



Strength-Based and Neurodiversity Affirming Eligibility Toolkit (SET)

*A Supplemental Guide for Affirming
Special Education Eligibility Determination*

The Strength-Based and Neurodiversity-Affirming Eligibility Toolkit (SET) provides school-based multidisciplinary teams with a practical framework for documenting a student's unique developmental profile and eligibility for special education services. This resource bridges traditional IDEA criteria with an affirming lens, moving away from deficit-based labeling toward a model of support-based identification.



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Included in this Toolkit:

- **Reframed IDEA Criteria:** Affirming interpretations for all 13 eligibility categories that prioritize support needs over inherent deficits.
- **Profile-Based Rating Scales:** Structured Likert-scale tools designed to document the frequency of student characteristics across various environments to document eligibility.
- **Environmental Mismatch Logic:** A specialized Eligibility Determination Summary that frames “adverse effect” as the mismatch between a student’s profile and the demands of the traditional education setting.



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The **Strength-Based and Neurodiversity-Affirming Eligibility Toolkit (SET)** is a supplemental resource designed to support Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams in special education eligibility determination through an affirming, culturally sensitive, and strength-based lens. It guides multidisciplinary teams in documenting a student's unique developmental profile through language that bridges traditional IDEA criteria and a strength-based understanding of neurodivergence, ensuring that each student's authentic way of engaging with the world is captured during the eligibility process. All 13 IDEA criteria are represented through individual SETs rooted in reframed eligibility criteria that capture the student's needs authentically while still aligning with special education law.

Each individual SET includes several characteristics related to patterns of strengths and needs for the specific eligibility category it represents, organized by domain/criteria for ease of reference. For each characteristic, practitioners and teams rate frequency on a Likert scale from 0 (Never) to 3 (Almost Always) to describe how often the individual being evaluated demonstrates the characteristic listed.

The SET can be used as a structured framework and discussion guide to organize observations and data gathered across multiple environments during the special education evaluation process, ensuring evidence is captured for each domain. While "high" (2-3) ratings are not needed for every characteristic to determine eligibility, the domains are meant to provide common characteristics or presentations of the disability category through language that identifies support needs rather than inherent deficits. The quantitative ratings and qualitative descriptions are designed to be integrated directly into the "Eligibility" or "Summary of Findings" sections of an evaluation report or IEP documentation to provide a robust, affirming rationale for the presence of a disability and its adverse effect on education using language that centers the student's needs humanely and holistically.

Important Compliance Note: This tool is a supplemental resource only. It is designed to support a strength-based and neurodiversity-affirming lens of special education eligibility discussions and the IEP process. Because special education evaluations require a comprehensive review of the student's educational experience, this tool should be used in conjunction with data gathered from general education interventions, such as Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) or Response to Intervention (RTI). Practitioners must always follow their specific state and district eligibility criteria and legal definitions to determine IDEA eligibility.

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Autism SBNA Eligibility Tool (AUT SET)

Purpose: This tool supports multidisciplinary teams in documenting the student's **Autistic profile**, identifying if their unique neurotype and/or learning, social, and communication differences create a mismatch with traditional educational settings, necessitating specialized instruction.

Ultimately, the IEP team must follow their state's eligibility criteria. This tool is a supplement only.

Autism IDEA Eligibility Definition

Autism means a **developmental disability** significantly **affecting** verbal and nonverbal communication and **social interaction**, generally evident before age three, that **adversely affects** a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in **repetitive activities** and **stereotyped movements**, **resistance** to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. Autism does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional **disturbance**.

Autism SBNA Reframed Definition

Autism represents a **unique developmental profile**, often evident before age three, that leads to a distinct way of engaging with the world. Autistic individuals often express themselves in **non-conventional** ways. Verbally, this may include deep verbal expression of areas of passion, direct communication, consistent tone, animated vocalizations, scripted language (also known as "gestalts"), and alternative augmentative communication such as pictures, speech generating devices, gestures, and facial expressions. Autistic people have **differences** in their use and understanding of **neurotypical** non-verbal communication, such as integrating and decoding subtle changes in tone, pitch, facial expressions, or body language. Socially, Autistic individuals often show a **preference** for meaningful and sincere connections, often **thriving** in environments where interactions are **predictable** and based on shared interests. They may have difficulty connecting with non-Autistic peers due to a **mismatch** of **social communication styles** and preferences. Other characteristics associated with autism may include a **need for consistency** and **specialized interests**, engaging in **self-stimulatory** behaviors as a means of **regulation** or **self-expression**, and/or **sensory differences** such as having heightened sensitivity and seeking or avoiding sensory experiences. The determination of Autism is centered on understanding the child's unique learning and interaction styles rather than emotional **differences** alone.

Autism SBNA Eligibility Tool (AUT SET)

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student's authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain I: Communication & Expression Profile	Rating (0-3)
Expression: The student expresses themselves through direct communication, deep verbal deep-dives into passions, or distinctive paraverbal elements (e.g., animated vocalizations, unique intonations, or varied vocal volume). For individuals who are non or minimally speaking, expression is supported through alternative, multimodal methods (e.g., AAC systems, pictures, or robust gestural communication).	
Gestalt Language Processing: The student utilizes scripted language, “chunks” of familiar phrases, or echolalia to share meaning, initiate interest, and learn language.	
Nonverbal Communication: The student requires support to navigate nonverbal communication dynamics. This includes decoding subtle physical cues in others (e.g., shifts in facial expressions, body language, gestures, or physical positioning), as well as consistently integrating their own nonverbal cues to match their intended message during interactions.	
Social Communication: The student requires direct and literal language to understand instructions and social expectations, often missing indirect “hints” or sarcasm.	

Domain II: Social Connection & Interaction Profile	Rating (0-3)
Preferences for Authenticity: The student shows a preference for meaningful connections, often thriving when interactions are based on shared interests rather than social “small talk.”	
Social Play: The student connects with peers through parallel engagement (side-by-side) or specific shared activities rather than conventional direct social play.	
Communication Style Mismatch: The student experiences a mismatch in style when connecting with non-autistic peers, requiring a bridge for “double empathy” differences. The student may engage more readily with adults or younger children, as the student has more ability to direct the conversation.	

Autism SBNA Eligibility Tool (AUT SET)

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student's authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain II: Social Connection & Interaction Profile (Cont.)	Rating (0-3)
Predictability in Socializing: The student needs social interactions to be predictable and sincere, showing difficulty when social rules are ambiguous or inconsistent. The student may also have difficulty understanding social hierarchies.	

Domain III: Regulatory & Learning Profile	Rating (0-3)
Self-Stimulatory Regulation: The student needs to engage in self-stimulatory behaviors (stimming) as a vital means of internal regulation, focus, or self-expression.	
Consistency & Structure: The student requires a high degree of consistency in daily routines and requires support when there are unexpected changes to schedules or activities. The student needs clear environmental structure and predictable systems (e.g., visual schedules, rhythmic routines) to remain regulated and engaged in learning.	
Monotropic Focus (SpINs): The student demonstrates deep, specialized interest(s) (SpINs) and requires these areas of passion to be integrated into learning for optimal engagement.	
Sensory Processing Differences: The student has heightened sensitivities or specific sensory needs, requiring the ability to seek or avoid sensory experiences to maintain regulation.	

Eligibility Determination Summary
I. Quantitative Evidence of Profile: A consistent pattern of scores (2s and 3s) across domains indicates a profile that aligns with the SBNA definition of Autism .
II. Exclusionary Clause (Primary Driver): The profile is primarily reflective of an Autistic neurotype and is not solely attributable to emotional disability or racial/cultural bias .
[] Confirmed

Autism SBNA Eligibility Tool (AUT SET)

Eligibility Determination Summary (Cont.)

III. Environmental Mismatch (Adverse Effect on Education): Does the student's **Autistic profile** create a **mismatch** with the demands and expectations of the general education setting, ultimately impacting their **access** to education?

