

Intellectual Disability (ID)

INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

Intellectual disability is the term used when a person has significant difficulties in cognitive functioning, such as communicating, problem-solving, and learning, combined with deficits in adaptive behavior such as everyday interactive social skills, and taking care of themselves. There is a limit to the person's ability to learn at an expected level and function in daily life. Skills of intellectual functioning vary greatly in children, from a very slight problem to a very severe problem which will require more support - particularly in school. Children with intellectual disabilities (previously known as mental retardation prior to passage of Rosa's Law in 2010), may take longer to learn to walk, speak, dress themselves, and feed themselves. They can learn in school, but it will take them longer. An intellectual disability is not a disease – it cannot be caught from anyone, and it is not a type of mental illness, like depression. There is no cure for intellectual disability, but there are many programs and resources available to help these children as they grow into adulthood.

INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY IS COMMON

Intellectual disability is the most common developmental disability with approximately 7 – 8 million people in United States having it. One in ten families are affected by intellectual disability. More than 425,000 school-age children have some level

of ID and receive special education services in public schools.

EARLY SIGNS

Intellectual disability can be caused by a problem that starts any time before a child turns 18 years old – even before birth. Disability can be caused by injury, disease, or a problem in the brain. Some of the most common known causes of intellectual disability, like Down syndrome, fetal alcohol syndrome, fragile X syndrome, genetic conditions, birth defects, and infections happen before birth. Other causes do not occur until a child is older; these might include traumatic brain injury, stroke, or certain infections.

Children with 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 consequences of their actions
- Have difficulty solving problems or thinking logically

Children with severe intellectual disabilities are more likely to have additional disabilities and/or disorders compared to children with milder IDs.

Examples of associated disabilities are:

- Cerebral palsy



Alabama Parent Education Center 

PO Box 118 * Wetumpka AL, 36092 * 334-567-2252 * 866-532-7660 * www.alabamaparentcenter.com

Special Education V.20

Page 1 of 4

Intellectual Disability (ID)

- Epilepsy
- Vision impairment
- Hearing loss
- Speech and language problems

CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR CHILD

To help your child reach his full potential, it is important to get help as early as possible. Talk with your child's pediatrician for advice on further evaluation or screening. If an intellectual disability is suspected there is help available for your child, according to the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA), beginning with a free evaluation of your child. According to IDEA, the nation's special education law, all children suspected of having a disability can be evaluated without cost to their parents to determine if they have a disability, and because of that disability, need special education services under IDEA. It is important to understand that a medical diagnosis does not mean the same as having a disability in education. Those special services are:

Early Intervention-a system of services to support infants and toddlers with disabilities (birth through 2) and their families. If a child is found eligible for Early Intervention services, staff work with you to develop what is known as an Individualized Family Services Plan or IFSP, which will describe your child's unique needs as well as the services he will

receive to address those needs. Contact Alabama Early Intervention Services at 1-800-543-3098.

Special Education and Related Services-Services available through the public school system for school-aged children, including preschoolers (ages 3-21). The federal special education law called IDEA, and corresponding state law called Alabama Administrative Code (AAC), require that special education and related services be made available free of charge to every eligible child with a disability, including preschoolers. These services are designed to address the child's individual needs in the classroom resulting from the disability.

Intellectual Disability

Definition: Intellectual Disability means significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with significant limitations in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period that adversely affects the child's educational performance.

AAC 290-8-9.03(6)(a)

REFERRAL AND EVALUATION FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

If you feel your child is in need of special education and related services, the first step is to make a referral to your child's school indicating the challenges you've noticed, and request that he be evaluated for a disability. The team will review all data and reports and parental concerns to



Alabama Parent Education Center 

PO Box 118 * Wetumpka AL, 36092 * 334-567-2252 * 866-532-7660 * www.alabamaparentcenter.com

Special Education V.20

Page 2 of 4

Intellectual Disability (ID)

determine if an evaluation is necessary. If the referral is accepted, a formal referral form is completed, and you must give written consent for the evaluation to be done. The school has 60 calendar days from written consent to complete the evaluation process. If the referral is not accepted, written notice is given to the parent, and the child is referred to the problem-solving team.

Keep in mind that a child does not have to fail in school to be eligible for special education services. A referral for special education should never be denied based solely on the student having passing grades.



An evaluation is the process of gathering information about your child, their potential disability, strengths, weaknesses, and areas of need. If your child is struggling in school and you are concerned about their learning, educational progress, social skills, or behavior, a comprehensive special education evaluation may be the information that can help you and your child's school to meet your child's educational needs. The initial evaluation will serve to answer these questions:

1-does my child have a disability?

2-does his disability affect his educational performance?

3-does my child need special education and related services?

Just the mere presence of a disability does not automatically qualify your child as “**a child with a disability**” under special education laws. Your child must meet the criteria and minimum evaluative components for Intellectual Disability outlined in the Alabama Administrative Code. In addition to passing the vision and hearing screenings, they must score at least two standard deviations below the mean (70 or below) on individual achievement and intelligence tests, in conjunction with significant deficits on two adaptive behavior scales which must include a school version and a home version. There must be evidence that the disability adversely affects educational performance.

DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY

Sometimes the test scores and data do not meet the qualifying criteria for disability, and your child is denied eligibility for services. If you disagree with the ineligibility decision, you have the right to appeal this decision and should inform the school. Ask about eligibility for 504 Plan services. You will receive a written copy of your Special Education Rights from the school, which contains information on due process procedures to follow. You can also contact our staff for assistance.



Alabama Parent Education Center 

PO Box 118 * Wetumpka AL, 36092 * 334-567-2252 * 866-532-7660 * www.alabamaparentcenter.com

Special Education V.20

Page 3 of 4

Intellectual Disability (ID)

Teachers and Parents Can Work on These Adaptive Skills:

- Communicating with others
- Taking care of personal needs (dressing, bathing, toileting)
- Health and safety awareness
- Chores (setting table, cleaning house, cooking)
- Social skills (manners, rules of conversation, playing a game)
- As they get older, skills they will need in the workplace

Stakeholder opinion is very important to our center. We invite you tell us what you think and make suggestions for trainings and publications. Complete a brief survey, call our center, or join our advisory committee. Your input is always welcome. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ALPT>
!



APEC IS HERE TO HELP

The contents of this publication were developed in part under a grant from the US Department of Education, #H328M150012. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Project Officer David Emenheiser. Special Education V.20 ID

RESOURCES

The ARC of Alabama <http://www.thearcofal.org/>

The ARC <https://www.thearc.org/>

Ala Dept of MH <http://www.mh.alabama.gov/ID/>

Family Voices <http://www.familyvoicesal.org/>

Down Syndrome

Alabama <https://downsyndromealabama.org/>

Early Intervention System (birth-2) <http://www.rehab.alabama.gov/individuals-and-families/early-intervention>

Alabama Department of Education, Special Education (Ages 3-21), www.alsde.edu/sec/ses/

Children's Rehabilitation

Service www.rehab.alabama.gov/crs

YOUR OPINION MATTERS



Alabama Parent Education Center 

PO Box 118 * Wetumpka AL, 36092 * 334-567-2252 * 866-532-7660 * www.alabamaparentcenter.com

Special Education V.20

Page 4 of 4