

How Does VSA Minnesota Define Disability?

People with disabilities are the primary constituents of VSA. Therefore, VSA and VSA Minnesota use the broadest guidelines to define that group.

First, a child or young adult has a disability if he or she is receiving any educational services by way of an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP).

Second, organizational policy states that VSA Minnesota use the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) definition of disability. The ADA defines disability as: with respect to an individual, a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual; a record of such an impairment; or being regarded as having such an impairment. Therefore, a person of any age is considered to have a disability if any of the following apply:

- (1) The phrase *physical or mental impairment* means --
 - (i) Any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, respiratory (including speech organs), cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genitourinary, hemic and lymphatic, skin, and endocrine;
 - (ii) Any mental or psychological disorder such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities.
 - (iii) The phrase *physical or mental impairment* includes, but is not limited to, such contagious and noncontagious diseases and conditions as orthopedic, visual, speech and hearing impairments, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, cancer, heart disease, diabetes, mental retardation, emotional illness, specific learning disabilities, HIV disease (whether symptomatic or asymptomatic), tuberculosis, drug addiction, and alcoholism.

- (2) The phrase *major life activities* means functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working.

- (4) The phrase *is regarded as having an impairment* means-
 - (i) Has a physical or mental impairment that does not substantially limit major life activities but that is treated by a public entity as constituting such a limitation;
 - (ii) Has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits major life activities only as a result of the attitudes of others toward such impairment; or
 - (iii) Has none of the impairments defined in paragraph (1) of this definition but is treated by a public entity as having such an impairment.

If any of the above apply, an individual is eligible to participate in the granting programs of VSA Minnesota. If you have any questions in regard to the disability definitions, or other aspects of the grant, please contact staff at 612-332-3888 or 800-801-3883 (voice/TTY). You may also e-mail VSA Minnesota staff at emerginggrant@vsamn.org.