☐ Yes

☐ No

IV. Need for Specialized Instruction: By reason of this environmental mismatch, does the student require specialized instruction **to make meaningful progress in their education**?

☐ Yes

☐ No

V. Determination: If the criteria in **Section I** are **met**, **Section II** is **Confirmed**, and **Sections III** and **IV** are marked **Yes**, the student meets the criteria for a child with an **educational disability** and is eligible for special education and related services under the category of **Autism**.

Deafblind SBNA Eligibility Tool (DB SET)

Purpose: This tool supports multidisciplinary teams in documenting a student's **hearing and vision profile**, identifying if the combination of their hearing and visual needs create a mismatch with traditional education settings, necessitating specialized instruction that exceeds the requirements of programs designed solely for deafness or blindness.

Ultimately, the IEP team must follow their state's eligibility criteria. This tool is a supplement only.

Deafblindness IDEA Eligibility Definition

Deaf-blindness means **concomitant** hearing and visual **impairments**, the combination of which causes such **severe** communication and other developmental and educational needs that they **cannot be accommodated** in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.

Deafblindness SBNA Reframed Definition

Deaf-blindness includes individuals who are **Hard of Hearing** or **d/Deaf** paired with **low vision** or **blindness**, calling for **specialized communication** methods and educational supports that **go beyond what's required** in programs for the d/Deaf or blind alone. Individuals with deaf-blindness often **excel** in their ability to understand and engage with their environment through their **other senses**. Recognizing and supporting these unique abilities requires creative, **personalized strategies** that respect and enhance their way of experiencing the world.

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student's authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain I: Combined Impact of Hearing and Vision Disabilities

Rating (0-3)

Dual-Sensory Access Needs: Due to the combination of significant hearing and vision disabilities, the student requires information to be delivered through tactile or close-range modes to ensure message clarity.

Deafblind SBNA Eligibility Tool (DB SET)

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student's authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain I: Combined Impact of Hearing and Vision Disabilities (Cont.) Rating (0-3)

Tactile Language & Signing: The student requires tactile-spatial language (e.g., hand-over-hand signing, Prototactile ASL, or tactile symbols) as their primary method for understanding and expressing language.

Haptic Social Cues: The student requires touch-based signals on the body to replace “visual-only” or “auditory-only” social cues, such as knowing who is speaking or the mood of a group.

Domain II: Environmental Navigation & Engagement Rating (0-3)

Tactile Mapping & Exploration: The student requires hands-on exploration to build mental maps and conceptualize the physical layout of their environment.

Alternative Sensory Identification: The student utilizes and requires access to non-traditional cues (e.g., vibrations, temperature changes, etc.) to orient themselves and identify environmental shifts.

Object-Based Predictability: The student needs tangible object cues or tactile schedule systems to navigate transitions and understand the sequence of educational activities.

Eligibility Determination Summary

I. Quantitative Evidence of Profile: A consistent pattern of scores (2s and 3s) across these domains indicates a profile that aligns with the SBNA definition of **Deafblindness** (Hard of Hearing/Deaf paired with Low Vision/Blindness/CVI).

II. Environmental Mismatch (Adverse Effect on Education): Does the student’s **combined hearing and vision profile** create a **mismatch** with the demands and expectations of the general education setting, ultimately impacting their **access** to education?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Deafblind SBNA Eligibility Tool (DB SET)

Eligibility Determination Summary (Cont.)

III. Need for Specialized Instruction: By reason of this environmental mismatch, does the student require specialized instruction **to make meaningful progress in their education?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

IV. Determination: If the criteria in **Section I** are **met**, and **Sections II** and **III** are marked **Yes**, the student meets the criteria for a child with an **educational disability** and is eligible for special education and related services under the category of **Deafblindness**.

Deafness SBNA Eligibility Tool (Deaf SET)

Purpose: This tool supports multidisciplinary teams in documenting a student's **hearing profile**, identifying if their unique hearing needs create a mismatch with traditional educational settings, necessitating specialized instruction.

Ultimately, the IEP team must follow their state's eligibility criteria. This tool is a supplement only.

Deafness IDEA Eligibility Definition

Deafness means a hearing **impairment** that is **so severe** that the child is **impaired** in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, that **adversely affects** a child's educational performance.

Deafness SBNA Reframed Definition

Deafness means a person **without the sense of hearing** that **influences** how a child processes linguistic information, with or without amplification, underscoring the **need for approaches that honor** and leverage other modes of communication and learning. Individuals with deafness often demonstrate **strong non-verbal communication**, visual-spatial skills, and other areas not reliant on auditory processing, benefiting most from visual and tactile learning strategies.

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student's authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain I: Auditory-Visual Access	Rating (0-3)
Established Deafness: In partnership with the school, clinical audiologist, or other qualified medical professional, the student has documented sensorineural, conductive, or mixed hearing variance.	
Visual-Primary Input: The student requires information to be presented through visual channels (signs, text, graphics) because auditory-only information is not accessible or reliable.	
Environmental Sound Substitution: The student needs visual or tactile alerts (e.g., flashing lights, vibrations, or visual timers) to replace auditory cues like bells or alarms.	

Deafness SBNA Eligibility Tool (Deaf SET)

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student's authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain I: Auditory-Visual Access (Cont.)	Rating (0-3)
Acoustic Environment Management: The student requires specific environmental modifications (e.g., reduced background noise, FM system, or strategic seating) to maximize any residual hearing or visual focus.	
Tactile & Kinesthetic Engagement: The student benefits from and requires hands-on, tactile experiences to reinforce concepts that are traditionally delivered via spoken word.	

Domain II: Linguistic & Communication Profile	Rating (0-3)
Diverse Communication Modalities: The student utilizes an individualized expressive repertoire which may include visual-spatial language (e.g., ASL), spoken language facilitated by auditory technology (e.g., cochlear implants, hearing aids), or alternative communication modes to facilitate communicative clarity.	
Direct Communication Access: The student requires direct, unfiltered access to communication (via fluent signing peers, staff, or interpreters) to participate fully in the curriculum.	
Pragmatic Visual Cues: The student utilizes and requires rich facial expressions, body shifts, and visual signals to convey and interpret nuance and emotion.	
Linguistic Bridge Building: The student requires specialized support to bridge visual language processing with English literacy (reading/writing) to ensure equitable growth.	

Eligibility Determination Summary
I. Quantitative Evidence of Profile: A consistent pattern of scores (2s and 3s) across domains indicates a profile that aligns with the SBNA definition of Deafness .
II. Environmental Mismatch (Adverse Effect on Education): Does the student's hearing profile create a mismatch with the demands and expectations of the general education setting, ultimately impacting their access to education?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Deafness SBNA Eligibility Tool (Deaf SET)

Eligibility Determination Summary (Cont.)

III. Need for Specialized Instruction: By reason of this environmental mismatch, does the student require specialized instruction **to make meaningful progress in their education?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

IV. Determination: If the criteria in **Section I** are **met**, and **Sections II** and **III** are marked **Yes**, the student meets the criteria for a child with an **educational disability** and is eligible for special education and related services under the category of **Deafness**.

Emotional Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (ED SET)

Purpose: This tool supports multidisciplinary teams in documenting a student's **emotional profile**, identifying if their unique mental health, social, and/or emotional needs create a mismatch with traditional educational settings, necessitating specialized instruction.

Ultimately, the IEP team must follow their state's eligibility criteria. This tool is a supplement only.

Emotional Disturbance IDEA Eligibility Definition

Emotional **disturbance** means a **condition** exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that **adversely affects** a child's educational performance:

- (A) An **inability to learn** that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors
- (B) An **inability** to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers
- (C) **Inappropriate** types of behavior or feelings under **normal** circumstances
- (D) A general **pervasive mood** of unhappiness or depression
- (E) A tendency to develop **physical symptoms** or fears **associated with** personal or school problems
- (ii) Emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia.

The term does not apply to children who are **socially maladjusted**, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance under paragraph (c)(4)(i) of this section.

