



For Immediate Release

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**KNOW THE SIGNS OF LEARNING DISABILITIES ...
AND WHAT TO DO TO HELP YOUR CHILD**

October is National Learning Disabilities Awareness Month

MINNEAPOLIS, October 13, 2003 – According to the National Institutes of Health, one in seven people in the United States suffers from some form of learning disability. That means that in the seven county Minneapolis / St. Paul metropolitan area, as many as 374,000 people may have learning disabilities, including more than 72,000 school-age children. LDA of Minnesota is here to help children, youth and adults with learning disabilities and related learning difficulties.

For young children especially, an undiagnosed and untreated learning disability can lead to needless struggle and frustration in school – struggle and frustration that often later result in low self-esteem, lack of self-sufficiency and scores of related problems. While learning disabilities can be diagnosed, treated and accommodated at any age, **early intervention** is especially valuable because it can enable success in school and prevent children from falling behind their peers in basic reading, language and math skills.

How early is “early”? The reading difficulties that underlie a very high percentage of learning disabilities often can be predicted at the preschool, kindergarten and elementary school levels. That is also where they are most successfully treated. Appropriate help by the first grade promises a normal reading ability for 90 percent of children with reading disabilities, according to the Coordinated Campaign for Learning Disabilities. If help is delayed to the fourth grade, however, 75 percent of children with learning disabilities will have reading difficulties throughout their school years.

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Now is the Time to be “LD Aware”

October is here. Children have completed several weeks of school. Autumn teacher conferences are likely appearing on family calendars. Now is the time to take a careful look at how children are performing in school.

For kindergartners through fourth graders, parents and teachers should be sensitive to these signs of a possible learning disability:

- Slow to learn connection between letters and sounds
- Confuses basic words (run, eat, want)
- Makes consistent reading and spelling errors, including letter reversals (b for d), inversions (m for w) and transpositions (felt for left)
- Transposes number sequences and confuses arithmetic signs
- Slow to remember facts
- Slow to learn new skills; relies heavily on memorization
- Impulsive, difficulty planning
- Unstable pencil grip
- Trouble learning about time
- Poor coordination, accident prone, unaware of physical surroundings

People with learning disabilities have average to above-average intelligence; their brains simply process information differently. The term “learning disability” describes this neurological disorder, that may result in problems learning to read, write, spell or do mathematics. With the right kind of help, the difficulties can be addressed and children with learning disabilities can be successful in school.

Parents who believe their child may have a learning disability should be taking these steps to ensure a proper diagnosis and course of action:

- Request an evaluation at your child’s school. Your child’s school can provide a summary of your rights to special education services. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (I.D.E.A.) says that your child has the right to “free and appropriate public education.”
- If appropriate, seek supplemental tutoring services designed to improve knowledge of word sounds and the correspondence between printed letters and series of letters and the sounds they produce.

- Consult with a speech pathologist to assess for other possible speech difficulties.
- Read often to your child, especially from books containing lots of rhyme to build awareness of letter and word sounds.
- Engage in word games at home. “If a word ends with the sound ‘at’ and begins with the sound ‘b’, what word is it?” (bat)
- Have your child read to you for 15 minutes each day.

Residents of the Twin Cities are fortunate to have Learning Disabilities Association of Minnesota as a resource for help with understanding, diagnosing and treating learning disabilities.

About LDA of Minnesota

Located in Minneapolis, LDA of Minnesota is the state’s leading nonprofit educational agency helping children, youth and adults at-risk for learning disabilities and related learning difficulties. For 36 years, LDA has been serving the needs of people of all ages with learning disabilities by maximizing their potential so that they may lead more productive and fulfilled lives. Services include diagnostic assessments, tutoring, consultations, family literacy activities, school-to-work transition programming, parent and professional training, public education and high-quality educational products. LDA of Minnesota is the state affiliate of LDA of America, a volunteer, parent-driven, membership organization dedicated to information, advocacy, research and education focused on learning disabilities (LD).

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