**Intellectual Disabilities**

***What are Intellectual Disabilities?***

The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities defines an intellectual disability as significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior, which covers many everyday social and practical skills. Intellectual functioning refers to mental capacity, such as learning, reasoning, and problem solving. These limitations are said to cause a child to learn and develop more slowly than a typical child.

***How Common are Intellectual Disabilities?***

Intellectual disability is the most common developmental disability. Approximately 6.5 million people in the United States have an intellectual disability, and more than 545,000 children ages 6-21 have some level of intellectual disability.

***Characteristics of Intellectual Disabilities:***

* Sit up, crawl, or walk later than other children
* Learn to talk later or have trouble speaking
* Find it hard to remember things
* Don’t understand how to pay for things
* Have trouble understanding social rules
* Have trouble seeing the consequences of their actions
* Have trouble solving problems
* Have trouble thinking logically

***Tips for Mentors:***

* Talk to your mentee’s family about their specific intellectual disability
* Create structure, consistency, and organization
* Give positive reinforcement and praise youth when he or she does well
* Apply skills your mentee is learning at school and strive to incorporate goals from his/her IEP into activities
* Create opportunities for success and emphasize the youth’s strengths
* Create opportunities for social activities that help the youth build upon social skills
* Mentors can help youth with adaptive skills that are needed to live independently, to work, and to be a member of the community. These skills include:
  + Communicating with others
  + Taking care of personal needs (hygiene)
  + Health and safety
  + Home living (i.e. setting the table, cooking, cleaning)
  + Social skills (i.e. manners, knowing the rules of conversation)
  + Reading, writing, and basic math

***Sources:***

1. American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities <http://www.aaidd.org/>
2. National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities <http://www.nichcy.org/>
3. US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission <http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/intellectual_disabilities.html>