Emotional Disability SBNA Reframed Definition

Emotional **disability** represents a **divergence** in a student's **emotional or behavioral profile**, where they exhibit one or more of the following distinct characteristics that **significantly influence** their interaction with and approach to learning over a long period of time:

- (A) A **distinctive impact in accessing learning** that is not due to intellectual, sensory, or other health factors—often showcasing **strengths** in these areas
- (B) Often **requiring significant support** to foster meaningful relationships with peers and teachers

Emotional Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (ED SET)

Emotional Disability SBNA Reframed Definition (Cont.)

(C) Expressions of emotions or behaviors that **differ significantly from expected** cultural and/or school-based norms

(D) Experiences **deep feelings of sadness** or mood variations

(E) The manifestation of **physical signals in response to** personal or educational experiences

(ii) Emotional disability includes schizophrenia

This term also acknowledges that behaviors traditionally labeled as “social maladjustment” can be **secondary** to significant internal distress, anxiety, or trauma or an **adaptive survival response** to perceived threat or lack of safety and still reflective of a true underlying emotional need that requires special education services.

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student’s authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain I: Cognitive & Learning Profile

Rating (0-3)

Aligns with Reframed Criterion A: Distinctive impact in accessing learning

Foundational Safety for Engagement: The student requires a learning environment that prioritizes emotional co-regulation and the establishment of neuro-physiological safety as a non-negotiable prerequisite for cognitive engagement and task initiation.

Instructional & Cognitive Scaffolding: The student requires specialized modifications (e.g., reduced verbal load during periods of distress, visual anchors, and proactive preparation for transitions) to bridge the gap between their regulatory state and academic expectations.

Adaptive Pacing & Energy Conservation: The student requires flexible learning structures and adjusted expectations to manage significant fluctuations in cognitive availability, energy depletion, and the recovery needs associated with emotional regulation needs.

Emotional Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (ED SET)

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student’s authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain II: Interpersonal & Relational Profile <i>Aligns with Reframed Criterion B: Support required to foster meaningful relationships</i>	Rating (0-3)
Peer Connection Support: The student requires specialized environmental and adult facilitation to navigate the sensory and emotional complexity of peer dynamics, ensuring social experiences remain within their window of tolerance.	
Relational Co-Regulation: The student requires proactive, individualized adult partnership and scaffolding to navigate perceived stressors and restore a sense of safety during interpersonal challenges.	
Social Safety & Belonging: The student requires a learning community that proactively fosters a sense of belonging and protects against social exclusion, allowing for engagement at a pace that honors their need for psychological safety.	

Domain III: Emotional and Behavioral Profile <i>Aligns with Criteria C (Externalizing Needs), D (Internalizing Needs), & E (Physical Signals)</i>	Rating (0-3)
Externalizing Needs (C): The student communicates internal dysregulation through outward protective responses (e.g., elopement, high-arousal signals) that require specialized support and interpretation of the behavior as a physiological survival response.	
Internalizing Needs (D): The student navigates internal distress that may manifest as withdrawal, “masking,” shutdown (hypo-arousal), or other depression or anxiety characteristics. The student’s needs require proactive adult connection, specialized pacing, and/or a low-demand environment to help the student maintain a sense of presence and safety.	
Somatic Signaling & Integration (E): The student communicates internal distress through physical signals (e.g., fatigue, tension, somatic pain, or sensory overwhelm) and requires a “bottom-up” approach to regulation that prioritizes physical comfort and sensory safety over cognitive processing.	
Recovery & Integration Time: The student requires specialized processing time and reduced cognitive demand following periods of high emotional or somatic arousal to allow the nervous system to return to baseline.	

Emotional Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (ED SET)

Eligibility Determination Summary

I. Quantitative Evidence of Profile: A consistent pattern of scores (2s and 3s) in one or more of the above domains* indicates a profile that aligns with the SBNA definition of Emotional Disability.

**Note: Per IDEA, the student need only exhibit one of the five reframed characteristics (A-E) to a “marked degree.”*

II. Intensity and Duration of Need: The team has determined that the student’s state of dysregulation or emotional need is at a level of **intensity** and **duration** where, even within a culturally responsive and affirming classroom, the student requires **individualized specialized services** and **legal protections** to safely access their education:

☐ **Over a long period of time** (duration)

☐ **To a marked degree** (intensity)

III. Exclusionary Clauses (Environment, Culture, & Social Maladjustment)

Bias & Environmental Check:

The team has confirmed that the student’s presentation is not **solely** a reaction to a punitive or non-affirming school climate. The team has specifically interrogated the potential for “**Adultification Bias**” (the tendency to perceive the protective responses of Black and Brown students as “aggressive” or “willful”) and has ruled it out as the **primary** driver of eligibility.

Clinical Discernment: Cultural Context vs. Emotional Disability:

The team recognizes that all student profiles are a reflection of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In distinguishing between cultural difference and Emotional Disability, the team applied the following discernment:

A. Respecting Cultural Expression: The team has ensured that the student’s presentation is not **solely** based on cultural variations in communication (e.g., vocal intensity, directness, or social style). These are recognized as valid social variations and have been separated from indicators of emotional distress.

B. Validating the Impact of Systemic Stress: Simultaneously, the team acknowledges that significant environmental stressors or racial trauma *can* manifest as a genuine, individualized need for support among students from minoritized backgrounds. The team has determined that the student is experiencing a level of internal distress or dysregulation that, regardless of its situational or systemic roots, is of such intensity and duration that it **requires specialized services** to ensure their safety, well-being, and access to learning.

Emotional Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (ED SET)

Eligibility Determination Summary (Cont.)

Social Maladjustment Consideration:

If behaviors traditionally perceived as “SM” (e.g., “social rule-breaking”) are present, the team has determined they are either secondary to significant internal distress, anxiety, or trauma or are adaptive survival responses to perceived threat or lack of safety. In either case, the student’s profile is defined by an internal need for safety and regulation.

☐ **Confirmed:** The profile is reflective of an Emotional Disability and is not solely attributable to environmental stressors, cultural difference, or social maladjustment.

IV. Environmental Mismatch (Adverse Effect on Education): Does the student’s **emotional and behavioral profile** create a **mismatch** with the demands and expectations of the general education setting, ultimately impacting their **access** to education?

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

V. Need for Specialized Instruction: By reason of this environmental mismatch, does the student require specialized instruction **to make meaningful progress in their education**?

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

VI. Determination: If the criteria in **Section I** are **met**, both boxes in **Section II** are **marked**, **Section III** is **Confirmed**, and **Sections IV** and **V** are marked **Yes**, the student meets the criteria for a child with an **educational disability** and is eligible for special education and related services under the category of **Emotional Disability**.

Hard of Hearing SBNA Eligibility Tool (HOH SET)

Purpose: This tool supports multidisciplinary teams in documenting a student's **hearing profile**, identifying if their unique hearing needs create a mismatch with traditional educational settings, necessitating specialized instruction.

Ultimately, the IEP team must follow their state's eligibility criteria. This tool is a supplement only.

Hearing Impairment IDEA Eligibility Definition

Hearing impairment means an **impairment** in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that **adversely affects** a child's educational performance but that is not included under the definition of deafness in this section.

Hard of Hearing SBNA Reframed Definition

Hard of Hearing (HOH) is characterized by a range of hearing **differences**, which may be permanent or fluctuating, that **significantly influences** a child's educational experience, and is distinct from those classified under Deafness. Individuals with HOH often **excel** through visual learning and other **sensory-engaged** teaching methods.

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student's authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain I: Hearing Differences	Rating (0-3)
Auditory Needs: The student requires adjustments to instruction or environment to account for auditory access, including hearing levels that change (fluctuate) as established by the school, clinical audiologist, or other qualified professional.	
Assistive Technology Use: The student requires specialized technology (e.g., FM/DM systems, hearing aids, or captioning) to ensure the hearing difference does not prevent educational access.	
Acoustic Environment: The student requires a controlled acoustic environment (e.g., strategic seating, reduced background noise) to manage how hearing differences influence their learning.	
Sound Interpretation Support: The student needs explicit support or visual cues to identify and understand environmental sounds that are not fully captured through their hearing.	

