look for before screening a student for learning needs?

Consult the “Characteristics of Adults with Learning Disabilities” that follows on page (198).

It lists specific behaviors and attitudes in regards to reading, writing, listening, speaking, mathematics and thinking that suggest an adult student may have a learning disability.

How confidential is information about learning disabilities?

Disability-related information should be treated as medical information and held in strict confidence.

Disability-related information includes any documentation that a person with a disability must provide to establish the existence of a disability and needed accommodations.

Disability-related information should be collected and stored in locked files with limited access.

Such information should only be shared when the need to know directly relates to some specific aspect of this confidential information and the person with the disability has signed a statement of release for that specific request for information.

Teaching Suggestions for Adults with Suspected Learning Disabilities/Differences

Dr. Susan A. Vogel prepared the following list of pointers as a contribution to Literacy Volunteers of America's training guide for tutors

Some adults with severe learning disabilities (LD) or learning differences may need specialized and intensive instruction in order to learn how to read and write; but most will be able to make slow, steady progress. The following are some general teaching suggestions based on principles of learning. They are not unique to the field of learning disabilities. All learners will benefit when you use them, but especially adults with LD.

1. Break tasks down into a logical sequence of discrete steps.
2. Pre-test, teach, test, reteach, as needed, and review.
3. Provide multiple opportunities to respond, interact with the teacher and classmates, and participate. The more active the learner, the more learning is taking place.
4. Be sure mastery has been achieved before moving on to the next step in the sequence of learning tasks.
5. Provide frequent feedback that describes what was done well and how it might be improved.
6. Encourage students to tell you how they learn best, and use this information to design future lessons.
7. Use color, highlighter, enlargement of print, and underlining to strengthen the visual input and enhance visual memory.
8. De-emphasize oral reading as this may interfere with comprehension and also embarrass the student. Use oral reading only for select purposes and in private. When instruction takes place in small groups, call on students with LD only if they volunteer to participate. Preparing passages for oral reading in advance of the group instruction may help prevent failure and embarrassment. Choral reading may be helpful.
9. De-emphasize closely timed tests and tasks.
10. Slow down the rate of your speech (assuming it is usually rapid) emphasizing important points. Maintain eye contact in order to assess level of comprehension, encourage participation, give and get feedback, and maintain attention.
11. Maximize success and enhance self-esteem by providing opportunities for the student to be successful.

12. Encourage the use of compensatory strategies (e.g., tape recording sessions, directions, assignments, and discussions) as aids for those with memory deficits.
13. Teach word processing skills, use of spelling and grammar checkers, and other software.
14. Use multi-media approaches such as audio cassette with text or video tape to preview story line of novel to supplement information from print.
15. Teach memory enhancement strategies that will aid recall, such as listing, rewriting, categorizing, alphabetizing, visualizing, and use of associations and acronyms.

The specific strategies of choice should be individualized based on the individual's profile and the effectiveness of each strategy. This segment of the adult education population is one of the most challenging to work with, and you may also want to reach out for assistance and refer the adult with a suspected learning disability to specialists for a full assessment, career counseling, and further literacy training.

Published in the National Institute for Literacy Newsletter, Volume 3, Number 4, Spring 1996. Found online at <http://novel.nifl.gov/newsletters/nspr96.htm> and available through subscriptions.

Some Thoughts on Learning ABILITIES: *Another Point of View*

Leslie Shelton is the Director of Project Read in South San Francisco and a current NIFL fellow. With the help of adult learners, she has developed a training curriculum called “Honoring Diversity,” based on the theory of multiple intelligences and the importance of gearing instruction to students’ learning styles. The following points touch on some of her perspectives about how we deal with adult learners.

