

Intentional Inclusion of People with Intellectual Disabilities



Key Health Facts – What is the Need?

- People with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) **have a greater chance of becoming obese**¹
- People with ID are **5 times more likely to develop diabetes** compared to the general population²
- People with ID **die younger** than the general population due to avoidable causes³
- People with ID are more likely than the general population to **experience chronic conditions**⁴

Background of Intellectual Disability Inclusion and the Health of People with Intellectual Disability:

People with intellectual disabilities (ID) are more prone to poorer health outcomes when compared to people without ID. Disability inclusion is understanding the relationship between the way people function and their involvement in society, and making sure everyone has the same opportunities to participate in every aspect of life to the best of their abilities and desires. The inclusion of people with ID into health programs is an effective way of improving their health and the health of society as a whole. Inclusion is more than simply offering a person with ID a seat at the table, but it is including them to be a part of the planning, implementation, and decision making process, as well as making sure organizations has both procedures and practices in place to promote inclusion. This is what is meant by intentional inclusion.

There are several barriers to inclusion of people with ID. These barriers can range from attitudinal (stereotyping or biases about people with ID), communication (using technical languages and long sentences), policy (lack of enforcement of existing laws), and even programmatic (little or no communication with participants). In order to overcome these barriers, a critical first step is to conduct a self-assessment of both you and your organization. What practices, perceptions, or biases exist within your organization that can cause a barrier to inclusion? Are there policies within your organization that may cause barriers to becoming inclusive? Below are some tips for taking the first steps to becoming inclusive of people with ID.

Striving for inclusive health for people with intellectual disabilities, which means equitable access to quality health care, education, and services throughout communities.



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Tips for Becoming Inclusive:

The following are some recommendations on steps organizations can begin taking to become more inclusive of people with ID:

1. Commit to intentionally include people with ID. This should be evident from all persons within the organization, starting with leadership.
2. Include people with ID in all stages of the organizational process, including planning, implementation, and dissemination of outcomes.
3. Create meetings, events, and program materials that are accessible, such as consideration of color and contrast, style, literacy level, which is understood by participants, and also culturally responsive and relevant.
4. Partner with self-advocates local and national organizations that work with/serve people with ID.
5. Use People First language, for example saying "Person with an intellectual disability" instead of "A handicapped or intellectually disabled person". If unsure, do not make assumptions; ask the person or community how they prefer to be addressed.
6. Involve people with ID in the evaluation of services/programs. Ask them for their feedback on ways to improve services/programs.
7. Reach out to people with ID from diverse backgrounds and communities that are traditionally underrepresented or underserved.

Self-Advocate Organizations and Organizations that Work with People with ID:

Across the nation, there are numerous self-advocate organizations and organizations that work with people with ID. The links listed below are of a few of these organizations. They can be utilized as a starting point to learn more about what is being done in inclusive health and to see what is being done in your communities.

If you're not sure where to start or if you have any questions, please contact us at inclusivehealth@specialolympics.org and we will help.

Self-Advocate Organizations

- [Autistic Self Advocacy Network](#)
- [Centers on Independent Living](#)
- [People First of Tennessee, Inc.](#)
- [Self Advocates Becoming Empowered](#)
- [Self-Advocacy Online](#)
- [The Arc](#)

Organizations that Work with People with ID

- [Autism Society](#)
- [Easter Seals](#)
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)
- [National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities \(NACDD\)](#)
- [Special Olympics Programs](#)
- [AUCD's University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities \(UCEDDs\)](#)

Additional Resources

The supplementary resources below are cross-disability resources to provide additional information on how to be inclusive and working with people with intellectual disabilities to think about inclusion overall.

- American Association on Health and Disability (AAHD). Disability Etiquette – [Tips for Interacting with People with Disabilities](#)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Communicating With and About People with Disabilities](#)
- Disability in Public Health. [Including People with Disabilities: Public Health Workforce Competencies](#)
- National Association of County & City Health Officials, June 2017, [Five Steps for Inclusive Health Promotion](#)
- National Association of County & City Health Officials, June 2014, [Strategies for Successfully Including People with Disabilities](#)

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014, [Vital Signs Adults with Disabilities](#)

² Krahn, G., Walker, D.K., and Correa-DeArujo, R. (2015). [Persons with Disabilities as an Unrecognized Health Disparity Population](#). *Am J Public Health*. 2015;105:S198–S206. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2014.302182

³ Hollins, S., & Tuffrey-Wijne, I. (2013). Meeting the needs of patients with learning disabilities. *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, 346.

⁴ Anderson, L.L., Humphries, K., McDermott, S., Marks, B., Sisirak, J., & Larson, S. (2013). The state of the science of health and wellness for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 51(5), 385-398.

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [Disability Inclusion](#)

⁶Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [Common Barriers to Participation Experienced by People with Disabilities](#)