Hard of Hearing SBNA Eligibility Tool (HOH SET)

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student’s authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain II: Visual and Sensory Learning	Rating (0-3)
Visual Information Needs: The student requires visual aids (e.g., charts, slides, or written notes) to fully grasp concepts and needs spoken information to be paired with visual representations to ensure that hearing differences don’t impact deep understanding.	
Sensory-Engaged Learning: The student excels with learning new concepts through hands-on, tactile, or kinesthetic teaching methods rather than auditory-only instruction.	
Visual Speech Support: The student requires a clear line of sight to the speaker to use facial expressions/lip movements to supplement and clarify what they hear.	

Eligibility Determination Summary
I. Quantitative Evidence of Profile: A consistent pattern of scores (2s and 3s) across these domains* indicates a profile that aligns with the SBNA definition of Hard of Hearing. <i>*Note: Per IDEA, Domain I is most essential for eligibility.</i>
II. Environmental Mismatch (Adverse Effect on Education): Does the student’s hearing profile—whether permanent or fluctuating—create a mismatch with the demands and expectations of the general education setting, ultimately impacting their access to education? ☐ Yes ☐ No
III. Need for Specialized Instruction: By reason of this environmental mismatch, does the student require specialized instruction to make meaningful progress in their education? ☐ Yes ☐ No
IV. Determination: If the criteria in Section I are met, and Sections II and III are marked Yes, the student meets the criteria for a child with an educational disability and is eligible for special education and related services under the category of Hearing Impairment (Hard of Hearing).

Intellectual Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (ID SET)

Purpose: This tool supports multidisciplinary teams in documenting a **cognitive and adaptive profile**, identifying if the significance of their learning, social, life skills, and/or safety needs create a mismatch with traditional educational settings, necessitating specialized instruction.

Ultimately, the IEP team must follow their state's eligibility criteria. This tool is a supplement only.

Intellectual Disability IDEA Eligibility Definition

Intellectual disability means **significantly subaverage** general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with **deficits** in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that **adversely affects** a child's educational performance.

Intellectual Disability SBNA Reframed Definition

Intellectual disability represents a profile of cognitive development that **significantly diverges** from **typical** intellectual functioning, often observed from the developmental period onward. This divergence is paired with **challenges that impact** everyday activities, learning, communication, and social integration. Accompanying these cognitive patterns are **variations** in adaptive skills related to independent functioning, where individuals **require substantial educational support**. **Success** can be achieved with individualized and personalized educational approaches.

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student's authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain I: Cognitive Divergence	Rating (0-3)
Intensive Conceptual Support: Whereas peers grasp abstract symbols, this student requires consistent, concrete, and tactile representations to access the curriculum due to cognitive skills being significantly below age-expectations.	
Differentiated Pacing: The student requires a deliberate instructional pace and volume of repetition exceeding the standard review provided to same-aged peers.	
Substantial Scaffolding: The student requires external prompts or "chunked" instructions to navigate multi-step tasks or novel situations.	

Intellectual Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (ID SET)

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student's authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain I: Cognitive Divergence (Cont.)	Rating (0-3)
Modified Complexity: To achieve success, the student requires the curriculum to be significantly modified, focusing on functional application rather than solely on the abstract grade-level standards of peers.	

Domain II: Adaptive & Functional Needs	Rating (0-3)
Comprehensive Daily Support: The student requires direct instruction and visual supports for age-expected daily living activities (e.g., personal care, safety, or community navigation) due to adaptive needs that are significant compared to same-aged peers.	
Self-Management Supports: The student requires external systems (checklists, timers, or peer-modeling) to initiate tasks and manage personal belongings or schedules that their same-aged peers generally do not demonstrate a need for.	
Significant Environmental Adaptation: The student requires a modified environment that prioritizes safety and accessibility to foster autonomy and confidence.	

Eligibility Determination Summary
I. Quantitative Evidence of Profile: A consistent pattern of scores (2s and 3s) across domains* indicate a level of need that is significant in frequency and intensity compared to same-aged peers. <i>*Note: Per IDEA, while not every characteristic in each domain needs to be endorsed, Intensive Conceptual Support and Comprehensive Daily Support should have the highest ratings (2's & 3's) to be indicative of ID.</i>
II. Exclusionary Clause (Primary Driver): The team has determined that this profile of significant cognitive and adaptive divergence is not primarily the result of a lack of appropriate instruction, the process of multilingual language proficiency, or cultural/environmental factors. [] Confirmed

Intellectual Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (ID SET)

Eligibility Determination Summary (Cont.)

III. Environmental Mismatch (Adverse Effect on Education): Does the student's **cognitive and adaptive profile** create a **mismatch** with the demands and expectations of the general education setting, ultimately impacting their **access** to education?

☐ Yes

☐ No

IV. Need for Specialized Instruction: By reason of this environmental mismatch, does the student require specialized instruction **to make meaningful progress in their education**?

☐ Yes

☐ No

V. Determination: If the criteria in **Section I** are **met**, **Section II** is **Confirmed**, and **Sections III** and **IV** are marked **Yes**, the student meets the criteria for a child with an **educational disability** and is eligible for special education and related services under the category of **Intellectual Disability**.

Multiple Disabilities SBNA Eligibility Tool (MD SET)

Purpose: This tool supports multidisciplinary teams in documenting a **profile of multiple disabilities**, identifying if the combined impact of their cognitive divergence paired with a physical or sensory disability create a mismatch with traditional educational settings, necessitating specialized instruction that extends beyond settings designed for a single type of support (e.g., just for ID or just for OI).

Ultimately, the IEP team must follow their state's eligibility criteria. This tool is a supplement only.

Multiple Disabilities IDEA Eligibility Definition

Multiple disabilities means **concomitant impairments** (such as intellectual disability-blindness or intellectual disability-orthopedic impairment), the combination of which **causes** such **severe educational needs** that they **cannot be accommodated** in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. Multiple disabilities does not include deaf-blindness.

Multiple Disabilities SBNA Reframed Definition

Multiple disabilities means a **combination of disabilities** (such as cognitive disability paired with visual disability or orthopedic disability paired with intellectual disability) that create a **unique educational profile, requiring significant support**, such that traditional settings designed for a single type of support **may not meet their holistic needs** or harness their full potential.

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student's authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain I: Integrated Learning & Information Processing		Rating (0-3)
Combined Information Access: The student requires learning materials to be modified for both cognitive demand and physical access (e.g., a simplified text paired with high-contrast visuals or tactile objects).		
Specialized Material: The student requires adaptable and specialized tools (e.g., slant boards, AAC systems, amplification) to ensure access to grade-level curriculum and minimize physical, sensory, or cognitive barriers to learning.		

Multiple Disabilities SBNA Eligibility Tool (MD SET)

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student's authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain I: Integrated Learning & Information Processing (Cont.)	Rating (0-3)
Cross-Domain Skill Generalization: The student needs direct instruction to use a skill across different settings (e.g., using a communication button in the cafeteria vs. classroom), as their multiple disabilities make generalization more complex.	

Domain II: Adaptive & Environmental Navigation	Rating (0-3)
Multidimensional Self-Care Support: The student requires adult assistance for daily school routines (e.g., mealtime, toileting, or transitions) that is specialized for both their sensory-based and/or mobility needs and their cognitive understanding of the routine.	
Navigational Environmental: The student requires a classroom layout that is both physically accessible and cognitively predictable (visual boundaries/ schedules) to ensure safety and autonomy.	
Interdisciplinary Integration: The student needs to utilize specialized equipment (e.g., standing frames or gait trainers) while simultaneously receiving cognitive instruction, requiring a high level of coordination between staff.	
Sustained Regulation & Stamina: The student requires a schedule that balances cognitive demands with physical rest or repositioning, as the effort of navigating the school day with multiple disabilities leads to significant fatigue compared to peers.	

