



Law Offices of Hirji & Chau welcomes California’s adoption of the term “emotional disability” to replace the previously used term

Description

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On July 18, 2024, the Governor of California signed AB 2173—a bill adding [Section 97](#) to the Education Code. The new law, authored by Assemblyperson Dawn Addis—a former special education teacher—takes effect January 1, 2025.

The new law allows educators and families to use the term “emotional disability” to be used where “emotional disturbance” was previously used and where it is still used in federal law (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act “IDEA”).

While the new law doesn’t replace the term as it is used in the IDEA, nor does it change eligibility criteria, it does allow California to use emotional disability in written documents including individual education programs (“IEP”) and related assessments.

Allowing the term “emotional disability” in place of the old term reduces the stigma associated with the term and is more reflective of the wide range of disabilities grouped under this eligibility. The new law doesn’t take effect until the new year, but in practice educators and advocates have already begun using the updated and more inclusive term.

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