

Quick Tip Sheet for Supporting Students who have suffered a Moderate to Severe Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

General Overview:

A student who has suffered from a traumatic brain injury can have various struggles in school, due to the effects of their injury. All brain injuries are unique and predicting the length of recovery or need for accommodations is difficult. It is important to consider the effects when planning accommodations, realizing that a student needs both a flexible and individualized plan addressing their specific injury and needs. A student's plan may need to be updated as progress is made. It is important to address the student's physical, medical, academic, and social/emotional needs when developing a plan. Suffering from a moderate to severe traumatic brain injury is a life-changing event for a student.

PHYSICAL EFFECTS

- Increased muscle spasticity
- Physical fatigue or decreased endurance
- Vision issues (visual-spatial difficulties/visual neglect are common)
- Strength, balance, and coordination difficulty in large and fine motor skills



Division for
Physical,
Health and
Multiple
Disabilities

Accommodations to Meet Physical Needs:

- Adult supervision and/or instructional aide support
- Arrange the classroom to be accommodating for students who use mobility devices such as crutches or wheelchairs (ex. wider aisles, adaptive desks or chairs)
- Scheduled breaks
- Access to the school elevator
- Allow extra time between classes and/or allow to leave a bit early to avoid crowded halls
- Be mindful of scheduling to accommodate/avoid fatigue
- Arrange the classroom to accommodate specific visual difficulties (e.g., closer to board, seated on a specific side of the room)
- Provide notes (visual spatial issues make note-taking difficult)
- Allow a scribe or assistive technology to assist with academic work, especially when writing
- Due to fatigue, stair step the return to school. Consider partial days, reduced or no homework, and exempt from tests/quizzes to ease the transition back to school

MEDICAL EFFECTS

- Decreased bladder and/or bowel control (may require catheterization or changing at school)
- Difficulty with breathing (student may have a tracheal tube) and/or eating and swallowing
- Increased chance of seizure disorder
- Medication administration at school for conditions and pain management
- Student may require in-school and/or outpatient therapies

Accommodations to Meet Medical Needs:

- Ensure that the student has an individualized health plan
- Need for a 1:1 nurse or aide due to severity of medical needs
- May require a Hoyer lift or changing cot to assist with safe transfers and toileting
- Need for privacy during catheterization and/or changing
- Recognize medical precautions and what to do for each need
 - Need for seizure rescue plan
 - Medication side effects
 - Training school staff to reposition, transfer, and assist student with toileting
- Allow makeup work for time missed due to taking care of medical needs such as catheterization/toileting/medical administration/repositioning/therapies

LEARNING EFFECTS

- Decreased memory, attention, and organization
- Difficulty with expressive and receptive language
- Impulsive behaviors/decreased problem solving abilities
- Perceptual issues//sequencing

Accommodations to Meet Learning Needs:

- Language deficits: recognition format, written directions, frontloading
- Attention: repeated directions, highlight key points, teach attention strategies
- Memory: errorless learning, reminders, teach cognitive strategies (e.g., mnemonics)
- Organization: assignment notebook, teach organization strategies (e.g., color-coding)
- Math difficulties: adapted materials/assistive technology for teaching math concepts (e.g., manipulatives, visual aids such as fraction circles, tactile graphing chart, graphing calculator)
- Reading comprehension difficulties: graphic organizers, text-to-speech software/apps, audio books
- Impulsivity/problem solving: explicitly teach desired behaviors, behavior plan, differential reinforcement
- Fine motor difficulties: assistive technology (Chrome book, iPad), scribe, speech-to-text software/apps