Definition of Special Health Care Needs

Latest Revision

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Special health care needs include any physical, developmental, mental, sensory, behavioral, cognitive, or emotional difference or limiting condition that requires medical management, health care intervention, and/or use of specialized services or programs. The condition may be congenital, developmental, or acquired through disease, trauma, or environmental cause and may impose limitations in performing daily self-maintenance activities or substantial limitations in a major life activity. Health care for individuals with disabilities or complex medical needs requires specialized knowledge, as well as increased awareness and attention, adaptation, and accommodative measures beyond what are considered routine.

This definition was developed by the Council on Clinical Affairs, adopted in 2004, and last revised in 2016.