Eligibility Determination Summary
I. Quantitative Evidence of Profile: A consistent pattern of scores (2s and 3s) across domains indicates a profile that aligns with the SBNA definition of Multiple Disabilities .
II. Environmental Mismatch (Adverse Effect on Education): Does the student's combined profile of multiple disabilities create a mismatch with the demands and expectations of the general education setting, ultimately impacting their access to education? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Multiple Disabilities SBNA Eligibility Tool (MD SET)

Eligibility Determination Summary (Cont.)

III. Need for Specialized Instruction: By reason of this environmental mismatch, does the student require specialized instruction **to make meaningful progress in their education?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

IV. Determination: If the criteria in **Section I** are **met**, and **Sections II** and **III** are marked **Yes**, the student meets the criteria for a child with an **educational disability** and is eligible for special education and related services under the category of **Multiple Disabilities**.

Other Health Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (OHI SET)

Purpose: This tool supports multidisciplinary teams in documenting a student's **neurobiological or health profile**, identifying if their unique physiology or medical support needs create a mismatch with traditional educational settings, necessitating specialized instruction.

Ultimately, the IEP team must follow their state's eligibility criteria. This tool is a supplement only.

Other Health Impairment IDEA Eligibility Definition

Other health **impairment** means having **limited** strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in **limited** alertness with respect to the educational environment, that—

(i) Is due to chronic or acute **health problems** such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome; and

(ii) **Adversely affects** a child's educational performance.

Other Health Disability SBNA Reframed Definition

Other health **disability** represents students who experience a **range of health statuses** that lead to variability and/or difficulty with sustained strength, vitality, or alertness that impact physical stamina, concentration, or mobility, presenting challenges in traditional learning settings.

(i) **Examples** include asthma, ADHD, diabetes, epilepsy, heart conditions, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette Syndrome.

(ii) **Tailored instruction and accommodations** are required in order for the child to access the curriculum and make meaningful progress.

Other Health Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (OHI SET)

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student’s authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain I: Vitality & Physical Stamina Profile	Rating (0-3)
Pacing Requirements: The student requires specialized pacing or scheduled breaks because their natural energy levels do not align with the rigid, linear scheduling of a traditional school day (e.g., rest periods for chronic fatigue/ asthma, recovery for heart conditions, or brain breaks to accommodate the metabolic demands of Tourette’s or the ADHD neurotype).	
Stamina-Based Participation: The student requires modified assignments or adjusted timelines to account for a mismatch between medical or neurobiological reality and traditional volume and speed expectations in the general education environment (e.g., reduced number of items, shortened school day, or extended time for students with chronic pain or glucose fluctuations).	
Recovery Scaffolding: The student requires a designated space or specialized “body-up” approach for physical or cognitive recovery when traditional demands exceed their physiological capacity (e.g., a quiet “recharge” zone after a seizure or time to recalibrate after a high-arousal sensory event).	

Domain II: Alertness & Sensory Regulation Profile	Rating (0-3)
Environmental Filtering Support: The student requires specialized environmental modifications due to heightened alertness to environmental stimuli that competes with the way their neurotype processes information within traditional classroom settings (e.g., noise-canceling tools for auditory sensitivity or visual blinders for ADHD-related drive to monitor the room).	
Physiological Regulation Tools: The student requires specialized tools or permissions to manage energy levels and/or maintain cortical arousal in response to the stationary and low-stimulation expectations of traditional seatwork (e.g., flexible seating, standing desks, pacing zones, movement-breaks, sensory tools, immediate access to hydration or medical stations).	
Responsive Alertness Support: The student requires a flexible instructional approach to bridge the mismatch between their natural “peaks and valleys” in alertness or interest-based nervous system and traditional static teaching methods (e.g., gamified tasks for engagement, novelty-infused instruction, or movement-based learning).	

Other Health Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (OHI SET)

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student’s authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain III: Concentration & Cognitive Profile	Rating (0-3)
External Executive Structures: The student requires specialized external structures because traditional expectations are mismatched with their endurance levels (e.g., visual organizers, visual timers for time management).	
Adjusted Processing Windows: The student requires additional “think time” or adjusted retrieval windows to account for health-related impacts that conflict with rote speed requirements (e.g., extended wait time, processing pauses during absence seizures, or accommodating fluctuations in cognitive clarity during medical flares or glucose shifts).	
Task Initiation Support: The student requires specialized instructional priming or reduced starting demands to bridge the mismatch between their regulation system needs and neurotypical initiation expectations (e.g., body doubling, mini-deadlines, or interest-based hooks).	

Eligibility Determination Summary

I. Quantitative Evidence of Profile: A consistent pattern of scores (2s and 3s) across one or more domains of strength, vitality, or alertness* indicates a profile that aligns with the SBNA definition of **Other Health Disability**.

Note: Per IDEA, the student must exhibit at least **one (limited strength, vitality, or alertness)*

II. Special Provision: State Medical Requirements: The team has addressed state-specific OHI requirements regarding medical documentation:

☐ **Medical-First/Hybrid:** A written diagnosis or statement from a licensed physician/medical expert has been obtained.

Primary Health Condition(s) identified as the driver of this profile: _____

☐ **Educational Autonomy:** The multidisciplinary team has determined eligibility based on school-based evidence of health-related impact; outside diagnosis was considered but not required by this state.

Other Health Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (OHI SET)

Eligibility Determination Summary (Cont.)

III. Exclusionary Clauses (Bias, Instruction, and Environment):

Bias & Pathologization Check:

The team confirms that the student's profile is not a reflection of the **pathologizing of natural energy levels** or **cultural variations in expression** among minoritized youth. The team has critically discerned that the student's motor activity, talkativeness, or need for movement is a manifestation of a neurobiological health profile and not simply a mismatch between the student's natural exuberance and a restrictive, sedentary environment.

For Black and Brown students, the team further confirms that these physiological needs are not being viewed through the lens of "**Adultification Bias**" (where high-energy responses are mischaracterized as "threatening" or "willful").

Instructional or Environmental Check:

The team confirms the student's strength, vitality, or alertness needs are not primarily the result of a "lack of appropriate instruction" or multilingual language development. The team finds that the mismatch persists even when high-quality, linguistically and culturally responsive instruction is provided, as traditional models are not neuro-aligned or medically-responsive to the student's specific physiological profile.

☒ **Confirmed.** The profile is reflective of a health-related disability and is not **primarily** the result of pathologized natural energy levels, linguistic diversity, or a lack of appropriate instruction.

IV. Environmental Mismatch (Adverse Effect on Education): Does the student's **health and regulatory profile** create a **mismatch** with the demands and expectations of the general education setting, ultimately impacting their **access** to education?

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

V. Need for Specialized Instruction: By reason of this environmental mismatch, does the student require specialized instruction **to make meaningful progress in their education?**

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

VI. Determination: If the criteria in **Section I** are **met**, **Sections II** and **III** are **Confirmed** (per state/district guidelines), and **Sections IV** and **V** are marked **Yes**, the student meets the criteria for a child with an **educational disability** and is eligible for special education and related services under the category of **Other Health Impairment (Other Health Disability)**.

Orthopedic Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (OI SET)

Purpose: This tool supports multidisciplinary teams in documenting a student's **orthopedic profile**, identifying if their unique motoric functioning and/or physical navigation differences create a mismatch with traditional educational settings, necessitating specialized instruction.

Ultimately, the IEP team must follow their state's eligibility criteria. This tool is a supplement only.

Orthopedic Impairment IDEA Eligibility Definition

Orthopedic **impairment** means a **severe** orthopedic **impairment** that **adversely affects** a child's educational performance. The term includes **impairments** caused by a congenital anomaly, impairments caused by disease (e.g., poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis), and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contractures).

