



Developmental Disabilities Fact Sheet

BACKGROUND

The California State Department of Developmental Disabilities and the Regional Center system were established in 1965 through the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act. As of January 2013, over 258,000 persons with developmental disabilities were being served through Regional Centers throughout the state. Regional Centers serve persons with intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism and other similar conditions. These conditions are substantially handicapping and occur prior to the age of eighteen (18).

INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY:

(Previously known as Mental Retardation)

An intellectual disability is a particular state of functioning that begins in childhood and is characterized by limitations in both intelligence and adaptive skills. Persons who have a mild intellectual disability are capable of learning many skills and living independently as adults. About 90% of persons with an intellectual disability are considered to have a mild intellectual disability. Individuals who have a moderate intellectual disability are generally able to learn social and self-help skills with special training and, as adults, can often work with supervision. Individuals who have a severe and profound intellectual disability exhibit the most noticeable delays in speech, social and daily living skills. With training and supports, individuals with intellectual disabilities can increase their level of independence in daily living tasks.

EPILEPSY:

Epilepsy is not a disease. It is a symptom of a disorder of the brain. Epilepsy has no single "cause," but can be caused by any number of conditions that injure or affect the functioning of the brain. Epilepsy can affect people of all ages at different stages of their lives. Epilepsy has many forms, ranging from generalized seizures (Grand Mal Seizures) to momentary lapses of attention (Petit Mal Seizures), or brief periods of altered behaviors (Psychomotor Seizures). Epilepsy is an episodic disability; and for most, seizures are brief and infrequent. Between seizures, most people with epilepsy are perfectly normal and healthy. For most, epilepsy can be treated, thus permitting many individuals to lead normal lives.

AUTISM:

Autism is a disorder characterized by certain behavior and communication patterns with symptoms that can range from mild to severe. People with autism have difficulty with communicating, socializing, and processing information. Autism is usually associated with rigid and repetitive behaviors, such as obsessively arranging objects or following very specific routines. Many people with autism have difficulty paying attention and managing their reactions. Other characteristics of autism may include resistance to eye contact, inappropriate laughing, resistance to change in routines, and fascination with specific objects. Currently, 1 in 88 children are diagnosed with autism and it is four times more likely to effect boys than girls. While learning difficulty is commonly associated with autism, these individuals can learn if given the proper education and environment in which to develop their skills.

CEREBRAL PALSY:

Cerebral palsy is not a single disorder but a term describing a group of conditions characterized by difficulty in muscular control and coordination. Sometimes cerebral palsy shows itself only by a slight awkwardness of gait; more often there has been a severe loss of muscular control in several areas of the body. Some people with cerebral palsy can do only simple tasks related to work and self-care; others have attained professional careers and lead independent lives. Although some people with cerebral palsy also have intellectual disability, most have normal intelligence.