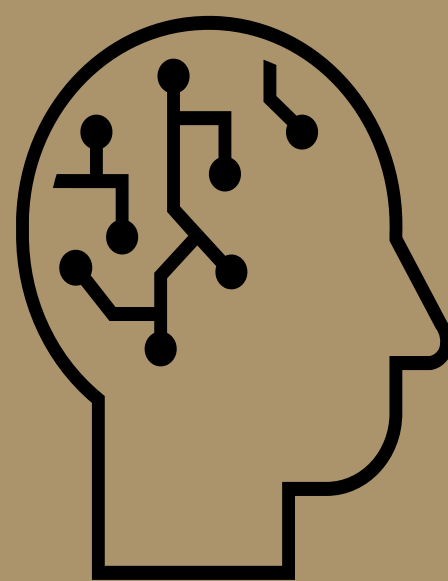


Improving Assessment of Adults with Co-Occurring Intellectual & Developmental Disability & Mental Health Challenges

Melani Lopera, BA, Frances Aranda, PhD, Jessica A. Jonikas, MA, & Judith A. Cook, PhD
UIC Center on Mental Health Services Research and Policy



Scope of the Problem

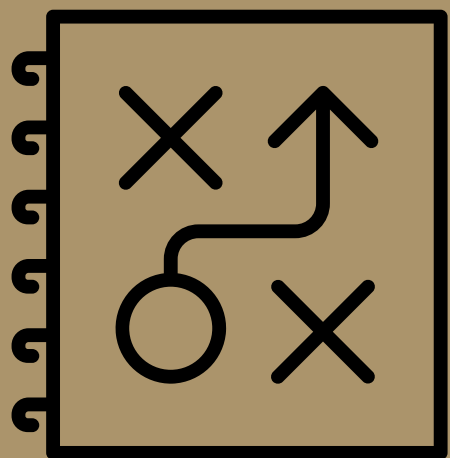
Approximately 7.37 million Americans have an intellectual or developmental disability (IDD) and 40% of these also have mental health (MH) challenges. This requires mental health assessment & care that many providers do not feel equipped to deliver.

Patient Communication Challenges

Difficulty describing symptoms, time frames, triggers, & memories

Inability to communicate emotional distress verbally, which can lead to destructive or self-destructive behaviors

Sensory deficits reduce tolerance for medical visits.

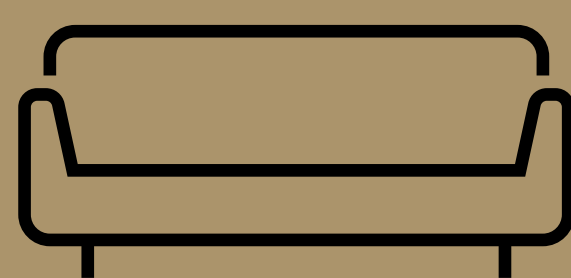


Barriers to accurate psychiatric assessment

Multiday assessments that require ongoing visits, focused attention, & tolerance for numerous questions

Provider beliefs that people with IDD-MH may not be competent to speak for themselves & lack decision-making skills.

Underdiagnosis, misdiagnosis, & lack of referrals to specialty services



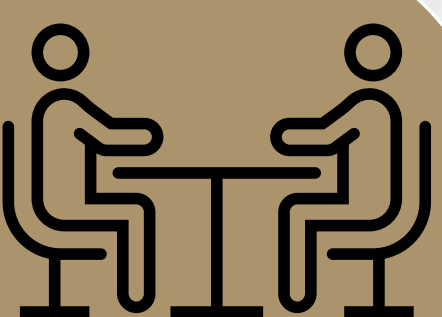
Enhancing environment

Creating low-sensory waiting & exam rooms.

Allowing patients to wait in their cars or outside.

Using calming tools & strategies such as stress balls, adult coloring books, lowered light & no TV.

Improving assessment process



Using interdisciplinary teams to support patients including peer supporters, advocates, community or residential staff, personal assistants, & family.

Scheduling extra time for appointments to allow patients time to process information & respond.

Paying attention to body language & non-verbal communication.

Emerging Best Practices



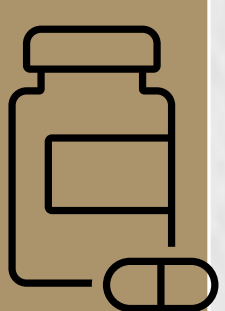
Facilitating communication

Using plain language, short sentences, & word/phrases that patients themselves use.

Building in extra time for appointments to allow patients time to process information & respond.

Using communication aids such as Books Beyond Words & Talking Mats.

Improving medication management



Using teams that include IDD targeted behavior analysts to evaluate need for medication.

Clearly delineating target symptoms/behaviors that medications will improve for ongoing evaluation.

Prescribing minimum effective doses, trying new medications in the absence of improvement, & attempting periodic drug reductions.

Referring to concurrent psychological therapy & self-management education.



Books Beyond Words



Talking Mats