

According to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, “developmental disabilities are a diverse group of severe chronic conditions that are due to mental and/or physical impairments. People with developmental disabilities have problems with major life activities such as language, mobility, learning, self-help, and independent living. Developmental disabilities begin anytime during development up to 22 years of age and usually last throughout a person’s lifetime.” (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/dd/dd1.htm>)

Some common developmental disabilities include:

Autism Spectrum Disorders (Autism, Asperger’s and Pervasive Developmental Disorders) - brain development disorders that begin in early childhood and persist throughout adulthood; affect three crucial areas of development: communication, social interaction and creative/imaginative play.

Cerebral Palsy - is an umbrella term encompassing a group of motor non-progressive, non-contagious diseases that cause physical disability in human development. Depending on which areas of the brain have been damaged, one or more of the following may occur: muscle tightness or spasms, involuntary movement, gross motor deficits (difficulty walking, climbing, etc.), fine motor deficits (difficulty with writing, pinching, etc.), and/or difficulty in perception and sensation.

Down syndrome (Trisomy 21) - a genetic disorder caused by the presence of all or part of an extra 21st chromosome. Individuals with Down syndrome can have a lower than average cognitive ability, often ranging from mild to moderate mental retardation. The chromosome abnormality affects both the physical and intellectual development of the individual. There is a characteristic facial appearance and heart defects are common.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (Fetal Alcohol Effects, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome) - an umbrella term describing the range of effects that can occur in an individual whose mother drank alcohol during pregnancy. These effects may include physical, mental, behavioral, and/or learning disabilities with lifelong implications. It is unknown whether amount, frequency or time of alcohol consumption during pregnancy causes a difference in amount of damage done to the fetus.

Fragile X Syndrome - An x chromosome based disorder that frequently causes mental retardation. There is typically a prominent forehead, nose, jaw, and ears. Heart murmurs are common. Boys are typically more severely affected than girls.

Intellectual Disability/Cognitive Impairment – generally used to describe people who have an intelligence quotient of 70 or below and have difficulties with daily living skills and adaptive functioning. Mental retardation is another term for this disability that is being phased out of use.

Traumatic Brain Injury - Traumatic injuries to the brain, also called intracranial injury, or simply head injury, occurs from a sudden trauma such as a being hit in the head or shaken violently. Traumatic brain injuries can impact all areas of development such as behavior, movement and intellectual disabilities.

For further information or advocacy services, contact Arc Greater Twin Cities at 952-920-0855 or visit www.arcgreatertwincities.org. Tell us what you think about this Arc Guide. Please complete a short survey online at <http://arcgreatertwincities.org/resources.aspx>. Thank you!