- Where do we focus our efforts in working with adults? There are two possible vantage points—an emphasis on disabilities or an emphasis on abilities. Do we follow a “medical model” approach to dissecting and analyzing problems, or do we focus on understanding how people learn, on promoting excellence in learning? While these aren’t mutually exclusive, I fear we’re concentrating on another specialty area that breaks a human being’s cognitive processes into small pieces rather than looking at the whole person. We spend too much time focusing on a person’s incapacities instead of capacities, on the part of the person that’s “not working” versus the part that is.
- It’s important to understand and identify barriers to learning, and to develop assessment tools that can be used to identify processing difficulties, but we need an equal, if not greater, effort to develop and disseminate instructional strategies that work.
- The label “learning disabilities” has benefits and drawbacks. The field benefits from research that helps us understand what’s happening to people neurologically. And it can help learners understand that they aren’t crazy or stupid. But what’s the price? Does the label become a crutch, or a cross to bear? And how do they benefit once they’re “diagnosed?”
- People with significant learning disabilities may benefit from the label if they need reasonable accommodation in a work setting or test-taking situation. But most of the adult learners I see do not have significant learning disabilities. Rather, their strongest learning intelligences don’t match the way we teach. They often have strong spatial, body, social, and musical intelligences—strengths that have been minimally used to teach literacy.
- One of the biggest problems I see is low self-esteem due to the labeling or being placed in special education as children. I have noticed that learners often will come into the program and say they think that they are dyslexic, but not that they are learning disabled. For many people, there is a stigma to “learning disabled,” and it does not boost a person’s self-esteem.
- From a Multiple Intelligences point of view, we are all unique as learners. Our “learning portrait” is as unique as our face. We all have learning difficulties in something, but we don’t learn by focusing on our difficulties. Why do we say that people with reading difficulties are “compensating” when they use their social skills or artistic skills or physical talents to help them learn, but we don’t call it compensating for others who use their talents to get around weaknesses? Focusing on strengths is much more powerful than focusing on disabilities.

- Who's the expert? Learners are often the best authority on what works for them. Many of them have already figured it out. Learners need to be equal partners in the process. And we the educators need to --
 1. Focus on what's right instead of what's wrong.
 2. Teach adult learners about the many ways they are smart.
 3. Help them do their own analysis of how they learn best, and include them in developing strategies that work.

Published in the National Institute for Literacy Newsletter, Volume 3, Number 4, Spring 1996.
Found online at <http://novel.nifl.gov/newsletters/nspr96.htm> and available through subscription.

Characteristics of Adults with Learning Disabilities

Reading Characteristics	What it Looks Like in an Adult
Does not read for pleasure.	Engages in leisure activities other than reading magazines or books; prefers more active pursuits. Doesn't read stories to his/her children.
Does not use reading to gather information.	Cannot easily use materials like newspapers and classified ads to obtain information.
Has problems identifying individual sounds in spoken words.	Does not attempt to sound out words in reading or does so incorrectly.
Often needs many repetitions to learn to recognize a new or unused word.	May encounter a newly learned word in a text and not recognize it when it appears later in that text.
Oral reading contains many errors, repetitions and pauses.	Reads slowly and laboriously, if attempts at all. May refuse to read orally.
Efforts in reading are so focused on word recognition that it detracts from reading comprehension.	Loses the meaning of text, but understands the same material when it is read aloud.
Has problems with comprehension that go beyond word recognition. May have limited language skills that affect comprehension.	Does not understand the text when it is read to him/her.
Has limited use of reading strategies. Is an inactive reader; not previewing text, monitoring comprehension or summarizing what is read.	When prompted to do so, does not describe strategies used to assist with decoding and comprehension of text.
Rarely practices reading, which may compound reading difficulties. Lacks complex language and word knowledge.	Recognizes and uses fewer words, expressions and sentence structures than peers.

