

MENTAL RETARDATION*

What is mental retardation / developmental disability?

How is mental retardation / developmental disability expressed? What are some of the characteristics?

Individuals with a slower rate of learning and a limited capacity to learn (typically scoring lower than 80 on a standardized IQ test) are identified as having mental retardation. Generally, they have a cognitive delay of two or more years. They may also walk and talk later, tend to be slightly shorter, and tend to be more susceptible to physical problems and illnesses.

In addition, such individuals may have difficulty managing the ordinary activities of daily living, understanding the behavior of others, and determining their own appropriate social responses. While having the same ranges of social behavior and emotion, they tend to have more frequent inappropriate responses to social and/or emotional situations due to difficulty generalizing information, difficulty in learning from past experiences, not fully comprehending what is expected of them, and lack of exposure to situations.

Mental retardation is more common than most people think. On average, three percent of the population may have mental retardation. However, only 1-2% of the population is actually receiving special services because of having mental retardation.

- ◆ Of the population with mental retardation, approximately 90% have mild disabilities and 10% have severe disabilities. Those with mild limitations may have a learning rate 40-70% of those without mental retardation.
- ◆ Those with severe limitations may lag four or more years behind their peers on physical and motor test. In addition, they are usually are incapable of traditional schooling. They need to master basic life skills and communication skills.

* In different parts of the world, mental retardation is referred to people who have:

- Intellectual disability
- Developmental disability
- Mental handicap
- Mental impairment