



OKLAHOMA PARENTS CENTER FACT SHEET

Intellectual Disability (ID)

What Is Intellectual Disability? (ID)

Intellectual disability (ID) is a condition that begins in childhood and affects a person's ability to learn, reason, solve problems, and manage everyday life skills. It involves challenges with both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior.

What Does This Mean?

An intellectual disability affects how a person:

- Learns new information
- Solves problems and makes decisions
- Communicates and interacts with others
- Manages everyday tasks like dressing, money, or time

It is not the same for everyone—people with ID have different strengths and challenges.

What Are the Signs of Intellectual Disability?

Signs can vary but can include:

Early Childhood Signs

- Delays in walking, talking, or sitting up
- Trouble remembering things
- Difficulty understanding cause and effect

School-Age Signs

- Trouble learning basic academic skills (reading, writing, math)
- Difficulty following directions
- Problems with problem-solving or reasoning
- Slower pace of learning compared to peers

Social & Behavioral Signs

- Difficulty understanding social rules
- Trouble communicating clearly
- Dependence on others for daily tasks

Signs can look different for every child but often involve delays in learning, communication, and everyday skills.

What Causes ID?

- Genetic conditions
- Problems during pregnancy
- Complications at birth
- Illness or injury
- Sometimes the cause is unknown

How Is ID diagnosed?

- Intellectual functioning (IQ tests)
- Adaptive behavior (daily living skills)
- Developmental history (delays present in childhood)

Intellectual disability is typically identified when an individual's **IQ is approximately 70 or below**, along with **limitations in adaptive skills**. A diagnosis is then made by trained specialists such as psychologists or doctors.

What Are Adaptive Skills?

- Conceptual skills (reading, writing, math) [understanding time and money]
- Social skills (communication, relationships) [following rules]
- Practical skills (daily routines and self-care) [dressing, hygiene, and safety]

Adaptive skills are the everyday skills people use to live, learn, and be independent.

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How Can Schools Help?

- Individualized Education Programs (IEP)
- Special education services
- Classroom accommodations
- Modified instruction
- Speech or occupational therapy
- Behavioral therapy
- Life skills training or classes

What This Looks Like Day-to-Day:

Children with intellectual disabilities may learn and develop skills more slowly, but they continue to grow with support and practice. Day to day, this might look like needing extra time to complete homework, step-by-step help with routines like getting dressed or brushing teeth, or reminders to stay on task.

At school, your child may receive instruction that is broken into smaller steps, repeated often, and taught in different ways to help them understand. At home, practicing everyday skills like following directions, using money, or communicating needs—can make a big difference.

Progress may take time, but every small step matters. With encouragement, consistency, and the right supports, children can build confidence, independence, and important life skills.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Defines Intellectual Disability as:

“...significantly subaverage 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)]

With the right supports, individuals with intellectual disability can live meaningful lives.

Did You Know?

- Intellectual disability affects about 1–3% of people
- Children with ID may take longer to walk, talk, and learn daily skills like dressing or eating
- It is a lifelong condition, but skills can continue to grow over time with support

Quick Tips for Families:

- Break tasks into small steps
- Give extra time to learn
- Practice skills during daily routines
- Celebrate small successes
- Every child learns differently
- Supports make a difference

If you suspect your child may have a disability and you are not sure who to contact or where to start, call the **Oklahoma Parents Center toll-free at **877-553-4332** and we can help you get started!**

**OKLAHOMA
PARENTS CENTER**



Or visit us at:

www.oklahomaparentscenter.org



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