

Teen Learning Disabilities

Teen learning disabilities have a profound effect on our society. Out of the 20 million kids who cannot read at grade level, nine million (that's almost half) have a learning disability. As children develop into teenagers, their learning disabilities become more obvious. If the problem is not identified and solved, it can lead to frustration with school, poor performance, and dropping out. In addition to affecting the teenager, teen learning disabilities also have an effect on society. Substance abuse, joblessness, welfare and even criminal behavior can be outgrowths of frustrations felt due to teen learning disabilities. It is estimated that learning disabilities cost society right about \$7.5 billion each year. Getting help for teens with learning disabilities while they are in public school needs to be a high priority.

1. Teen learning disabilities can affect school performance. They can even cause teens to drop out of school. It is relatively low-cost to help teens with learning disabilities learn how to learn best:

- 80 percent of teen learning disabilities have to do with reading
- 35 percent of teenagers with learning disabilities do not finish high school
- Special education costs, on average, are right around \$10,000 per year per teen

2. Teenage learning disabilities can affect the way a teen does a job for the rest of his/her life. Without learning the skills necessary to overcome the disability, a teen may find that he/she has lifelong trouble getting and maintaining employment.

- 62 percent of teens with learning disabilities do not have employment one year after completing high school
- 25 percent of the population of young adults (including teens) does not have the literacy skills necessary to do typical jobs
- The most common obstacles to getting off welfare, and getting and holding a job are: 1) substance abuse and 2) learning disabilities

3. Frustrations associated with teen learning disabilities can be the root of substance abuse problems and criminal, or even violent behavior. Getting help for learning disabilities can result in less crime and fewer substance abuse problems.

- 60 percent of teens being treated for substance abuse have learning disabilities
- 50 percent of delinquent juveniles have learning disabilities that have not been detected
- The rate of learning disabilities among criminal offenders is 50 percent
- 31 percent of teens with learning disabilities are arrested between three and five years after graduating from high school
- It costs \$31,000 per year to take care of one criminal offender

4. It is possible to save both monetary costs when the problem of teen learning disabilities is addressed. By investing \$10,000 per year for the six years that a teen is in school in order to help him or her compensate for a learning disability, we could save tens of thousands of dollars over the life of a teen by giving him/her the tools to stay out of jail. Learning disabilities when acknowledged do not have to be permanent stumbling blocks. Teenagers who get help for their learning disabilities can go on to be fully participating and happy members of society.