



# ID

## *Intellectual Disability*

*Questions from Parents*

*Anne Arundel County Public Schools  
Office of Psychological Services*

## *The definition of Intellectual Disability*

Intellectual disability is a disability characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning (reasoning, learning, problem solving) and in adaptive behavior, which covers a range of everyday social and practical skills. This disability originates before the age of 18.

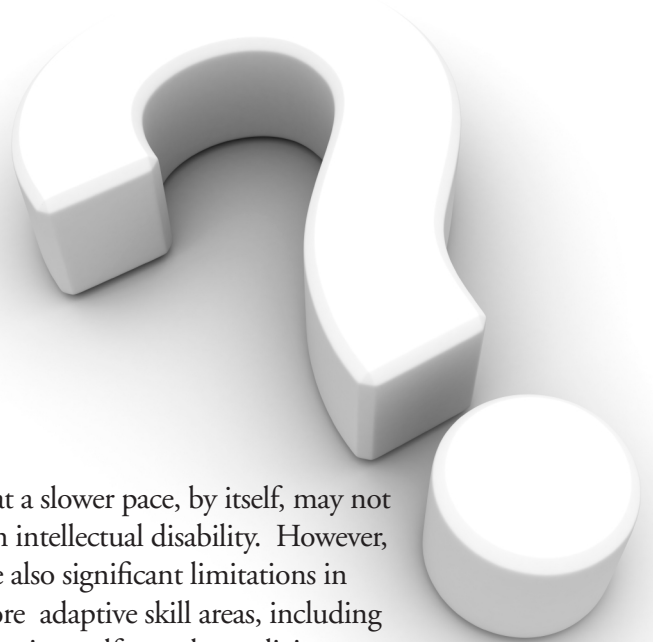
*AAIDD (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities)*

## *A Functional Definition*

*People with an Intellectual Disability are likely to:*

- Learn more slowly
- Have difficulty following directions that contain more than one or two steps
- Retain less
- Have difficulty applying what they learn to new situations
- Think more concretely
- Have difficulty making decisions because of limited reasoning and problem solving skills
- Show poor social judgment by saying or doing that which is inappropriate in social situations
- Learn and develop throughout their lives

# Questions from parents



*I know that my son learns at a slower pace, but does that mean he's Intellectually Disabled?*

Learning at a slower pace, by itself, may not indicate an intellectual disability. However, if there are also significant limitations in two or more adaptive skill areas, including communication, self-care, home living, social skills, self-direction, community use, health and safety, functional academics, leisure or work skills, then an intellectual disability may be the appropriate diagnosis.

*Why do you have to use those words!?*

*I agree with the findings; I know my child has trouble learning.*

*I don't want her "labeled" Intellectually Disabled.*

State and federal laws specify in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004), the definitions of disabilities and the "labels" used. The label or disability enables children to obtain specialized instruction and related services that can contribute to their education and provide for growth.



### *Do IQ scores change over time?*

It is often very difficult to accurately assess a preschooler or infant. Early intervention and instruction can improve a child's "learning" as measured by IQ tests, so later IQ scores may vary. Different tests can also yield different scores depending on the method of evaluation and the areas of development being measured. For these reasons, the school team provides ongoing evaluation in several areas of functioning to determine your child's strengths and weaknesses and to aid in developing individual educational goals to encourage growth.

### *Don't these tests discriminate against minority children?*

Intelligence test scores reflect a sample of learning in several different skill areas which have been found to be good predictors of academic success.

Standardized tests are generally supplemented with information regarding classroom performance, adaptive behavior, medical and family history and cultural background. Your child's motivation, creativity and work habits are not measured by tests, but influence your child's success in school. If all these factors are considered, then the impact of any test bias is significantly reduced.

*He can do much more at home. I do not understand why he does not show the teacher what he knows.*

As parents, you have obviously encouraged his independence and growth at home and he appears very responsive to the individual attention and instruction you have provided. New skills that are emerging in a child are often seen in school or at home before they are seen in both. Typically, with time and consistency, a student will generalize the skill to both environments and will also be able to show the skill to other individuals besides his parents and teacher. When teaching new skills, it is very important for you and your son's teacher to work together closely to ensure consistency in instruction and to reinforce emerging skills both at home and at school.

*If I work with my daughter or if we hire a tutor to help, wouldn't that correct this problem?*

Working with your child on school topics will help her see the importance of the school lessons. However, like all children your child needs a break from the school work. There are other ways we teach our children daily that are often overlooked. Asking her to help with cooking, shopping or cleaning will increase her knowledge and independence. Providing activities and experiences in social skills and language development are also very important.

*If he is a little behind, why don't you just keep him back for a year?  
He does not need special education, he just needs to work harder.*

Children with an intellectual disability will work hard to gain every skill they learn. Presenting the same material a second year in a row would not acknowledge the unique way your son learns and may just add to his frustration. In addition, physical development in most children with an intellectual disability is the same as other children, so if retained, your son will likely "outgrow" his classmates.

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*can improve a child's learning.*



*How will my child's educational program differ from that of other students his age?*

Your son's educational program will always be individualized to support his learning. He will benefit from

frequent repetition, concrete hands-on experiences and special education instruction and support to encourage his independence in daily living and the community.

Instruction and training may be provided in real life settings such as the home or the community, to enable him to learn and practice skills he will use often. He may also require more frequent teacher attention and intervention to ensure he learns new skills.

*My friends have told me that my child may have autism.*

*How would I know?*

Children with autism generally have severe difficulties in the development of language and social interaction.

