

Intellectual Disability

Fact Sheet

DEFINITION

Intellectual disability means significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period that adversely affects a child's educational performance. 34 CFR 300.8(c) (6)

Evaluations

Evaluations are multi-criterion in scope and consist of standardized assessment tools, adaptive behavior scales, observations, checklists, and other relevant tools. One component of the comprehensive evaluation process includes the IQ test or cognitive abilities test. It is a major tool in measuring intellectual functioning, which is the mental capacity for learning, reasoning, problem solving, and so on. A test score at or below 73—indicates a limitation in intellectual functioning.

In addition, adaptive behavior information is collected in conjunction with intelligence testing to determine if an intellectual disability exists. Adaptive behavior is the collection of conceptual, social, and practical skills that are learned and performed by people in their everyday lives. Examples include:

- Conceptual skills--language and literacy; money, time, and number concepts; and self-direction.
- Social skills—interpersonal skills, social responsibility, self-esteem, gullibility, naiveté (i.e., wariness), social problem solving, and the ability to follow rules, obey laws, and avoid being victimized.
- Practical skills—activities of daily living (personal care), occupational skills, healthcare, travel/transportation, schedules/routines, safety, use of money, use of the telephone.

An intellectual disability is one of several developmental disabilities—that is, there is evidence of the disability during the developmental period, which in West Virginia is operationalized as eighteen or below.

In defining and assessing an intellectual disability, additional factors are taken into account, such as the community environment typical of the individual's peers and culture. Professionals should also consider linguistic diversity and cultural differences in the way people communicate, move, and behave.

Finally, assessments must also assume that limitations in individuals often coexist with strengths, and that a person's level of life functioning will improve if appropriate personalized supports are provided over a sustained period.

POSSIBLE CAUSES

Doctors have found many causes of an intellectual disability. The most common are:

- Genetic conditions-- Sometimes an intellectual disability is caused by abnormal genes inherited from parents, errors when genes combine, or other reasons. Examples of genetic conditions are Down syndrome, fragile X syndrome, and phenylketonuria (PKU).
- Problems during pregnancy-- An intellectual disability can result when the baby does not develop inside the mother properly. For example, there may be a problem with the way the baby's cells divide as the baby grows. A woman who drinks alcohol or gets an infection like rubella during pregnancy may also have a baby with an intellectual disability.
- Problems at birth-- If a baby has problems during labor and birth, such as not getting enough oxygen, he or she may have an intellectual disability.
- Health problems-- Diseases like whooping cough, measles, or meningitis can cause an intellectual disability. It can also be caused by extreme malnutrition, lack of medical care, or by being exposed to poisons such as lead or mercury.

INCIDENCE

- Intellectual disabilities are the third largest disability category in West Virginia with 2.78 percent of enrolled students identified (ages 6-21).
- Nationally, 0.94 percent of enrolled students are identified as intellectually disabled (ages 6-21).
- In West Virginia, 17.6 percent of students with disabilities receive special education services for intellectual disabilities (ages 6-21).
- Nationally, 7.4 percent of students with disabilities receive special education services for

Intellectual Disability

intellectual disabilities. (IDEA 2012 Child Count Data)

POSSIBLE SIGNS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Usually, the more severe the degree of an intellectual disability, the earlier the signs can be noticed. However, it might still be hard to tell how young children will be affected later in life. There are many signs of an intellectual disability. For example, children with an intellectual disability may:

- Sit up, crawl, or walk later than other children.
- Learn to talk later, or have trouble speaking.
- Find it hard to remember things.
- Have trouble understanding social rules.
- Have trouble seeing the results of their actions.
- Have trouble solving problems.
- Have trouble thinking logically.
- Be unable to learn as quickly or retain and generalize learned skills as well as their typical peers.

TEACHING TIPS/INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

It's important that students with an intellectual disability be involved in, and progress in, the general education curriculum and held to high expectations. Teachers play a critical role in providing the needed supports/strategies for learning to occur such as:

- Recognize that a teacher can make an enormous difference in the student's life; determine the student's strengths and interests and create opportunities for success.
- Use concrete items and examples to explain new concepts.
- Teach one concept or activity component at a time, avoiding multiple skills and/or directions.
- Provide direct instruction in small groups or one-on-one based on individualized student needs.
- Use formative/classroom assessment data during instruction to adjust ongoing teaching and learning.
- Provide multiple opportunities to teach and practice skills in a number of different and natural settings to demonstrate skill generalization and retention.
- Use physical and verbal prompting to guide correct responses and provide specific quality feedback to reinforce these responses.

- Implement the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) by providing multiple means of representation of content, multiple means of

student expression and multiple means of student engagement.

- Provide accessible instructional materials (AIM) in a timely manner to students with an intellectual disability who need them.
- Provide adapted equipment and/or materials.
- Provide assistive technology, consisting of tools or devices and services, to enable students with an intellectual disability to engage more fully in typical activities and routines at home, in school, and in the community.
- Utilize peer tutors and/or peer-mediated support strategies to build meaningful relationships, promote self-advocacy, respect diversity and enable students with an intellectual disability to have age-appropriate models.
- Provide community readiness instruction for students with an intellectual disability to reach their potential as active participants in home, school and community environments.
- Collaborate among staff, parents, and/or other professionals to share talents, materials, ideas and classroom activities that lead to effective problem solving to meet students' needs and improved educational experiences.
- Participate in professional development to learn about an intellectual disability and gain new knowledge and skills in classroom practice.

Additional instructional strategies in the areas of *Learning & Academics, Socialization, Communication, Daily Living and Behavior* for teaching students with an intellectual disability can be found at the following link:

http://www.do2learn.com/disabilities/CharacteristicsAndStrategies/IntellectualDisability_Strategies.html

This information developed from the following resources:

- American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
www.aaid.org/
- The Arc – for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

Intellectual Disability

Fact Sheet

<http://www.thearc.org/page.aspx?pid=2448>

- Center for Parent Information and Resources
<http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/intellectual>

- National Center on Universal Design for Learning
www.udlcenter.org
- Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM-WV)
<http://wvde.state.wv.us/osp/accessiblematerials.html>
- Community Readiness – Guidance for WV Schools and Districts
[http://wvde.state.wv.us/osp/communityreadiness_guidanc%20\(1\).pdf](http://wvde.state.wv.us/osp/communityreadiness_guidanc%20(1).pdf)