

# COMMON DISABILITIES AND BEHAVIORS

Sometimes children have physical or mental challenges called disabilities. Students with disabilities can have trouble learning and following rules. Schools cannot suspend children with disabilities for more than ten (10) days without a special meeting. This meeting is called a Manifestation Meeting or MDR (Manifestation Determination Review). At the Manifestation Meeting, the school must decide whether the disability contributed to the behavior problem.

Ask the school for a Manifestation Meeting whenever the school wants to suspend a child for more than 10 days. To figure out whether the suspension is more than 10 days, add up all the child's suspensions for the whole school year at the child's current school.

## Common Disabilities

## Behaviors

Attention Deficit  
Hyperactivity Disorder  
("ADHD")

A child with ADHD may have a hard time focusing on schoolwork and listening to a teacher's instructions. Some children with ADHD try to hide that they are having trouble learning and may goof off or make classmates laugh to distract them. The child may also blurt out answers or talk a lot in class.

Bipolar Disorder

A child with bipolar disorder may cycle through depressive and manic states (often mistaken as "mood swings"). In a depressive state, a child may seem sad, sleepy, or have little energy. The child may not want to participate in class or other activities that the child used to enjoy. In a manic state, a child may seem to have a lot of energy, appear to be "buzzing," or seem not to need sleep. They may show hypersexualized or risky behaviors or have racing thoughts and speech. For example, a child may engage in risky behaviors like having sex or doing illegal drugs in school, without seeming to consider any negative consequences.

## Common Disabilities (continued)

## Behaviors

### Conduct Disorder

A child with conduct disorder may break rules often. For example, the child may steal, destroy property, act aggressively toward people or animals, run away from home or school, or fight other students. A child with conduct disorder may seem to not care about breaking rules. For example, they may not act sorry even if they hurt someone.

### Depressive Disorders

A child with a depressive disorder may have very low energy or have trouble focusing. For example, the child may sleep through class, or not pay attention to classmates or activities. Some children with depressive disorders have suicidal thoughts or actions. They may also seem anxious or refuse to participate in activities that they used to enjoy.

### Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder ("DMDD")

A child with DMDD may be anxious or become easily irritated. For example, if a teacher tells the child to change their behavior, the child may have an extreme or excessive emotional reaction. The child may throw a tantrum, throw things, shout, or act violently. The child may also have sudden, angry outbursts that appear to happen for little or no reason.

### Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder ("PTSD")

A child with PTSD will often actively avoid any triggers that remind them of a past traumatic event. For example, a child with PTSD from physical abuse may avoid being touched at all costs or may react violently if they are touched at all, even by a trusted classmate or teacher. A child with PTSD may be easily startled, think that small incidents are actually large threats, or may not trust other people. A child with PTSD may also show signs of depression, anxiety, or may be easily irritated. For example, the child may appear unfocused or sleepy, unmotivated, or disengaged. The child may seem easily agitated.

### Oppositional Defiance Disorder ("ODD")

A child with ODD often challenges authority figures. For example, a child may break rules on purpose, or start arguments or fights with authority figures like parents, teachers, or school administrators. A child with ODD can be easily angered or irritable, and often blames others for their own mistakes. For example, the child may not admit wrongdoing or may feel like they are the victim in behavior incidents.

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For a more comprehensive list of disabilities that trigger protections under federal education law, search for the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#).