Although children with an intellectual disability may also have language delays, they are usually evenly delayed in all developmental areas.

Many children with autism may also have an intellectual disability, but there are times when a child with autism displays unique skills in some areas and delays in others. With the help of trained professionals, such as the school psychologist, a speech pathologist and others, a complete picture can be obtained.

*Did I do something to cause this when I was pregnant?*

*Could the fall when he was two have caused his intellectual disability?*

*How did this happen?*

Cause is complex and often the result of multiple factors. There are some clearly identified causes of an intellectual disability that may include severe brain injury or viral infections. In some cases, there may be a genetic or hereditary component related to your child's intellectual disability, and you may want to discuss this possibility with your pediatrician.

*Is she always going to be this way?*

*Are you saying that my daughter will never be able to take care of herself?*

An intellectual disability is a life-long condition but it would be a mistake to conclude that she will never learn or take care of herself. Children with an intellectual disability have made great strides in learning academic subjects and caring for their health and personal needs.

This has become possible with the early intervention through preschool programs and ongoing instruction in functional academics. The greatest difference is that

these specific skills must be taught to the child and that it will usually take longer for the child with an intellectual disability to learn them.

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*always be individualized to help him learn.*



*What will happen when my child's education is completed?*

If special education services are needed, they are available for your child through age 21. The school staff will work with you to develop a transition plan to provide for your child's adult life. Many adults with an intellectual disability contribute to society as wage earners and tax payers.

They may be independently employed in competitive, supervised or job-coached positions. Although many adults with disabilities remain living with their families, there are also opportunities for these adults to live in group homes in the community or in supervised living arrangements.

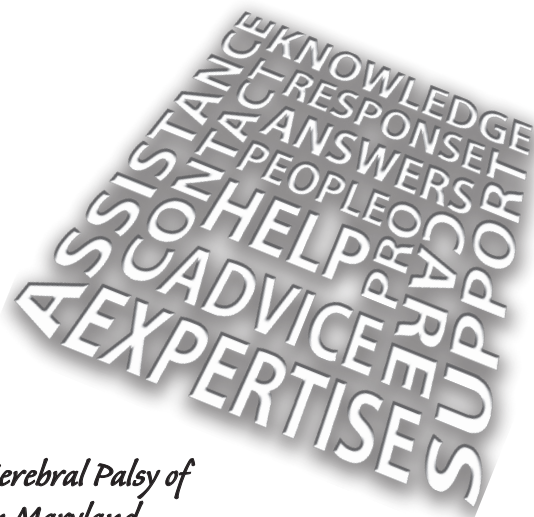
*What organizations and resources are available to help me make decisions about her present care and to plan for my daughter's future?*

There are many organizations that can help you provide fulfilling experiences for your child. We have made tremendous strides in offering educational opportunities to children with disabilities. Your school system participates with other agencies in your community, like the Department of Health, to care for your child's needs, and to provide medical attention and enriching stimulation.

Also groups like the Department of Recreation and Parks and The Arc of the Central Chesapeake Region offer specialized services for children with a wide range of disabilities.



# Resources



## *Anne Arundel County Department of Social Services*

410-421-8500

410-269-4500

[www.dhr.state.md.us/county/ann](http://www.dhr.state.md.us/county/ann)

## *Supplemental Security Income Program (SSI) Social Security Office*

1-800-772-1213

[www.ssa.gov/ssi](http://www.ssa.gov/ssi)

## *The Arc of the Central Chesapeake Region*

410-269-1883

410-268-8085

[www.thearcccr.org](http://www.thearcccr.org)

## *Developmental Disabilities Administration Central Maryland Office*

410-234-8200

[www.ddamaryland.org](http://www.ddamaryland.org)

## *Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)*

410-974-7608

[www.dors.state.md.us](http://www.dors.state.md.us)

## *United Cerebral Palsy of Southern Maryland*

410-224-4205

[www.ucp.org/ucp\\_local.cfm/83](http://www.ucp.org/ucp_local.cfm/83)

## *Parent's Place of Maryland, Inc.*

410-768-9100

[www.ppmd.org](http://www.ppmd.org)

## *The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council*

410-767-3670

[www.md-council.org](http://www.md-council.org)

## *Service Coordination Systems of Anne Arundel County*

410-863-0360

[www.servicecoordinationinc.org/aactyw](http://www.servicecoordinationinc.org/aactyw)

*Resources cont.*

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*her teacher to ensure consistency.*

# Resources

## *Anne Arundel County Department of Recreation and Parks*

410-222-7300

[www.aacounty.org/recparks](http://www.aacounty.org/recparks)

## *Maryland Disability Law Center*

410-727-6352

[www.mdclaw.org](http://www.mdclaw.org)

## *Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education*

410-859-5400

[www.mcie.org](http://www.mcie.org)

## *PACT: Helping Children with Special Needs, Inc.*

410-298-7000

[www.pact.kennedykrieger.org](http://www.pact.kennedykrieger.org)

## *The Coordinating Center*

410-987-1048

[www.coordinatingcenter.org](http://www.coordinatingcenter.org)







ANNE ARUNDEL  
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*Special thanks to the Division of Special Education for their review and contributions.*

*For information on ordering copies of this series of brochures, please call 410-222-5101.*

*Other subjects covered include Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder,  
Emotionally Disabled, Learning Disabilities, and Autism.*

*The photos in this document are being used for illustrative purposes only; any person depicted in this document is a model.*

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