Writing Characteristics	What it Looks Like in an Adult
Has difficulty communicating through writing.	Rarely writes letters or notes. Needs help completing forms such as as job applications.
Written output is severely limited.	Struggles to produce a written product. Produces short sentences and text with limited vocabulary.
Writing is disorganized.	Omits critical parts or puts information in the wrong place. Writing lacks transition words.
Lacks a clear purpose for writing.	Does not communicate a clear message. Expresses thoughts that don't contribute to the main idea.
Does not use the appropriate text structures.	Uses sentences that contain errors in syntax or word choice. Fails to clearly indicate the referent of a pronoun.
Shows persistent problems in spelling.	Spells phonetically. Leaves out letters. Refrains from writing words that are difficult to spell.
Has difficulties with mechanics of written expression.	Omits or misuses sentence markers such as capitals and end punctuation, making it difficult for the reader to understand the text.
Handwriting is sloppy and difficult to read.	Has awkward writing grip or position. Letters, words and lines are misaligned or not spaced appropriately.
Demonstrates difficulties in revising.	Is reluctant to proofread or does not catch errors. Focuses primarily on the mechanics of writing, not on style and content.

Listening Characteristics	What it Looks Like in an Adult
Has problems perceiving slight distinctions in words.	Misunderstands a message with a word mistaken for a similar word. Might say, "Pick up the grass," instead of, "Pick up the glass."
Has a limited vocabulary.	Recognizes and uses fewer words than peers when engaged in conversation or when gathering information by listening.
Finds abstract words or concepts difficult to understand.	Requests repetitions or more concrete explanations of ideas. Frequently asks for examples.
Has difficulty with nonliteral or figurative language such as metaphors, idioms and sarcasm.	Does not understand jokes or comic strips.
Confuses the message in complex sentences.	Will eat lunch first if given the direction, "Eat lunch after you take this to the mail room."
Has difficulty with verbal memory.	Doesn't remember directions, phone numbers, jokes, stories, etc.
Has difficulty processing large amounts of spoken language.	Gets lost listening in classroom or large group presentations, complaining that people talk too fast.

Speaking Characteristics	What it Looks Like in an Adult
Mispronounces words.	Adds, substitutes or rearranges sounds in words, as in <i>phemomenon</i> for <i>phenomenon</i> or <i>Pacific</i> for <i>specific</i> .
Uses wrong word, usually with similar sounds.	Uses a similar-sounding word, like <i>generic</i> instead of <i>genetic</i> .
Confuses the morphology, or structure, of words.	Uses the wrong form of a word, such as calling the <i>Declaration of Independence</i> the <i>Declaring of Independence</i> .
Has a limited vocabulary.	Uses the same words over and over in giving information and explaining ideas. Has difficulty conveying ideas.
Makes grammatical errors.	Omits or uses grammatical markers incorrectly, such as tense, number, possession and negation.
Speaks with a limited repertoire of phrase and sentence structure.	Uses mostly simple sentence construction. Overuses <i>and</i> to connect thoughts.
Has difficulty organizing what to say.	Has problems giving directions or explaining a recipe; talks around the topic (circumlocutes), but doesn't get to point.
Has trouble maintaining a topic.	Interjects irrelevant information into story. Starts out discussing one thing and then goes off in another direction without making the connection.
Has difficulty with word retrieval.	Can't call forth a known word when it is needed and may use fillers, such as "ummm," and "You know." May substitute a word related in meaning or sound, as in <i>boat</i> for <i>submarine</i> or <i>selfish</i> for <i>bashful</i> . May use an "empty word," such as <i>stuff</i> . May describe rather than name, as in <i>a boat that goes underwater</i> .
Has trouble with the pragmatic or social use of language.	Does not follow rules of conversation like turn-taking. Does not switch styles of speaking when addressing different people.

