

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES INFORMATION

Developmental Disability – according to the federal Developmental Disabilities Act, the term means a severe, chronic disability of an individual 5 years or older that:

1. Is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or combination
2. Is manifested before the age of 22
3. Is likely to continue indefinitely
4. Results in substantial functional limitations in 3 or more of the following areas of major life activity:
 - a. Self care
 - b. Receptive and expressive language
 - c. Learning
 - d. Mobility
 - e. Self direction
 - f. Capacity for independent living
 - g. Economic self sufficiency
5. Reflects the individual's need for a combination and sequence of special, interdisciplinary or generic services, supports or other assistance of a lifelong or extended duration and is individually planned and coordinated.

(Above extracted from the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council)

The American Psychiatric Association provides the following definition:

Developmental Disabilities refer to disabilities that affect a range of social and cognitive areas including communication, learning, judgment, and interpreting and responding to social cues. Generally developmental disabilities are present at birth or considered to be intrinsic to the organism (i.e. not acquired through illness or accident, except when the incident occurs early enough to significantly interfere with acquisition in *the* social and cognitive areas as defined above).

They are distinguished from the mental illnesses in a variety of ways. First they are generally stable or progressive, but not generally relapsing and remitting. Second they primarily affect cognition and perception, and are not necessarily associated with distortions in thinking or with affective disturbances. *It is important to remember* that people with developmental disabilities may also have *treatable* mental illnesses

Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD) – describes a class of disorders with the following characteristics: impairments in social interaction, imaginative activity, verbal and non-verbal communication skills and a limited number of interests and activities that tend to be repetitive. Five disorders are identified under this category:

1. Autistic Disorder
2. Rett's Disorder
3. Childhood Disintegrative Disorder
4. Asperger's Disorder
5. Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified

Down syndrome – chromosome disorder due to an extra chromosome (number 21). Down syndrome causes cognitive limitations and characteristic face and multiple malformations. The chromosome abnormality affects both the physical and intellectual development of the individual. There are risks of heart malformations, duodenal atresia (part of small intestine not developed) and leukemia.

Autism – an umbrella term for a wide spectrum of disorders referred to as Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD) or Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). They are a group of neurobiological disorders that affect a child's ability to interact, communicate, relate, play, imagine, and learn, and are often accompanied by extreme behavioral challenges.

Individuals with autism may:

- have a hard time communicating
- exhibit repeated body movements (hand flapping, rocking)
- have unusual responses to people
- form attachments to objects
- have resistance to change in routine
- in some cases, exhibit aggressive and/or self injurious behavior

Asperger's Disorder (Syndrome)- characterized by a lack of social skills; difficulty with social relationships; poor coordination and poor concentration; and a restricted range of interests, but normal intelligence and adequate language skills in the areas of vocabulary and grammar.

Cerebral Palsy – a group of developmental disorders of movement and posture in children and adults, causing activity restriction or disability attributed to disturbances that occurred in the fetal or infant brain. Cerebral palsy may be accompanied by a seizure disorder and by impairment of sensation, cognition, communication and/or behavior.

Epilepsy – Any of various neurological disorders characterized by sudden recurring attacks of motor, sensory, psychic malfunction with or without loss of consciousness or convulsive seizures.

Williams Syndrome

Rare genetic disorder characterized by physical and developmental disabilities; characteristic facial appearance; overly friendly personality; developmental delay, learning disabilities and attention deficit. It has been noted that the Williams syndrome child tests like a child with intellectual limitations, talks like the gifted child, behaves like a disturbed child and functions like a learning disabled child”.

Klinefelter Syndrome or XXY Males

Males having extra chromosome. Symptoms include occasional breast enlargement, lack of facial and body hair, rounded body type, tend to be overweight and may be infertile. Although they are not cognitively limited, most XXY males have some degree of language impairment. They often learn to speak much later than other children and have difficulty learning to read and write. The majority tend to have some degree of difficulty with language throughout their lives.

