

The Language Lab: Intellectual disability

Intellectual disability

Intellectual disability is a developmental disability in which there are impairments of an individual's ability to develop intellectual and adaptive skills. The diagnostic definition of intellectual disability includes three criteria which must all be present:

- General intellectual functioning which is significantly below average (with an IQ of 70 or below, or at least 2 standard deviations below the mean).
- Significant limitations in adaptive functioning in at least two of the following skill areas: communication, self-care, home living, social/interpersonal skills, use of community resources, self-direction, functional academic skills, work, leisure, health, and safety.
- The onset of these conditions must occur during the developmental period (before the age of 18 years).

Adaptive Functioning

Refers to how effectively individuals cope with common life demands and how well they meet the standards of personal independence expected of someone in their particular age group, sociocultural background, and community setting. It may be influenced by various factors, including education, motivation, personality characteristics, social and vocational opportunities, and the mental disorders and general medical conditions that may coexist with intellectual disability. Problems in adaptive functioning are more likely to improve with remedial efforts than is the cognitive IQ, which tends to remain a more stable attribute. Adaptive skills are classified into the areas of: communication, self-care, social, community use, self-direction, health and safety, functional academics, leisure, and work.

Cognitive

The ability to receive information, process and analyze it.

Developmental Disability

A diverse group of physical, cognitive, psychological, sensory, and speech impairments that begin anytime during the developmental period before the age of 18, are expected to continue indefinitely and result in substantial functional limitations in three or more of these areas. Nationwide, about 13.87% of U.S. children have a developmental disability.

Developmental Disabilities: Faces, Patterns, Possibilities

Etiology

The etiology, or cause, of intellectual disability is an important aspect of diagnostic classification because: it may be associated with other health-related problems which impact physical abilities; it may be treatable and therefore permit appropriate treatment which could prevent or minimize intellectual disability; epidemiological information may be utilized for assessment of needs, design of resources, comparative research, and prevention.

Functional Impairment

The effect of specific impairments on an individual's capacity to perform within a social context.

IQ

Intelligence Quotient- a quantitative measure of intellectual functioning obtained by assessment with one or more of the standardized individually administered intelligence tests (e.g., Wechsler Intelligence Scales for Children, Stanford Binet, Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children).

Practical Intelligence

The ability to manage the ordinary activities of daily living, including the capacity to use one's physical abilities, whatever they may be, to achieve the greatest degree of independence possible.

Primary Prevention

Actions which may be taken prior to the onset of a problem, which prevent that problem from occurring (e.g. prevention of prenatal substance abuse).

Secondary Prevention

Actions which may be taken to shorten the duration or reverse the effects of a problem (such as early intervention/ infant development, special diets, etc.).

Social Intelligence

The ability to understand social expectations and the behavior of other individuals and to judge appropriately how to conduct oneself in social situations.