

What is an Intellectual Disability (ID)?

An Intellectual Disability, often referred to as ID, is characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual and adaptive functioning.

Intellectual Functioning	Adaptive Functioning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refers to intelligence, cognitive ability or general mental capacity. Includes learning, reasoning, problem-solving, planning, abstract thinking, judgement, academic learning, and learning from experience. Measured with standardized cognitive/intellectual (IQ) testing as part of a comprehensive assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The collection of skills that are learned and performed by individuals in everyday living. Includes <u>conceptual</u> (e.g., academics, communication), <u>social</u> (e.g., peer and adult relations), and <u>practical</u> (e.g., daily living) skills. Measured with interviews, observations, and rating scales as part of a comprehensive assessment.

Limitations in these areas can make it difficult for individuals to meet expected outcomes at school or engage in age-appropriate daily activities. Individuals with ID are capable of learning and making progress, though often at a slower pace than peers and with more intensive effort and supports.

What is the cause of ID?

The cause is unknown for about two-thirds of individuals with an Intellectual Disability. The most common known causes of ID are problems during childbirth (e.g., lack of oxygen), genetic conditions (e.g., Down Syndrome), neurodevelopmental disorders (e.g. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder), injuries and infections.

How is ID diagnosed?

Comprehensive culturally responsive assessment that considers ethnic and linguistic background, experiences, and expected functioning within the community and cultural setting		
WHAT	WHO	WITH
Deficits in intellectual and adaptive functioning in multiple settings with onset before age 18	Developmental pediatrician, psychiatrist, or psychologist	Severity levels (Mild, Moderate, Severe, Profound) that can change with age and maturity
THERE ARE NO DISTINGUISHING PHYSICAL FEATURES OF ID		
NO SINGLE TEST OR QUESTIONNAIRE CAN DIAGNOSE ID		

About 1% of the population has an ID and most of those individuals (85%) are considered Mild.

Adapted from: DSM – 5 **Diagnosis In The Schools** – Renee M. Tobin & Alvin E. House; **American Psychiatric Association** – Diagnostic Statistical Manual – 5th Edition (DSM-5) and <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/intellectual-disability/what-is-intellectual-disability>

Global Developmental Delay is a temporary diagnosis reserved for children under the age of 5 when intellectual and adaptive levels of functioning cannot be reliably assessed during early childhood. It is diagnosed when a child does not meet expected developmental milestones in several areas and cannot undergo systematic assessments; however, this category requires a clinical assessment of intellectual and adaptive functioning levels after a period of time. If an Intellectual Disability diagnosis is offered, this replaces the previous diagnosis of Global Developmental Delay.

How are children and teens with ID supported at school?

Students with ID may require support with learning and academics, socialization, behaviour management, daily living skills, and communication. The skills and abilities of students with ID vary widely, requiring school staff to consider individual strengths and needs when planning and delivering supports.

Inclusion & Planning

- All students benefit from general education classroom inclusion and participation in activities with same-age peers.
- Often, students with ID can experience school success with differentiated instruction, adaptations, and strategies known to be effective within an inclusive education model. However, some students with ID may require more intensive supports, such as Modified credits or Individualized programming, which require a team decision-making and planning process.
- Student Specific Plans (e.g., IEP) help document strengths, weaknesses, learning goals and supports, as these are likely to differ from peers at times. It is important to regularly monitor plans and update them to match current needs.

Repetition & Practice

- Students with ID often learn at a slower rate than peers, making repetition and opportunities for practice critical for developing mastery.
- Teach new skills and behaviours in a routine-like matter. In addition, remind students how previously learned skills apply in new situations, as some students with ID struggle to generalize between situations.

Meaningful Learning

- Use manipulatives, experiments, games, play, and project-based learning to make learning meaningful and relevant.
- Explicitly connect the student's learning with real-life experiences and teach abstract concepts based on concrete parts.

Functional Skills

- Many children with intellectual disabilities need help with adaptive skills and some will require explicit teaching of day-to-day living skills, including: health and safety, hygiene, social skills (e.g., manners, social rules), communication, and home living (e.g., setting the table, cleaning room).