Multiple Disabilities

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

A key part of the definition is that the combination of disabilities causes the student to have severe educational needs. In fact, those educational needs must be severe enough that they cannot be addressed by providing special education services for only one of the impairments.

The term *multiple disabilities* is general and broad. From the term, you can’t tell:
- how many disabilities a child has
- which disabilities are involved
- how severe each disability is

Many combinations of disabilities are possible. For example, one child with multiple disabilities may have an intellectual disability and deafness. Another child may have cerebral palsy and autism. Another has three different disabilities: an intellectual disability, problems with mobility, and a speech impairment.

**To support, parent, or educate a child with multiple disabilities, it’s important to know:**

- which individual disabilities are involved
- how severe (or moderate or mild) each disability is
- how each disability can affect learning and daily living

The different disabilities will also have a combined impact. That’s why it’s also important to ask: How does the combination of these disabilities affect the child’s learning, balance, use of the senses, thinking, and so on?