Mental Retardation

What is Mental Retardation?

According to the Arizona Revised Statutes ARS§ 15-761(12), " 'Mental retardation' means a significant impairment of general intellectual functioning that exists concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and that adversely affects the child's performance in the educational environment."

"'Mild mental retardation' means performance on standard measures of intellectual and adaptive behavior between two and three standard deviations below the mean for children of the same age." [ARS § 15-761(13)]

"'Moderate mental retardation' means performance on standard measures of intellectual and adaptive behavior between three and four standard deviations below the mean for children of the same age." [ARS § 15-761(14)]

"'Severe mental retardation' means performance on standard measures of intellectual and adaptive behavior measures at least four standard deviations below the mean for children of the same age." [ARS § 15-761(30)]

How Common is Mental Retardation?

In the 2005-2006 school year, 8,803 students were classified as having mental retardation and received special education services. This number represents 0.87% of the 1,004,009 children enrolled in Arizona public schools as of December 1, 2005 and accounts for 7.16% of the total special education population.

Mental retardation is a developmental disability, not a disease or mental illness. Many children with mental retardation have genetic abnormalities. Other causes include, but are not limited to, infections during pregnancy, infectious illness in infancy, abnormal delivery, prenatal exposure to drugs and alcohol, lack of mental stimulation, and various medical conditions. According to The Arc, as many as 3 out of every 100 people in the country have mental retardation.

What Effect Does Mental Retardation Have on a Child?

Individuals with mental retardation develop social, emotional, academic and physical skills more slowly. Many are mildly or moderately disabled.

Educational services that begin in infancy and continue through preschool years and beyond give children with mental retardation the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential. An appropriate instructional program includes approaches and materials that are interesting, age-appropriate and meaningful to the student. The curriculum should be structured in small blocks of time with frequent review and feedback to make sure that the student can apply the knowledge to tasks inside and outside of the classroom.

An important part of the evaluation process is consideration of Assistive Technology (AT) services. AT can include a wide-range of options from low-technology pictoral schedules and assignments to high-technology communication boards or computers.

Individuals with developmental disabilities benefit from opportunities to be included in activities in their home, school, and community. Lifelong services and support systems that include education, opportunities for self-determination, vocational preparation, health services, daily living skills training, residential alternatives, and recreational options, should be available for persons with disabilities and their families.

References


Resources

Books for Adults


Books for Children


Video Tapes

Fanlight Productions, 4196 Washington St., Boston, MA 02131. 800-937-4113. [www.fanlight.com](http://www.fanlight.com)

Program Development Associates, P.O. Box 2038 Syracuse, NY 13220-2038. 800-543-2119. [www.disabilitytraining.com](http://www.disabilitytraining.com)

Organizations/Hotlines/Web Sites


Enhancing Arizona’s Parent Networks (EAPN), [www.azcapn.org](http://www.azcapn.org)

Family Village, [www.familyvillage.wisc.edu](http://www.familyvillage.wisc.edu)


National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY), P.O. Box 1492, Washington, DC 20013. 800-695-0285, [www.nichcy.org](http://www.nichcy.org)


Raising Special Kids, 2400 N. Central, Ste. 200, Phoenix, AZ 85004-1313. 602-242-4366 or 800-237-3007, [www.raisingspecialkids.org](http://www.raisingspecialkids.org)


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