



IDHealth  
AN INITIATIVE BY  
HAPPEE HEARTS  
MOVEMENT

# SCREENING FOR INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY



## DEFICITS IN INTELLECTUAL FUNCTIONING

*Intellectual functioning* refers to a person's ability to reason, solve problems, plan, think in the abstract, make judgements and learn.

*Adaptive functioning* refers to a person's ability to manage daily routines independently, communicate and interact with others in a variety of settings (e.g., work, school).

## DEFICITS IN ADAPTIVE FUNCTIONING



## ONSET BEFORE 18 YRS OLD

The onset of the above deficits appear *before 18 years old*.

Suggested Questions (to ask patient and/or caregiver)	
Intellectual Functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Point to a wall clock or watch and ask "Can you tell me the time?"</b></li> <li>• <b>Point to a sign and ask the patient to read it.</b></li> <li>• <b>Please write your name.</b></li> <li>• Ask, "What will happen if you don't take your medication?"</li> </ul> <p><i>Things to look out for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Difficulty understanding simple questions and instructions</i></li> <li>• <i>Slow response time</i></li> <li>• <i>Concrete/literal thinking</i></li> </ul>
Adaptive Functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>How do you spend your days?</b></li> <li>• <b>Do you need help with preparing meals / dressing / grooming / buying things (managing money)?</b></li> <li>• <b>Do you have a job? Do you need help with your job?</b></li> <li>• <b>How did you get an appointment to see me today?</b></li> <li>• <b>How will you get home?</b></li> <li>• How do you withdraw money from an ATM?</li> <li>• Do you take bus, MRT or taxi by yourself?</li> <li>• How would you get to a new place by yourself?</li> </ul>
Onset before 18 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>How old were you when you left school?</b></li> <li>• Was the patient born full-term?</li> <li>• <b>Were there delays in achieving developmental milestones?</b></li> <li>• Did the patient attend a special school?</li> </ul>

Based on research evidence and clinical experience, the questions in **bold** may have better screening ability.

N.B. The diagnosis of intellectual disability used to be based solely on IQ testing. Patients with an IQ of less than 70 were deemed to have ID. However, there is now a greater emphasis on adaptive functioning instead of specific IQ scores.

References:

- Hardy, S. & Woodward, P. (2010) Mental health nursing of adults with learning disabilities. Royal College of Nursing. London.  
 Mentalhelp.net (n.d.) *Diagnostic Criteria For Intellectual Disabilities: DSM-5 Criteria*. Accessed 19 Dec 2022 <<https://mentalhelp.net/intellectual-disabilities/dsm-5-criteria/>>  
 Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. (2022) IDD - Screening. Accessed 28 Dec 2022 <<https://www.camh.ca/en/professionals/treating-conditions-and-disorders/intellectual-and-developmental-disabilities/idd---screening>>