Mathematics Characteristics	What it Looks Like in an Adult
Doesn't remember and/or retrieve math facts.	Uses a calculator or counts on fingers for answers to simple problems; <i>e.g.</i> , 2 X 5.
Doesn't use visual imagery effectively.	Can't do math in his/her head and writes down even simple problems. Has difficulty making change.
Has visual-spatial deficits.	Confuses math symbols. Misreads numbers. Doesn't interpret graphs or tables accurately. Has trouble maintaining a checkbook.
Becomes confused with math operations, especially multi-step processes.	Leaves out steps in math problem-solving or does them in the wrong order. Can't do long division except with a calculator. Has trouble budgeting.
Has difficulties in language processing that affect the ability to do math problem-solving.	Doesn't translate real-life problems into the appropriate mathematical processes. Avoids employment situations that involve this set of skills.

Thinking Characteristics	What it Looks Like in an Adult
Has problems with abstract reasoning.	Asks to see ideas on paper. Prefers hands-on ways of learning new ideas.
Shows marked rigidity in thinking.	Resists new ideas or ways of doing things and may have difficulty adjusting to changes on the job.
Thinking is random as opposed to orderly, either in logic or chronology.	May have good ideas that seem disjointed, unrelated or out of sequence.
Has difficulty synthesizing ideas.	Pays too much attention to detail and misses the big picture or idea when encountering specific situations at home or at work.
Makes impulsive decisions and judgments.	"Shoots from the hip" when arriving at conclusions or decisions. Doesn't use a structured approach to weigh options.
Has difficulty generating strategies to acquire/use information and solve problems.	Approaches situations without a game plan, acting without a guiding set of principles.

“Other Difficulties” Characteristics	What it Looks Like in an Adult
Has problems with attention, which may be accompanied by hyperactivity, distractibility or passivity.	Doesn't focus on a task for an appropriate length of time. Can't seem to get things done. Does better with short tasks.
Displays poor organizational skills.	Doesn't know where to begin tasks or how to proceed. Doesn't work within time limits, failing to meet deadlines. Work space and personal space are messy.
Has eye-hand coordination problems. Demonstrates poor fine motor control, usually accompanied by poor handwriting.	Omits or substitutes elements when copying information from one place to another, as in invoices or schedules. Avoids jobs requiring manipulation of small items. Becomes frustrated when putting together toys for children.
Lacks social perception.	Stands too close to people when conversing. Doesn't perceive situations accurately. May laugh when something serious is happening or slap an unreceptive boss on the back in an attempt to be friendly.
Has problems establishing social relationships. Problems may be related to spoken language disorders.	Does not seem to know how to act and what to say to people in specific social situations and may withdraw from socializing.
Lacks “executive functions,” including self-motivation, self-reliance, self-advocacy and goal-setting.	Demonstrates over reliance on others for assistance or fails to ask for help when appropriate. Blames external factors on lack of success. Doesn't set personal goals and work deliberately to achieve them. Expresses helplessness.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

- Present information in small manageable steps
 - Rephrase questions both during discussions and on exams
 - Teach new materials in concrete ways (give examples)
 - Teach organizational skills such as color coding and filing
 - Relate new material to student's everyday life
 - Discuss and study new vocabulary words before they appear in the instructional material
 - Prepare handouts in typewritten form
 - Provide frequent feedback
 - Experiment with the use of large print
 - Provide outlines for lessons on new material
 - Prepare students for changes in routines
 - Teach students to proofread for each other
 - Make frequent eye contact
 - Encourage student questions
 - Structure activities
 - Use graph paper to help with letter spacing in writing
 - Set up instructional space away from distractions (away from the door, windows, or heating/air-conditioning units)
 - Restate information on test questions in a variety of ways
 - Use a sheet of colored transparency to change the contrast between ink and paper on duplicated materials
-
- Use graphics to reinforce learning
 - In math, encourage the use of a number line
 - Use color coding
 - Write directions for assignments
 - Use a highlighter to call attention to key words or phrases, especially during testing
 - Teach the use of alternative notetaking systems such as outlining, graphing, flow-charting, and diagramming
 - Form a mental picture of words or facts to be memorized
-
- Use Books on Tape from Recordings for the Blind and/or Talking Books from state libraries for the blind
 - Encourage students to read along with taped texts
 - Use interactive activities during class time
 - Use oral testing
 - Use oral as well as written directions
 - Let students read together aloud
 - Ask students to repeat directions orally

