

**From:** Scott Corcoran [scott@afamilyforeverychild.org]  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 18, 2013 4:49 PM  
**To:** scott@afamilyforeverychild.org  
**Subject:** Child Disability level definitions



Estimates of children who are awaiting adoption indicate that anywhere from 30 - 50% have a developmental disability. However, these children are not a homogeneous group. Their physical, cognitive and social characteristics may differ considerably. Each child's diagnosis and/or classification are coupled with their individual uniqueness. Children with developmental disabilities, like all children, benefit from the love and stability that come from belonging to permanent families. (Source: [www.adoptuskids.org](http://www.adoptuskids.org))

\*These should be used as a rough guideline, if you're ever unsure about what is listed in a child's biography.

**None:** No known disabilities, or disabilities so mild that they do not affect the child's functioning in any significant way, such as wearing glasses for near sightedness, or mild allergies.

**Mild:** Caregivers can expect the child to respond to limit-setting or other interventions. The child can perform basic life management functions appropriate for child's age and development and can use mainstream methods of transportation and communication.

- Child requires no equipment for daily functioning and may require average or slightly above average medical care and appointments.
- Child may have a condition that is totally managed by medication, or a condition that is correctable or improves on its own with time.
- The child may be developmentally delayed in physical development but has a prognosis of catching up.

The child with a Mild disability could have one or more of the following conditions:

- Developmental/Learning conditions that are not severe enough to require special education.
- Emotional conditions such as adjustment reactions, situational depression or acting out behaviors.
- Mental conditions with mild mental retardation in children who usually will be able to live independently as an adult, hold a job, and manage their lives with some guidance in crises. A child with mild mental retardation can often be in a mainstream class with resource room help or tutoring.
- Physical/Medical conditions, such as mild cerebral palsy and treatable medical conditions such as controlled seizures, hearing or vision impairment.

**Moderate:** Caregivers need to provide a structured supportive setting in which most activities are designed to improve the child's functioning. Child has a relatively stable non-correctable condition that is neither progressive nor degenerative. Child can perform basic life management functions appropriate for age and development (feeding, dressing, toileting) with some assistance.

- Child may require moderate home modifications, corrective surgery, and/or one or more weekly medical appointments.
- Child may require some assistance with transportation and communication functions.

The child with a Moderate disability could have one or more of the following conditions:

- Developmental/Learning conditions such as those requiring long-term special education classes.
- Emotional conditions such as conduct disorder, sexual abuse and other problems that may need long-term therapy.
- Mental conditions with moderate mental retardation in children who as an adult, may achieve partial self-support in a sheltered work place, but will always need supervision and will need to live in a group home or family setting.
- Medical/Physical conditions, such as moderate cerebral palsy, paraplegia, spina bifida, hydrocephalus, partially controlled seizures, blindness or deafness.

**Severe:** Caregivers may need specialized training or experience to provide therapeutic, habilitative, and medical support and intervention. Child may require life support equipment, or has a progressive, degenerative or terminal illness.

- Child may require significant home modifications.
- Child may require repeated doctor or frequent hospitalizations or surgeries.
- Child requires 2 or more medical appointments per week.
- Child requires a parent or aide to perform basic life management functions (feeding, dressing, toileting, etc.).
- Child may require special adaptations for transportation and/or communication.

The child with a Severe disability could have one or more of the following conditions:

- Developmental/Learning conditions that may cause a permanent difficulty in academic or social/emotional functioning, or occupation.
- Emotional conditions such as attachment disorder that may require hospitalization or residential treatment.
- Mental conditions such as severe to profound retardation with an IQ less than 25. Individuals with severe mental retardation may be able to partially contribute to self-care, but will be unable to work and will need ongoing supervision and help with daily routines.
- Medical/Physical conditions, such as fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), multiple moderate conditions or a condition that requires ongoing and constant medical attention, such as quadriplegia or cystic fibrosis.

Source: [http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/adoption\\_and\\_foster\\_care/about\\_our\\_children/disabilities/levels.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/adoption_and_foster_care/about_our_children/disabilities/levels.asp)

This information is provided for informational purpose only.

If you have questions about a specific child's disability, please have your adoption worker contact the child's worker.

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