

DSM-5: What does it mean for students identified with MID?

Psychological service providers and Post-secondary level Offices for Students with Disabilities have approached the Assessment and Resource Centres (RARC and NOARC) about the impact of the DSM-5 on students in post-secondary education previously identified as having MID.

It is the position of the Assessment and Resource Centres (RARC and NOARC) that students previously labelled as having MID do not automatically qualify for a DSM-5 diagnosis of a Learning Disorder.

Rationale:

While Learning Disorder diagnoses require academic achievement less than the 7th percentile, or lower than the 16th percentile on the basis of clinical judgment and supporting background documentation, it also requires that the individual has experienced unexpected learning failure. In the case of an individual with a low IQ, it may be that their academic achievement is consistent with their intelligence. For example, someone with an IQ of 70-75 would be expected to have low achievement. While it is possible for a person with low cognitive ability to meet criteria for diagnosis of a Learning Disorder under the DSM-5, such cases would be rare. It would be more likely, on the other hand, that individuals with cognitive abilities greater than 80-85 with unexpected learning failures would meet current DSM-5 criteria for Learning Disorder. As stated in the DSM-5 (pp. 20 & 25), a Learning Disorder is not necessarily a disability. As such, someone with a Learning Disorder (DSM-5) diagnosis would not qualify as a person with a disability without evidence of functional impairment.

Additional Note – (3-Sept-2014)

The ARCs have received feedback on the recently issued, “DSM-5 and MID ARC Policy Statement”, and it has become clear that the Disability Service Offices (DSOs) would benefit from seeing specific wording in ARC practitioner reports in cases where a DSM diagnosis of Specific Learning Disorder is being made. A direct statement attesting to the disabling effects of a Learning Disorder will assist DSOs in making a determination as to the student’s eligibility for funding and accommodations. A sample statement is as follows: “STUDENT meets criteria for a Specific Learning Disorder, as defined by the DSM-5, in the area of reading affecting STUDENT’S ability to comprehend written text at a level comparable to their peers. STUDENT is thus considered disabled in the area of reading and in need of accommodations to assist them in accessing meaning from written material.”