

## Chapter 3

# Other Health Impairment (OHI) Disabilities Category and an In-Depth Look at the Most Common Neurobiological Condition for Students

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The other health impairment (OHI) disability category refers to a condition that causes limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including heightened alertness to environmental stimuli that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment due to a chronic or acute health problem and adversely affects a child's educational performance. This disability category, as explored in this chapter, may include one or a combined type of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, kidney disease, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette's syndrome. As a result of the child's other health impairment, as described above, the child is prevented from receiving reasonable educational benefit from general education.*

*Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid. -Albert Einstein*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Other Health Impairment (OHI) disability category refers to a condition that causes limited strength, vitality or alertness, including heightened alertness to environmental stimuli that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment due to a chronic or acute health problem and adversely affects a child's educational performance (IDEA, 2004). This disability category may include, but is not limited to, one or a combined type of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, kidney disease, Sickle cell anemia and Tourette Syndrome.

As a result of the child's Other Health Impairment, as described above, the child is prevented from receiving reasonable educational benefit from general education as evidenced by one or more of the following: limited strength as indicated by an inability to perform typical tasks at school, limited vitality as indicated by an inability to sustain effort or to endure throughout an activity and/or limited alertness as indicated by an inability to manage or maintain attention, to organize or to attend, to prioritize environmental stimuli, including heightened alertness to environmental stimuli that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment.

In school year 2019-2020 there were 1,079,301 students across the United States, outlying areas and freely associated states identified with a disability included in the Other Health Impairment (OHI) category. It is not the sole existence of the disability or condition that determines if a student may receive services. The degree to which the student's education is adversely affected, state policies and assessments from a psychological evaluation are reviewed by the IEP team, led by a school psychologist, to determine if the student qualifies for special education services.

In many cases extended absence due to the medical condition or daily school nurse services are necessary to make sure the student receives a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). By their very nature, Other Health Impairments involve medical care and medical concerns. The amount of time that must be devoted to doctor visits, medical appointments, hospitalization, and seeing to the child's well-being will depend greatly on the nature and severity of the child's health impairment. For many families, the actual medical care of their child can be a daily, weekly, or monthly challenge. It's not uncommon for a child with an OHI to be absent for long periods of time, especially if hospitalization is necessary. During these times, the public school remains responsible for providing educational and related services to the eligible student. Because IDEA specifically says that special education can be provided in a range of settings, including the home or the hospital, states and school districts will have policies and approaches for addressing children's individualized needs and circumstances.

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