

FACT SHEET

TYPES OF DISABILITY

For a condition to be considered a disability, the condition or impairment must impact a person's daily activities, communication or and/or mobility, and has lasted or is likely to last for 6 months or more.

The only thing that distinguishes a person with disability is that they may require some form of adaption/adjustment to enable them to do certain things in the same way as people without disability.

No two people with disability experience their disability in the same way.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) sets out the breadth of impairments and medical conditions considered to cause disability as:

- Physical - affects a person's mobility or dexterity
- Intellectual - affects a person's abilities to learn
- Mental Illness / Psychosocial Disability- affects a person's thinking processes
- Sensory - affects a person's ability to hear or see
- Neurological – affects the person's brain and central nervous system,
- Learning disability
- Physical disfigurement; or
- Immunological - the presence of organisms causing disease in the body

PHYSICAL DISABILITY

A physical disability is a physical condition that affects a person's mobility, physical capacity, stamina or dexterity. This can include spinal cord injury, acquired brain injury, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, epilepsy, arthritis and other musculoskeletal disorders, multiple sclerosis, tourette's syndrome, muscular dystrophy and dwarfism.

The causes of a physical disability generally fall into one of two categories, however can be varied.

Hereditary/Congenital - Where a person was born with a physical disability, developed one due to inherited genetic problems, experienced an injury at birth, or has issues with their muscles.

Acquired - Where a person acquires a disability due to an accident, infection or disease, or as a side effect of a medical condition.

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INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

Intellectual disability is a disability that is categorised by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and in adaptive behaviour, which can affect many everyday social and practical skills. Intellectual disability usually originates before the age of 18.

Intellectual Functioning (also known as intelligence) refers to general mental capacity - such as learning, problem solving, reasoning etc. One of the common ways to measure a person's intellectual functioning is through an IQ test. Generally, an IQ of 70 or less causes a limitation in intellectual functioning.

Adaptive Behaviour refers to the conceptual, social and practical skills that people learn and perform in their everyday lives. Conceptual skills refer to language and literacy; money, time and number concepts; and self-direction. Social skills refer to interpersonal skills, social responsibility, self-esteem, gullibility, naivete, social problem solving as well as the ability to follow rules/obey laws and avoid victimisation. Practical skills refers to activities such as daily living activities such as personal care, occupational skills, healthcare, travel, schedules & routines and safety.

An intellectual disability can be caused by genetic conditions, problems during pregnancy and birth, illness or environmental factors.

SENSORY DISABILITY

A sensory disability is a disability of the senses (sight, sound, hearing, smell, touch, taste), or spacial awareness, which can affect how a person gathers information from the world around them.

The most common types of sensory disability are:

Blindness and low vision - Can occur as a result of a number of different diseases, conditions or accidents. May be congenital (present at or near birth) or develop later in life. Some causes of vision loss include injuries to the eye, eye defects, albinism, macular degeneration, diabetes, glaucoma, cataracts and tumors.

Deafness and hearing loss - Hearing loss (sometimes known as hard of hearing) is the partial or total inability to hear. Some people with very little or no hearing prefer to use the term Deaf. Hearing loss can vary in severity and is caused by damage to any part of the external, middle or inner ear. Some causes of hearing loss include damage to the bones within the ear or cochlear nerve, exposure to noise, genetic disorders, exposure to diseases in utero, age, trauma and other diseases.

Sensory Processing Disorder - Where a person has trouble receiving and responding to sensory information, and may misinterpret sensory information such as touch, sound and movement. Some people with Sensory Processing Disorder may be oversensitive to things in their environment. Sensory Processing Disorder can affect one or more senses,

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NEUROLOGICAL DISABILITY

Sometimes referred to as Neurological Disorders, Neurological Disability is caused by damage to the nervous system, resulting in some loss of mental or bodily function. A Neurological Disability can be caused by infection, genetic disorders, heart attacks or lack of oxygen.

The effects of a Neurological Disability vary from person to person, and a person's symptoms can vary depending on the day.

People with Neurological Disability may feel tired, have difficulty moving their body, experience speech difficulties, have difficulty processing information and may have an impaired ability to tolerate and express feelings.

LEARNING DISABILITY

Learning disabilities affect a person's ability to learn in one or more area, such as maths, reading or writing. Learning disabilities are lifelong conditions, and it is estimated that 1 in 10 Australians lives with a learning disability.

A learning disability is different from an intellectual disability (which affects every aspect of how the brain learns and understands), as they only affect a specific area of learning. Types of learning disability include:

- Dyslexia - about 8 in 10 people with a learning disability have dyslexia, which affects reading and writing
- Dysgraphia, which affects spelling and handwriting
- Dyscalculia, which affects maths ability
- Dysphasia, which affects speaking and understanding others' speech

Learning disabilities can be present at birth, or can sometimes be caused by external influences, such as how a person is raised.