- Have students read aloud or subvocalize (form the words without saying them out loud)
 - Speak in even, measured tones
 - Use music and rhythms to reinforce learning
 - Encourage students to read first drafts of written work aloud
 - Encourage students to tape “write” first drafts and/or tape test answers
-
- Use hands-on activities
 - Use simulation and board games
 - Pair students to work together on assignments
 - Allow for frequent breaks from studying
 - Change activities frequently
 - Touch students on the arm or shoulder to re-focus attention
 - Trace letters and words to learn spelling
 - Use the computer (i.e., word processing spell checks)
 - Memorize and drill for rote learning while walking or exercising
 - Provide opportunities for touching and handling instructional materials (manipulatives)
 - Use a calculator or abacus in math
 - Use index cards rather than notebooks for notetaking

Source: “A Learning Disabilities Digest for Literacy Providers,”
published by the Learning Disabilities Association of America.

LEARNING NEEDS SCREENING

INTERVIEWER NAME: _____

INTERVIEW DATE: _____

CLIENT NAME: _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____ GENDER: MALE FEMALE

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER _____

HOW MANY YEARS OF SCHOOL HAVE YOU HAD? _____

- CHECK ALL EARNED:
- HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA
 - GED
 - TECHNICAL/VOCATIONAL CERTIFICATE
 - AA DEGREE
 - OTHER (SPECIFY): _____

WHAT KIND OF JOB WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET? _____

DO YOU HAVE EXPERIENCE IN THIS AREA? YES NO

WHAT MAKES IT HARD FOR YOU TO GET OR KEEP THIS KIND OF JOB?

WHAT WOULD HELP? _____

BEFORE PROCEEDING TO THE QUESTIONS, READ THIS STATEMENT ALOUD TO THE CLIENT:

The following questions are about your school and life experiences.

We're trying to find out how it was for you (or your family members) when you were in school or how some of these issues might affect your life now. Your responses to these questions will help identify resources and services you might need to be successful securing employment.

See final page for directions and scoring.

The Learning Needs Screening is not a diagnostic tool and should not be used to determine the existence of a disability.

SECTION A _____

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Did you have any problems learning in middle/junior high school? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 2. Do any family members have learning problems? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 3. Do you have difficulty working with numbers in columns? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 4. Do you have trouble judging distances? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 5. Do you have problems working from a test booklet to an answer sheet? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |

Count the number of "Yes's" for Section A ____ x 1 =

SECTION B _____

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 6. Do you have difficulty or experience problems mixing arithmetic sign (+/x)? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 7. Did you have any problems learning in elementary school? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |

Count the number of "Yes's" for Section B ____ x 2 =

SECTION C _____

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 8. Do you have difficulty remembering how to spell simple words you know? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 9. Do you have difficulty filling out forms? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 10. Did you (do you) experience difficulty memorizing numbers? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |

Count the number of "Yes's" for Section C ____ x 3 =

SECTION D _____

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 11. Do you have trouble adding and subtracting small numbers in your head? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 12. Do you have difficulty or experience problems taking notes? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 13. Were you ever in a special program or given extra help in school? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |

Count the number of "Yes's" for Section D ____ x 4 =

TOTAL YES'S MULTIPLIED BY FACTOR INDICATED FOR SECTIONS A, B, C, D

See final page for directions and scoring.

The Learning Needs Screening is not a diagnostic tool and should not be used to determine the existence of a disability.

14. Check to see if the client has ever been diagnosed or told he/she has a learning disability. If so,

By whom?

When?

