

COMMENTS BY THE  
LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF  
NEW YORK STATE TO THE MOST INTEGRATED  
SETTING COORDINATING COUNCIL

The Learning Disabilities Association of New York State (LDANYS) is a statewide parent driven organization, representing thousands of individuals who have learning disabilities and their families throughout the state. A learning disability is a neurobiological disorder, which is developmental in nature. A learning disability manifests itself as a chronic condition in many aspects of learning and behavior across the lifespan and its impact upon an individual's ability to function can be significant. My comments today will address the areas of improving quality, specifically access to services and looking to the future.

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According to the National Institutes for Health, 15% of Americans have some form of a learning disability, which translates to approximately 2.9 million New Yorkers. Approximately 50% of students receiving special education services have learning disabilities. The term learning disability includes an array of deficiencies. A person may have one or more learning disabilities. Learning disabilities affect people in a multitude of ways. Some people with learning disabilities are able to function well with little or no assistance while others may require more assistance such as help with educational, employment-related, social and life skills. The term learning disability itself is confusing because it almost implies that a disability only exists in a school-based or learning environment and that once a person leaves school, they will be cured or their disability will disappear. Unfortunately, that is not the case. People who have been diagnosed with a learning disability will have it throughout their lives, however their ability to compensate and gain access to support from society and those around them can determine the extent to which the disability impacts them, I'd like to share with you some statistics that illustrate the effects of learning disabilities on individuals and society:

- According to the most recently conducted national longitudinal study, 35% of students with learning disabilities drop out of school. This number does not of course include those dropouts who have never been diagnosed or those who are "pushed out".
- 35% of people on welfare have learning disabilities and 42% of families whose heads of households have learning disabilities are at or below the federal poverty live vs. 16% of families whose heads of households do not have learning disabilities.
- In a study conducted by the Hazeldon Foundation, 60% of adolescents in treatment for substance abuse were also found to have learning disabilities.