

**Q. What is a physical disability?**

**A.** A physical disability is any physiological disorder or condition, anatomical loss or cosmetic disfigurement affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological, musculoskeletal, respiratory (including speech organs), special sense organs, cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genito-urinary, hemic and lymphatic, skin and endocrine. Physical disability can arise from early disorders of the nervous, skeletal and muscular systems, such as cerebral palsy and spina bifida. Others, who become physically disabled later in life, may have experienced brain or spinal injury usually as a result of an accident or warfare.

**Q. What are the characteristics of a physical disability?**

**A.** Disability, like humanity, is expressed uniquely in every human being. People with physical disabilities are unable to move normally or to exercise proper control over movement. These people can find gross and/or fine movements difficult. Some may have unwanted or uncontrolled movements and others may experience a decreased range and strength of movement. There is a wide range of conditions that may limit mobility and/or hand functions. For some children, a physical disability may be unnoticeable, for others the effects may be profound, causing involuntary movements, paralysis, problems with speech and balance and/or learning difficulties. Physical access can be a major concern for individuals who are physically disabled. Those who use wheelchairs, braces, crutches, rolators, canes, prostheses or those who fatigue easily may have difficulty moving around.

**Q. What can be done to help someone with a physical disability?**

**A.** Management of all forms of physical disability should involve a team approach consisting of the child's parents, paediatrician, educational psychologist, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, speech and language therapist, teacher and sometimes dietician/nutritionist. It is important for parents to keep informed of each step of the team's evaluation and to be involved in the ongoing development of their child's Individual Education Plan. As a physical disability can affect the child and family in so many ways, help may be needed in many areas including educational, medical, emotional, physical and practical.

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