



Saskatchewan College of Psychologists

1026 Winnipeg Street
Regina SK, S4R 8P8

Tel: (306) 352-1699
Fax: (306) 352-1697
Email: skcp@sasktel.net
www.skcp.ca

Membership Advisory

Learning Disabilities - Assessment and Diagnosis

The Learning Disability Association of Canada (LDAC) defines learning disabilities as follows:

Learning Disabilities refer to a number of disorders which may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or nonverbal information. These disorders affect learning in individuals who otherwise demonstrate at least average abilities essential for thinking and/or reasoning. As such, learning disabilities are distinct from global intellectual deficiency.

The differential diagnosis of a learning disability requires consideration of other conditions including but not limited to whether or not an intellectual deficit is present which may better explain the learning problems being experienced. The assessment of learning disabilities should include the gathering of information from multiple sources and the integration of that information to provide a picture unique to each client. Assessment of an intellectual deficit should be conducted by a professional with specific training in intellectual assessment who is recognized by the developers of the intellectual assessment tool to be qualified to provide that assessment. In practice this generally means individuals who have a minimum of Masters level training in psychometric assessment which is most often obtained in graduate-level Psychology programs. Diagnosis of learning disabilities often involves a multidisciplinary team approach and may include assessment by Physicians, Speech Pathologists, Audiologists, Ophthalmologists/Optomtrists, Teachers, and Psychologists, in addition to demographic, medical and developmental information obtained from parents/guardians. The information from these various sources will assist in ruling in or out the presence of a learning disability.

In Saskatchewan the formal establishment of a diagnosis of a learning disability must be carried out by a duly qualified medical professional or a Registered Psychologist with the Authorized Practice Endorsement (APE) on their license. Section 23 of the *Psychologists Act 1997* limits the right to convey psychological/psychiatric diagnoses to these two groups only. In Saskatchewan the scope of practice for the profession of Optometry does not include the primary assessment and diagnosis of learning disabilities.

Members of the Saskatchewan Association of Optometrists (SAO) may play an important contributory role in the assessment of a learning disability and ultimately in assisting in ameliorating the impact that a learning disability has in a client's life. Members are encouraged to work collaboratively with other professions in assisting these clients and are advised to be cognizant of the limitations of scope in this jurisdiction in terms of assessment, diagnosis and treatment of learning disabilities.