Orthopedic Disability SBNA Reframed Definition

Orthopedic **disability** represents children who experience **disabilities** relating to the bone, joint, or muscle that **significantly impact their educational experience**, requiring **individualized support**. The term includes congenital anomalies, diseases like poliomyelitis or bone tuberculosis, conditions such as cerebral palsy, amputations, or severe injuries such as fractures or burns.

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student's authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain I: Physical Navigation & Environmental Access		Rating (0-3)
Physical Disability: The student has a physical disability (bone, muscle, or joint) that has been identified by their medical team in conjunction with relevant school-staff (e.g. physical therapist, occupational therapist, teacher of orthopedically impaired).		
Environmental Engineering: The student requires a highly modified physical environment (ramps, specialized seating, widened pathways) to access the same educational spaces as peers.		

Orthopedic Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (OI SET)

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student's authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain I: Physical Navigation & Environmental Access (Cont.)	Rating (0-3)
Assistive Technology Integration: The student requires specialized tools (e.g., switches, adaptive keyboards, or mobility devices) to interact with learning materials that same-aged peers access via typical fine/gross motor skills.	
Positioning & Physical Support: The student needs frequent, specialized adult assistance for positioning or transfers to ensure physical safety and comfort.	
Navigation: The student requires significantly modified transition times or specialized transportation between school environments to accommodate their unique motoric profile.	

Domain II: Stamina, Regulation & Motoric Expression	Rating (0-3)
Stamina Management: The student requires planned periods of rest or pacing adjustments due to the significant physical exertion required to navigate the school day, unlike same-aged peers who maintain consistent energy levels.	
Modified Output Methods: The student requires alternative methods for demonstrating knowledge (e.g., voice-to-text, scribing, or shortened assignments) to bypass motoric barriers.	
Self-Care & Health Maintenance: The student needs specialized support for activities of daily living (feeding, toileting, or health protocols) that same-aged peers have mastered.	
Proprioceptive & Comfort Regulation: The student requires specialized equipment (standing frames, orthotics, or sensory-motor breaks) to maintain the physical regulation necessary for cognitive engagement.	

Eligibility Determination Summary

I. Quantitative Evidence of Profile: A consistent pattern of scores (2s and 3s) across these domains indicates a profile that aligns with the SBNA definition of **Orthopedic Disability**.

Orthopedic Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (OI SET)

Eligibility Determination Summary (Cont.)

II. Environmental Mismatch (Adverse Effect on Education): Does the student's **physical and motoric profile** create a **mismatch** with the demands and expectations of the general education setting, ultimately impacting their **access** to education?

☐ Yes

☐ No

III. Need for Specialized Instruction: By reason of this environmental mismatch, does the student require specialized instruction **to make meaningful progress in their education**?

☐ Yes

☐ No

IV. Determination: If the criteria in **Section I** are **met**, and **Sections II** and **III** are marked **Yes**, the student meets the criteria for a child with an **educational disability** and is eligible for special education and related services under the category of **Orthopedic Impairment (Orthopedic Disability)**.

Specific Learning Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (SLD SET)

Purpose: This tool supports multidisciplinary teams in documenting a student's **brain-based processing profile**, identifying if their unique learning neurotype creates a mismatch with traditional educational settings, necessitating specialized instruction.

Ultimately, the IEP team must follow their state's eligibility criteria. This tool is a supplement only.

Specific Learning Disability IDEA Eligibility Definition

Specific learning disability means a **disorder** in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the **imperfect ability** to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

Specific Learning Disability SBNA Reframed Definition

Specific learning disability means a **variation** in one or more of the psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, leading to **differences** in listening, thinking, speaking, reading, writing, spelling, or performing mathematical calculations, resulting in **below-expected academic achievement**. These **brain-based differences** and **processing patterns** require **tailored instructional approaches** to support their unique learning styles. While they may learn differently, children with SLD often exhibit **strengths** related to their **processing patterns** that should always be incorporated into their educational programming.

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student's authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain I: Language & Literacy Processing Profile	Rating (0-3)
Specialized Reading & Spelling Support: The student requires a specialized, systematic instructional approach to instruction to account for brain-based differences in how sounds and symbols are processed (e.g., basic reading skills, decoding, phonological processing).	

Specific Learning Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (SLD SET)

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student's authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain I: Language & Literacy Processing Profile (Cont.)	Rating (0-3)
Support for Making Meaning from Text: The student requires specialized comprehension strategies or multi-modal anchors to account for brain-based differences in how written information is synthesized and interpreted (e.g., reading comprehension).	
Adjusted Pacing for Literacy Tasks: The student requires environmental modifications (e.g., extra time, reduced visual clutter) to account for brain-based differences in processing speed and automaticity in reading (e.g., reading fluency).	
Support for Expressing Ideas Orally: The student requires tailored expression tools or specialized methods (e.g., visual prompts, voice-output tools, word banks) to support brain-based processing differences that impact organization of thoughts into spoken language (e.g., oral expression).	
Support for Expressing Ideas in Writing: The student requires tailored expression tools or specialized methods (e.g., speech-to-text, graphic organizers, word banks) to support brain-based processing differences that impact translation of thoughts into written form (e.g., written expression).	
Support for Following Complex Language: The student requires information to be broken down, repeated, or paired with multi-modal supports to account for brain-based differences in how spoken instruction or auditory information is processed (e.g., listening comprehension).	

Domain II: Mathematical & Symbolic Processing Profile	Rating (0-3)
Specialized Instruction for Math Concepts: The student requires specialized instructional approaches to account for brain-based variations in processing numerical rules, symbolic logic, or mathematical relationships (e.g., math calculation).	
Support for Expressing Mathematical Logic: The student requires tailored tools or methods (e.g., manipulatives, templates, or grid paper) to account for brain-based differences in how mathematical thinking is organized and shared.	

Specific Learning Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (SLD SET)

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student’s authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain II: Mathematical & Symbolic Processing Profile (Cont.)	Rating (0-3)
Support for Processing Math Steps: The student requires intensive instructional scaffolding (e.g., visual anchors or concrete examples) to account for brain-based variations in how multi-step procedures or word problems are sequenced (e.g., mathematics problem solving).	
Adjusted Pacing for Math Tasks: The student requires access to reference tools or adjusted timing (e.g., calculators, charts, extended time) to account for brain-based differences in the automatic retrieval of math facts and numerical data, impacting speed of math calculation.	

Domain III: Cognitive Processing Profile	Rating (0-3)
Support for Information Retrieval: The student requires adjusted pacing and extended retrieval windows to account for brain-based processing differences.	
Support for Connecting New Information: The student requires instruction that explicitly links new information to established conceptual frameworks to account for brain-based variations in how data is stored and retained.	
Removing Barriers in Content Areas: The student requires specialized approaches and assessment formats (e.g., assistive technology, oral responses, project-based learning) to ensure that brain-based differences in literacy do not act as a barrier to demonstrating their authentic knowledge in other subjects.	
Learning Through Discovery: The student requires a learning environment that accommodates an exploratory processing style, as traditional rote-based instruction often creates a mismatch with their natural cognitive engagement.	

Eligibility Determination Summary

I. Quantitative Evidence of Profile: A consistent pattern of scores (2s and 3s) across domains* indicates a profile that aligns with the SBNA definition of Specific Learning Disability.

**Note: Per IDEA, the team must document a variation in one or more basic psychological processes (Domain III) alongside corresponding processing differences in language, literacy, or math (Domains I and/or II), confirming a need for specialized instruction in one or more of the eight designated areas of SLD.*

Specific Learning Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (SLD SET)

Eligibility Determination Summary (Cont.)

II. Special Provision: State Identification Requirements: The team has addressed and satisfied all state-specific regulatory requirements for identifying the presence of an SLD, ensuring that the identification process, including mandated observations and methodology, is consistent with state-approved models.

☐ **Confirmed**

III. Exclusionary Clauses (Culture, Primary Root, and Instruction):

Cultural Discernment:

The team confirms the profile is a true neurobiological variation and not a penalty for **cultural or linguistic diversity** (e.g., AAVE dialect) or the process of multilingual language acquisition. The team has discerned that the student's academic profile is not primarily the result of **systemic opportunity gaps** or a misalignment between the **student's sociocultural learning context** and traditional school-based expectations.

