

Cognitive Disabilities¹

People with cognitive disabilities may have problems with:

- Abstract reasoning
- Poor judgment
- Memory
- Learning unless tasks are broken down into smaller parts and taught in steps
- Short and/or long-term planning
- Solving problems
- Managing money or a budget
- Using public transportation alone
- Logical analysis
- Concentration
- Transferring skills used in one context to another context
- Developmental milestones like sitting up, crawling, walking, talking, and/or toilet training
- Passivity, for example they may not say what they want or feel
- Insight, such as understanding why they and others behave the way they do.
- Perception
- Controlling your own behavior
- Being easily manipulated by others
- Adapting to new situations
- Speaking and listening (called expressive and receptive language)
- Fine and gross motor control and movement
- Living in the community independently
- Daily tasks at home
- Remembering on their own about keeping appointments, following a schedule, taking medication
- Learning from experiences
- Being self-sufficient, for example finding a job or learning job skills
- Needing a structured, and predictable environment
- Organizing, planning, or prioritizing tasks or activities
- Social skills and behaviors
- Leisure activities
- Personal hygiene
- Telling time
- Health and safety, for example running into traffic or getting burned when cooking
- Lower cognitive function²
- Lower adaptive function³

¹ The state law says “mental retardation”, but we use “cognitive disability” here, to include similar conditions. Use this list to decide if a condition is “closely related to” mental retardation and would be eligible for services under the fifth category. But you are not automatically eligible for services just because you have the problems on this list.

² Lower cognitive function means at least one standard deviation below the mean of 100. That means a score of 85, or lower, as measured by standardized IQ tests. You do not need a score in the range of mental retardation (70 or below) to show you have a condition closely related to mental retardation.

³ Lower adaptive function is measured by standardized tests of adaptive behavior, such as the Vineland Scales Comprehensive Test of Adaptive Behavior or Street Skills Survival Questionnaire. You should usually look for scores in the 70s or lower, or behavior composites that are 3 or more years below a person's age.