Angelman Syndrome

Little known genetic disorder that results from a small deletion on chromosome 15. Early signs may include a small head size, seizures and significant delays in motor and cognitive development. The most significant characteristic is the lack of spoken language. Other traits include an awkward gait, light colored hair and eyes and a happy demeanor with frequent laughter.

Developmental Dyspraxia

Developmental dyspraxia is a disorder characterized by an impairment in the ability to plan and carry out sensory and motor tasks. Generally, individuals with the disorder appear "out of sync" with their environment. Symptoms vary and may include poor balance and coordination, clumsiness, vision problems, perception difficulties, emotional and behavioral problems, difficulty with reading, writing, and speaking, poor social skills, poor posture, and poor short-term memory. Although individuals with the disorder may be of average or above average intelligence, they may behave immaturely.

Rett's Disorder

Rett's Disorder is included as a Pervasive Developmental Disorder because there is some potential confusion with autism - particularly in the preschool years (Tsai, 1992). Otherwise the course and onset of this condition is very distinctive. In people with Rett's Disorder (first reported by Rett in 1966), very early development is normal. Head growth then decelerates, usually in the first months of life, and a loss of purposeful hand movements occurs. Motor involvement is quite striking and profound cognitive limitation is typical. Characteristic hand-washing stereotypes develop. The existing literature on Rett's syndrome documents the condition primarily in girls.

Chromosome 18q Syndrome

A rare chromosomal disorder in which there is a deletion of part of the long arm (q) of chromosome 18. Disorder causes dysmyelination, a failure of the myelin sheath to form completely, thereby affecting the brain's circuitry and impacting information transfer between nerve cells. Characteristic features include cognitive limitations; short stature; abnormalities of the skull and facial region (microcephaly, deep set eyes, prominent ears and underdeveloped midfacial regions); poor muscle tone; visual abnormalities; hearing impairment; structural heart defects; and other physical abnormalities.

Microcephaly

Abnormally small head due to failure of brain growth. Often equated with developmental delays and cognitive limitations, however, not all children with microcephaly have cognitive limitations. Development of motor skills and speed may be delayed and convulsions may also occur.

Lissencephaly

A brain malformation characterized by microcephaly and the lack of normal convolutions (folds) in the brain. The term means “smooth brain”. Caused by a defect in the process in which nerve cells move from their place of origin to their permanent location. Children with lissencephaly may have unusual facial appearance, difficulty swallowing and severe psychomotor retardation. Anomalies of the hands, fingers, or toes, muscle spasms and seizures may also occur. Prognosis varies depending on degree of brain malformation.

Fragile X

A family of genetic conditions which can impact individuals and families in various ways. The genetic conditions are related in that they are all caused by gene changes in the same gene called the FMR1 gene. Fragile X syndrome (FXS) is the most common cause of inherited mental impairment. This impairment can range from learning disabilities to more severe cognitive or intellectual disabilities. FXS is the most common known cause of autism or “autistic-like” behaviors. Symptoms can include characteristic physical and behavioral features and delays in speech and language development.

Cornelia deLange Syndrome

A rare syndrome that causes profound cognitive limitations, epilepsy, cerebral palsy and heart and respiratory complications.

Smith-Magenis Syndrome

A developmental disorder that affects many parts of the body. The major features of the condition include mild to moderate cognitive limitations, delayed speech and language skills, distinctive facial features, sleep disturbances, and behavioral problems.

**Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)/
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)**

3 characteristics:

- Inattention – the most basic trait is a lack of focused attention
- Impulsivity – a general lack of self control
- Hyperactivity – overactive

Other Characteristics:

- Disorganization
- Poor peer/sibling relations
- Aggressive behavior
- Poor self-concept/self-esteem
- Sensation-seeking behavior
- Daydreaming
- Poor coordination
- Memory problems
- Persistent obsessive thinking
- Inconsistency, the “hallmark” characteristic