Clinical Discernment:

The team confirms that the learning profile is not **primarily** the result of a Visual, Hearing, or Motor Disability; Intellectual Disability; or Emotional Disability. While these factors may co-occur, the primary driver of the academic mismatch is a neurobiological variation in processing.

Appropriate Instruction:

The team confirms the profile is not the result of a “lack of appropriate instruction” in reading or math. Instead, the profile persists because standard general education models are not aligned with the student’s specific processing style.

☐ **Confirmed:** The student’s SLD profile is not **primarily** the result of systemic opportunity gaps, linguistic diversity, other primary disabilities, or a lack of appropriate instruction.

IV. Environmental Mismatch (Adverse Effect on Education): Does the student’s **brain-based processing profile** create a **mismatch** with the demands and expectations of the general education setting, ultimately impacting their **access to** education?

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

V. Need for Specialized Instruction: By reason of this environmental mismatch, does the student require specialized instruction **to make meaningful progress in their education?**

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

Specific Learning Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (SLD SET)

Eligibility Determination Summary (Cont.)

VI. Determination: If the criteria in **Section I** are **met**, **Sections II** and **III** are **Confirmed**, and **Sections IV** and **V** are marked **Yes**, the student meets the criteria for a child with an **educational disability** and is eligible for special education and related services under the category of **Specific Learning Disability**.

Speech or Language Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (SLI SET)

Purpose: This tool supports multidisciplinary teams in documenting a student’s **communicative profile**, identifying if their communication needs create a mismatch with traditional educational settings, necessitating specialized instruction or support.

Ultimately, the IEP team must follow their state’s eligibility criteria. This tool is a supplement only.

Speech or Language Impairment IDEA Eligibility Definition

Speech or language impairment means a communication **disorder**, such as stuttering, **impaired articulation**, a language **impairment**, or a voice **impairment**, that **adversely affects** a child’s educational performance.

Speech or Language Disability SBNA Reframed Definition

Speech or language **disability** means a communication **difference**, including stutters, **unique rhythms** or voice qualities, or **differences** in producing or understanding language. These variations may involve using gestures, vocalizations, or other multi-modal means of communication, as well as processing language through repetition. Children with an SLI **require individualized support** to fully access and succeed in their educational experience.

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student's authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain I: Receptive & Expressive Language Profile	Rating (0-3)
Processing & Receptive Scaffolding: The student requires additional wait time and visual supports (icons, maps, or flowcharts) to successfully bridge the “verbal bottleneck” and follow complex directions.	
Gestalt Language Processing: The student utilizes scripted language, chunks of familiar phrases, or echolalia to share situational meaning and navigate social interactions.	
Expanding Intent: The student needs adult partners to use facilitating techniques like recasting (repeating with expansion) to successfully bridge existing skills into new communicative functions.	

Speech or Language Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (SLI SET)

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student's authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain I: Receptive & Expressive Language Profile (Cont.)	Rating (0-3)
Linguistic Agency: The student requires "Power Words" (e.g., "No," "Stop," "My turn") to be reliably honored by staff to foster communicative autonomy and reduce the reliance on body-based communication/challenging behaviors.	
Pragmatic Support: The student needs adult partners to facilitate social entry-points using their preferred mode of communication. Their authentic social connection style (e.g., info-dumping on passions, parallel play, or non-verbal proximity) needs to be validated alongside instruction of neurotypical norms.	

Domain II: Stuttering & Communication Confidence Profile	Rating (0-3)
Spontaneous Participation: The student requires a classroom environment that prioritizes the message and spontaneity of their contribution over the speed or fluency of their delivery.	
Pressure-Free Communication: The student requires an environment where oral participation is invited but never forced, ensuring they can build communication confidence without triggering an avoidance response.	
Stuttering Gain & Resilience: The student demonstrates traits of “Stuttering Gain” (e.g., high empathy, patience, or resilience) that require validation as a valuable part of their communicative identity.	
Self-Advocacy Needs: The student requires support in identifying their own communicative aspirations, focusing on ease and participation rather than conforming to typical speech norms.	
Situational Output: The student experiences a situational shutdown of verbal speech in specific settings, requiring the use of non-verbal “bridges” (e.g., nodding, pointing, or writing) to maintain social and academic connection.	

Speech or Language Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (SLI SET)

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student's authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain III: Motor-Speech Profile	Rating (0-3)
Multi-Modal Autonomy: The student requires access to high-tech or low-tech AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) that mirrors their existing physical means (e.g., direct-selection pointing), as well as flexibility to switch between communication modes (e.g., typing when fatigued, gesturing for quick requests) to maintain high-level social engagement.	
Motor-Planning Support: The student needs consistent, rhythmic, and multi-sensory modeling to support the complex motor-planning required for speech production.	
Symbolic Representation: The student utilizes a combination of gestures, vocalizations, and digital tools to share meaning, requiring all partners to validate these as primary communication.	

Domain IV: Voice & Vocal Resonance Profile	Rating (0-3)
Resonant Variation: The student utilizes unique vocal qualities (e.g., volume, pitch, or resonance) that require acceptance as a natural part of their neurobiological "output" system.	
Sensory-Vocal Connection: The student requires environmental adjustments or sensory breaks to regulate vocal volume and intensity in high-stimulation settings.	
Sustainable Voice Habits: The student needs proactive education on maintaining their unique voice qualities in a way that feels comfortable and sustainable for their specific neurotype.	

Eligibility Determination Summary

I. Quantitative Evidence of Profile: A consistent pattern of scores (2s and 3s) within or across domains* indicates a profile that aligns with the SBNA definition of **Speech or Language Disability**.

**Note: Not all domains or characteristics need to be present, though each domain aligns with the areas outlined by IDEA.*

Speech or Language Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (SLI SET)

Eligibility Determination Summary (Cont.)

II. Exclusionary Clauses (Linguistic & Cultural Diversity): The team has carefully differentiated between a Communication Disability and a Communication Difference related to accent, dialect, or the process of multilingual language acquisition.

Accent & Dialect:

The student's speech patterns (e.g., AAVE or regional/linguistic accents) are recognized as rich, community-uniting linguistic variations and were not penalized during assessment.

English Learners (ELs)/Multilingual Learners (MLs):

The team has confirmed that the student's communicative profile is present in both/all languages used by the student. Differences in performance are not solely due to the "silent period" of language acquisition or lack of exposure to English.

Cultural Context:

Assessment materials and interpretations were adjusted for cultural relevance to ensure the student was not penalized for non-Western communication norms (e.g., differing eye contact or social proximity norms).

☐ **Confirmed:** The profile is a neurobiological disability, not a result of linguistic or cultural difference.

III. Environmental Mismatch (Adverse Effect on Education): Does the student's **communicative profile** create a **mismatch** with the demands and expectations of the general education setting, ultimately impacting their **access** to education?

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

IV. Need for Specialized Instruction: By reason of this environmental mismatch, does the student require specialized instruction **to make meaningful progress in their education**?

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

V. Determination: If the criteria in **Section I** are **met**, **Section II** is **Confirmed**, and **Sections III** and **IV** are marked **Yes**, the student meets the criteria for a child with an **educational disability** and is eligible for special education and related services under the category of **Speech or Language Impairment (Speech or Language Disability)**.

Traumatic Brain Injury SBNA Eligibility Tool (TBI SET)

Purpose: This tool supports multidisciplinary teams in documenting a student's **brain-based profile**, identifying if their significant functional and psychosocial differences create a mismatch with traditional educational settings, necessitating specialized instruction.

Ultimately, the IEP team must follow their state's eligibility criteria. This tool is a supplement only.

