

IDEA vs. DSM V

How is it possible for a student to be diagnosed with a disability by a physician or other qualified medical professional and NOT be a student eligible for special education under IDEA?

Medical professionals evaluate and diagnose children based on medical criteria. They look at students through a medical lense. Education professionals evaluate and determine eligibility based on specific IDEA criteria. They look at students through an educational lense.

Often, these 2 lenses can intersect and overlap, however there is also some disconnect. Doctors don't always know what resources and techniques are available in schools, so sometimes their recommendations don't make sense in the school setting. School professionals don't always know what resources and techniques are available in the medical world so we don't generally look to them for medical advice. We really don't look to doctors to create education plans the same way that we don't look to teachers to prescribe medication. We may choose to seek their input or opinions, but that information should be considered as one part of a larger pool of data or information when making IEP team decisions.