

Recognizing a mental health problem

As with the developmental disability questions, these questions are intended to help you explore the possibility of a mental health problem. Psychologists or psychiatrists make a formal diagnosis of a mental health problem. Diagnosing a mental health problem can be difficult and may require a number of interviews over a period of time. The initial diagnosis may change as the person's circumstances change (e.g., the amount of support and stresses in their lives).

Mental health needs indicators*

- Is the person overly dependent given his or her abilities?
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- Is change really hard for the person?
- Does the person lack peers and friends
- Is the person impulsive?
- Is the person withdrawn?
- Is the person aggressive, verbally or physically?
- Does the person have trouble with anger?
- Is the person irritable?
- Has the person been in trouble with the law?
- Has the person been socially or sexually inappropriate?
- Does the person that he or she is not intellectually disabled?
- Does the person appear higher functioning than he or she really is?
- Has the person been diagnosed with a mental illness?
- Does the person hurt him- herself?
- Has the person been sleeping more or less than usual?
- Has there been a change in the person's appetite?

* (Adapted, with permission, from Concerned Parents of Toronto, Inc. (2002). *Supports & Services Resource Handbook*. Toronto: author.)

- Does the person seem overactive?
- Is the person overly fearful?
- Is the person extremely confused or disoriented?
- Does the person hear voices even when no one is there? (This is not the same as talking to oneself for company or to reduce anxiety.)
- Has it been difficult to get professionals to agree over the years about a diagnosis for both the person's range of cognitive functioning and his or her mental health?
- Do family problems interfere with the person's functioning?
- Is there a parent with an intellectual disability or a mental health problem?