

INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

Fact Sheet for Parents and Teachers



Introduction

Many individuals experience difficulties with learning throughout their lives. A small number of these may receive a formal diagnosis of Intellectual Disability. An Intellectual Disability is characterised by significant deficits in general intellectual functioning (that is, a person's ability to think, reason and problem solve), as well as their skills required for everyday living (such as communication, self-care, socialisation, independence, and/or academic skills).

Approximately 2% of children have an Intellectual Disability. It is required that deficits are noted before the age of 18 years with the expectation they will continue into the future. Intellectual Disability occurs in varying degrees ranging from Mild to Profound, with the majority of cases falling in the Mild range.

Assessing for Intellectual Disability

In Victorian schools a cognitive assessment (also referred to as an intellectual assessment or IQ test) is required to diagnose an Intellectual Disability. This is completed by a Psychologist using a standardised assessment of intelligence, most often the *Wechsler* scales. To receive a diagnosis of Intellectual Disability a child must have a Full Scale IQ of 70 or below.

Daily living skills or adaptive behaviour is usually assessed in the form of a questionnaire, often completed by a teacher who is familiar with the child, and scored by the Psychologist. Again, an overall Adaptive Behavior Composite score of 70 or below is required.

Further evidence indicating a history of difficulties is also required. This may include pre or perinatal difficulties, delayed milestones, a family history of learning difficulties/Intellectual Disability, ongoing difficulties with academic skills, etc.

Receiving a diagnosis of Intellectual Disability

Children who are diagnosed with an Intellectual Disability have the ability to learn, but will do so at their own pace. It is likely to take them longer to learn new skills than their typically developing peers. It is important to remember that each child is unique and will have their own pattern of strengths and weaknesses. Indeed there are many aspects of a child's ability and personality that are not assessed with a cognitive assessment.

If your child receives a diagnosis of Intellectual Disability they may be eligible to receive additional support in the school and home environments. Within the Department of Education and Training, children with an Intellectual Disability are able to attend a mainstream school, a Special School, or a Special Developmental School depending on their level of disability. Each of these schools provide a range of supports and services for children with Intellectual Disabilities and all work towards helping children achieve their learning potential.