Notes: _____

LEARNING NEEDS SCREENING DIRECTIONS

1. Ask the client each question in each section (A, B, C, D) and question #14.
2. Record the client's responses, checking "Yes" or "No."
3. Count the number of "Yes" answers in each section.
4. Multiply the number of "Yes" responses in each section by the number shown in the section subtotal. For example, multiply the number of "Yes's" obtained in Section C by 3.
5. Record the number obtained for each section of the "=" sign in the section subtotal.
6. To obtain a Total, add the subtotals from sections A, B, C and D. If the Total from sections A, B, C and D is 12 or more, refer for further assessment.

Note: It is recommended interviewers ask an additional set of medical/health-based questions to gather more complete background information.

The Learning Needs Screening was developed for the Washington State Division of Employment and Social Services Learning Disabilities Initiative (November 1994 to June 1997) under contract with Nancie Payne, Senior Consultant, Payne & Associated, Olympia, Washington.

The Learning Needs Screening is not a diagnostic tool and should not be used to determine the existence of a disability.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS WHICH MAY BE ASKED:

GLASSES:

- Does the client need or wear glasses? YES NO
Last examination was within two years? YES NO

HEARING:

- Does the client need or wear a hearing aid? YES NO

MEDICAL/PHYSICAL:

Has the client experienced any of the following:

- multiple, chronic ear infections YES NO
- multiple, chronic sinus problems YES NO
- serious accidents resulting in head trauma YES NO
- prolonged, high fevers YES NO
- diabetes YES NO
- severe allergies YES NO
- frequent headaches YES NO
- concussion or head injury YES NO
- convulsions or seizures YES NO
- long-term substance abuse problems YES NO
- serious health problems YES NO

Is the client taking any medications that would affect the way he/she is functioning? YES NO

If yes, what is the client taking? _____

How often? _____

Does the client need medical or follow-up services? YES NO

Referrals needed/made: _____

LEARNING NEEDS SCREENING CLIENT COPY

How many years or schooling have you had?

Check all earned:

- High School Diploma
- GED
- Technical/Vocational Certificate
- Other (specify): _____

What kind of job would you like to get? _____

Do you have any experience in this area? _____

What makes it hard for you to get or keep this kind of job? _____

What would help? _____

The following questions are about your school and life experiences.

We're trying to find out how it was for you (or your family members) when you were in school or how some of these issues might affect your life now. Your responses to these questions will help identify resources and services you might need to be successful securing employment.

1. Did you have any problems learning in middle school or junior high school?

2. Do any family members have learning problems?

3. Do you have difficulty working with numbers in columns?

4. Do you have trouble judging distances?

5. Do you have problems working from a test booklet to an answer sheet?

6. Do you have difficulty or experience problems mixing arithmetic signs (+/x)?

7. Did you have any problems learning in elementary school?

8. Do you have any difficulty remembering how to spell simple words you know?

9. Do you have difficulty filling out forms?

10. Did you (do you) experience difficulty memorizing numbers?

11. Do you have trouble adding and subtracting small numbers in your head?

12. Do you have difficulty or experience problems taking notes?

13. Were you ever in a special program or given extra help in school?

Recommended Resources for Dealing with Learning Disabilities

National Institute for Literacy

1775 I Street, NW, Suite 730
Washington DC 20006-2401
Phone: 202-233-2025
Fax: 202-233-2050
NIFL Hotline: 800-228-8813
<http://www.nifl.gov>

National Center for Learning Disabilities

<http://www.nclld.org/>

This site provides free information on LD and resources to parents, professionals and adults with LD in the community.

LD Online: Learning Disabilities Resources

<http://www.ldonline.org/>

This site includes weekly links to current articles about LD and monthly topics.

Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) Hotline: 800-949-4232

Equal Employment Opportunity Administration: 800-669-3362

Job Accommodations Network (JAN): 800-562-7234 (TTY)

GED National 24-Hour Hotline: 800-626-9433

Provides information on local GED classes, testing services and accommodations for Learning Disabilities

National Library of Education: 800-424-1616