Traumatic Brain Injury IDEA Eligibility Definition

Traumatic brain injury means an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in **total or partial functional disability** or **psychosocial impairment**, or both, that **adversely affects** a child's educational performance. Traumatic brain injury applies to open or closed head injuries resulting in **impairments** in one or more areas, such as cognition; language; memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problem-solving; sensory, perceptual, and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior; physical functions; information processing; and speech.

Traumatic Brain Injury SBNA Reframed Definition

Traumatic brain injury refers to an acquired brain injury caused by an external physical force, resulting in **significant functional** and/or **psychosocial differences** that **require individualized support** to help a child succeed in their education. Traumatic brain injury applies to open or closed head injuries that **impact** one or more areas, such as cognition, language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem-solving, sensory, perceptual, motor skills, psychosocial behavior, physical functions, information processing, and speech.

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student's authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain I: Evidence of Acquired Injury

Rating (0-3)

Documented Event: There is a known history of an external force (fall, accident, impact) resulting in a change of consciousness or medical intervention.

Traumatic Brain Injury SBNA Eligibility Tool (TBI SET)

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student's authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain I: Evidence of Acquired Injury (Cont.)	Rating (0-3)
Marked Contrast: The student demonstrates a clear “before and after” shift* in academic, social, or physical capabilities compared to pre-injury status. <i>*Note: This could be a latent effect</i>	
Health History: The student experiences persistent physical symptoms linked to the injury (e.g., headaches, dizziness, or vision changes) that require monitoring.	

Domain II: Cognitive & Executive Skills	Rating (0-3)
Processing Time: The student needs extra time to synthesize verbal instructions or academic material compared to their pre-injury baseline.	
Memory Tools: The student requires compensatory aids (checklists, guided notes, digital recorders) to navigate gaps in spontaneous recall.	
Attentional Differences: The student needs structured support to re-engage with a task after being distracted by noise, movement, or internal fatigue.	
Crystallized Knowledge vs. Learning: The student has retained most pre-injury information but has difficulty acquiring novel information.	

Domain III: Communication & Social Profile	Rating (0-3)
Word Finding & Language Use: The student needs patience, extra time, or visual cues when they experience a pause in retrieving specific words or names. They may have variability in grammar and vocabulary development.	
Social Cues: The student requires direct and literal language to understand subtle social hints, idioms, or sarcasm that may be processed differently post-injury.	
Social Interactions: The student needs predictable social environments and support to maintain relationships when social demands become complex.	

Traumatic Brain Injury SBNA Eligibility Tool (TBI SET)

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student's authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain IV: Regulation & Physical Profile	Rating (0-3)
Regulation: The student needs explicit instruction in deliberate regulation strategies to manage sudden shifts in mood or emotional dysregulation.	
Sensory Needs: The student requires environmental adjustments (e.g., dimmed lights, quiet zones) to remain regulated and prevent sensory overwhelm.	
Physical Output: The student needs accommodations for physical tasks, such as speech-to-text tools or modified assignments, to manage changes in motor speed.	
Predictable Days: The student requires a consistent daily routine and needs clear systems to stay regulated when the school schedule changes.	

Eligibility Determination Summary

I. Quantitative Evidence of Profile: A consistent pattern of scores (2s and 3s) across domains* indicates a profile that aligns with the SBNA definition of **Traumatic Brain Injury**.

**Note: Domain I is required for establishing evidence of a TBI, while Domains II-IV reflect the ways in which the TBI may manifest.*

II. Exclusionary Clause: The team has determined that the student's unique functional differences, resulting from an external physical force, are the primary driver of the profile rather than an innate neurotype alone.

☐ Confirmed

III. Environmental Mismatch (Adverse Effect on Education): Does the student's **brain-based profile** create a **mismatch** with the demands and expectations of the general education setting, ultimately impacting their **access** to education?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Traumatic Brain Injury SBNA Eligibility Tool (TBI SET)

Eligibility Determination Summary (Cont.)

IV. Need for Specialized Instruction: By reason of this environmental mismatch, does the student require specialized instruction **to make meaningful progress in their education?**

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

IV. Determination: If the criteria in **Section I** are **met**, **Section II** is **Confirmed**, and **Sections III** and **IV** are marked **Yes**, the student meets the criteria for a child with an **educational disability** and is eligible for special education and related services under the category of **Traumatic Brain Injury**.

Visual Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (VI SET)

Purpose: This tool supports multidisciplinary teams in documenting a student's **vision profile**, identifying if their vision needs create a mismatch with traditional educational settings, necessitating specialized instruction.

Ultimately, the IEP team must follow their state's eligibility criteria. This tool is a supplement only.

Visual Impairment IDEA Eligibility Definition

Visual **impairment** including blindness means an impairment in vision that, **even with correction, adversely affects** a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.

Visual Disability SBNA Reframed Definition

Visual **disability**, including **low vision** and blindness, refers to differences in vision that persist **even with support, uniquely shaping** a child's approach to learning. Individuals with visual disabilities tend to rely on **strengths** in auditory, tactile, and other **sensory learning** methods.

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student's authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain I: Sensory Access & Information Processing	Rating (0-3)
Established Visual Disability: Assessment by a relevant provider (e.g. optometrist, ophthalmologist, teacher of the visually impaired) has identified a visual disability.	
Tactile & Braille Literacy: The student requires tactile representations (e.g., Braille, raised-line graphics, 3D models) to conceptually understand academic information.	
Auditory-Primary Learning: The student requires information to be presented through auditory channels (e.g., screen readers, audiobooks, verbal descriptions) to ensure full comprehension and participation.	

Visual Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (VI SET)

Instructions: Rate the frequency of each statement based on the student’s authentic developmental profile across multiple environments.

- 0 – Never
- 1 – Sometimes
- 2 – Often
- 3 – Almost Always

Domain I: Sensory Access & Information Processing (Cont.)	Rating (0-3)
Visual Enhancement & Magnification: The student needs specialized tools (e.g., high-contrast interfaces, video magnifiers, large print) to maximize functional vision for reading and task completion.	
Multisensory Synthesis: The student requires a multi-sensory approach to integrate information from non-visual sources simultaneously to build a complete mental map of a concept.	

Domain II: Environmental Navigation & Social Ecology	Rating (0-3)
Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Mastery: The student requires specialized tools or strategies (e.g., white cane, trailing, or echolocation) to safely and independently navigate school and community spaces.	
Lighting & Contrast Consistency: The student needs specific environmental modifications (e.g., glare reduction, high-contrast markers on stairs/hallways) to ensure safe and efficient movement.	
Auditory Social Cues: The student relies on and requires auditory cues (e.g., voice inflection, footsteps) and verbal narration of “visual-only” social events to engage with peers.	

Eligibility Determination Summary
I. Quantitative Evidence of Profile: A consistent pattern of scores (2s and 3s) across these two domains indicates a profile that aligns with the SBNA definition of Visual Disability , including Low Vision and Blindness.
II. Environmental Mismatch (Adverse Effect on Education): Does the student’s vision profile create a mismatch with the demands and expectations of the general education setting, ultimately impacting their access to education? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Visual Disability SBNA Eligibility Tool (VI SET)

Eligibility Determination Summary (Cont.)

III. Need for Specialized Instruction: By reason of this environmental mismatch, does the student require specialized instruction **to make meaningful progress in their education**?

☐ Yes

☐ No

IV. Determination: If the criteria in **Section I** are **met**, and **Sections II** and **III** are marked **Yes**, the student meets the criteria for a child with an **educational disability** and is eligible for special education and related services under the category of **Visual Impairment (Visual Disability)**.



ABOUT

The Strength-Based and Neurodiversity-Affirming Collaborative

Strength-based and neurodiversity-affirming practice should be the default, not the alternative.

SBNA Collaborative is a partnership between Dr. Kelsie Reed and Breea Rosas, EdS, two school psychologists offering practical resources, consultation, and professional development for the adults walking alongside disabled and neurodivergent young people.

Our book, *Essentials of Strength-Based and Neurodiversity-Affirming School-Based Evaluations*, publishes Fall 2026 with Wiley.

Find more resources, work with us, or join our list at:

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