



WELLNESS BULLETIN

MENTAL HEALTH

California Department of Developmental Services

MAY 2024

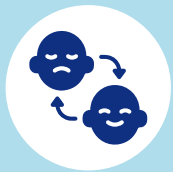


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Mental health is an important part of general health. Recognizing the mental health needs of the individuals you support is an essential component of them living a healthy life.

Mental Health and Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities (I/DD)



IT IS ESTIMATED THAT ANYWHERE FROM **14-75%** OF INDIVIDUALS WITH I/DD HAVE A CO-OCCURRING MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION.

This wide variation is due to the limited number of research studies, studies with comparison groups and inconsistency in how these studies define and identify co-occurring mental health conditions in individuals with I/DD.

SOME RESEARCH SHOWS HIGHER INCIDENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS IN PEOPLE WITH I/DD THAN IN THE GENERAL POPULATION.



PEOPLE WITH I/DD ARE OFTEN UNDERSERVED IN ADDRESSING THEIR MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS.

Sources: Hogg Foundation; American Psychiatric Association



Wellness and Safety Bulletins are produced by the Department of Developmental Services to alert direct service providers, regional center staff, and others about specific risks to our community. Please provide feedback on this bulletin and what we can do better through this survey: [Bulletin Survey](#)

Possible Signs and Symptoms of Emerging Mental Health Conditions

The mental health needs of individuals with I/DD can be overlooked. Let your supervisor and the individual's Service Coordinator or a member of the individual planning team know when the person displays a departure from usual or typical patterns in the following areas:

- Lingering sadness
- Social withdrawal
- Increased irritability
- Lack of interest in activities that were previously enjoyed
- A functional or behavioral change such as:
 - Loss of appetite or change in eating habits
 - New or increased aggression
 - Changes in sleep habits
 - A change in ability to pursue activities of daily living such as self-dressing, attention to self-care and personal hygiene, feeding, toileting, walking, or communicating
 - Expressing confused or disturbed thoughts that are not usual behavior
- Suicidal ideation or thoughts of wanting to hurt or kill oneself (situation may require emergent intervention)
- Psychotic symptoms such as seeing, hearing, or tasting things that are not there (hallucinations and delusions)

Whether a mental health condition or medical condition, it is important that the individual be evaluated, and the appropriate intervention offered.

Source: [NAMI](#); [Mental Health America](#); [Mayo Clinic](#)



Helpful Tips to Improve Mental Health

Changes in behavior unusual for the individual, such as aggression or self-injury, may be a sign that they are experiencing a mental health challenge. Discuss the importance of taking care of mental health with the individuals you support. If the individual has a Behavioral Support Plan, it may include individualized tips about how to support the individual when they are stressed. Below are some tips to help the individuals that you support [unwind and take breaks](#) when they appear or communicate that they are stressed or upset.

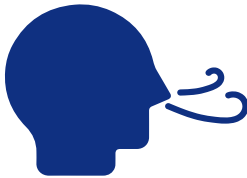


Teach individuals to take deep breaths when they are stressed or anxious. Here are two common breathing techniques:

Four-square or box breathing: Inhale to a count of four, hold the air in for a count of four, exhale to a count of four, hold your lungs empty for a count of four, repeat

Visualization Breathing: Breathe in and imagine the air is filled with a sense of peace and calm; Breathe out and imagine breathing out stress and tension

Sometimes other visuals can help with this, such as belly breathing with putting your hand on your stomach to feel the rise and fall, or visualizing blowing up balloons, or practicing with blowing a pinwheel or bubbles.



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REPEAT

Assist individuals to stay connected to others, including their friends and family

Support individuals in making a phone call or arranging a visit

Help individuals make a card, write a letter, or video chat with their loved ones

Identify activities individuals prefer to engage in on an ongoing basis to maintain their wellness

Help coordinate and offer them the opportunity to engage in their preferred activities



Source: [Health Care for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#)

Emergency Intervention

Some situations may require emergent intervention. Know how to prepare for and manage an emergency situation. If the individual is at risk of harm to self, others, or environment, or is engaging in seriously disruptive behaviors use safety strategies:

Give the individual personal space; keep a respectful distance

Use a supportive stance

Stand at an angle and off to the side of the individual, not facing the individual directly

Keep your arms relaxed at your sides; don't fold your arms across your chest

Maintain a calm demeanor

Avoid sudden movements

Use clear, simple, calm and slow statements

Calmly remind the individual about pre-established boundaries

Get assistance if you feel that your own safety or the safety of others or the individual is at imminent risk



Use crisis response services in an emergency, such as calling 911 or local mobile crisis unit. Refer to a plan established by your agency for crisis situations.

Source: [Navigating-A-Mental-Health-Crisis \(nami.org\)](https://www.nami.org)

Helpful Resources

An individual's regional center Service Coordinator may be able to provide referrals to community-based behavioral health providers or have more information on accessing behavioral health services through the individual's insurance. Additional resources include:

[Warmline Directory](#)

Peer-run listening lines staffed by people in mental health recovery themselves. Also called peer support lines (offer peer support).

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#)

"988" is the three-digit, nationwide phone number that connects callers directly to the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

[Friendship Line California](#)

Non-emergency emotional support line for people over the age of 60 and adults living with disabilities.

[Mental Health Services Division](#)

Mental health programs for children and youth, adults, and older adults.

[County Mental Health Plan Information](#)

Directory of county-specific specialty mental health services.

Additional Resources

NADD

[!\[\]\(2e897e890e69d81eae4503a8342c36b0_img.jpg\) Association for persons with intellectual disabilities and mental health needs](#)

Center for Disease Control (CDC)

[!\[\]\(e2376d476d06eb31946dc01a69a4403a_img.jpg\) Mental health resources to help and support](#)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

[!\[\]\(0aff635c4179ba9e710b00f4b01d3b20_img.jpg\) Information and videos to help reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness](#)

988 Crisis Line

[!\[\]\(0b5e7e25e8775f7e7e80906ada4f0021_img.jpg\) 24/7 free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources, and best practices for professionals in the U.S.](#)

American Psychiatric Association

[!\[\]\(6bb0e4f14c4133b37d2887cb37e67ddd_img.jpg\) Mental health information for patients and families](#)

American Psychological Association

[!\[\]\(bd3b31712ad9bab5a241210fa6925cdd_img.jpg\) Research that can inform and guide those seeking help with issues that affect their professional lives, family relationships, and emotional wellness](#)

[!\[\]\(0fb13ad0bfa3d86868cdd3883e5665b3_img.jpg\) Information about working with adults with developmental disabilities](#)

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

[!\[\]\(41aea2746216b27a6939d696d8e035da_img.jpg\) Information about mental illness](#)

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

[!\[\]\(e50091943b385fe16d3277389202856f_img.jpg\) Basic information on mental disorders, a range of related topics, and the latest mental health research](#)

