

Hear Me

Getting Mental Health Information from Individuals with ID (Intellectual Disability)

For Individuals with ID

You can speak for yourself at the doctor's office.

You know better than anyone else how you are feeling:

- You know what is feeling good in your mind and body.
- You know what is feeling bad in your mind and body.
- You are the best person to talk about your mental health, like feeling happy, worried, angry, or sad.



Your doctor needs to hear from you:

- You are the best person to answer questions about you.
- Sometimes, family or staff members can help with communication.
- You can ask doctors to say things another way if you do not understand something.

<https://www.rrtcnisonger.org/>



For Doctors Treating Patients with ID (Intellectual Disability)

Listening to adults with ID is needed to understand their mental health.

- 1. The individual is the best source of information** to report their own mental health (i.e., self-report).
- 2. Most adults with ID can tell you correct mental health information** with appropriate support (e.g., assistive tech, communication devices, visual aids).
- 3. Easy-to-understand health questions and answer choices are needed** to support adults with ID.
- 4. Family members or direct support professionals can help** *only* if they know the individual well *and* they are asked about things they can see.
- 5. Understanding disabilities is important to collect self-report information** from individuals with ID and combine with information from family and staff.

Tips

- Speak directly with the patient first
- Get to know them and build trust before asking personal questions
- Explain and respect confidentiality (e.g., I will not share your answers)
- Practice using rating scales to improve understanding and communication
- Use short words, simple sentences, and clear phrases (e.g., concrete & literal)
- Use anchoring events (e.g., birthdays, holidays) when talking about the past
- Give the individual enough time to think about and respond to questions
- Ask about specific activities or events instead of asking general questions
- Ask the individual for permission before speaking with family or support staff
- Ask your patient if they need a break, and take breaks as needed
- Summarize information, ask for understanding, and restate as needed

ORIGINAL ARTICLE: Havercamp, S. M., Barnhill, L. J., Bonardi, A., Chapman, R., Cobranchi, C., Fletcher, R., Rabidoux, P., Seeley, J. R., Tassé, M. J. and the Nisonger Center RRTC on Health and Function. (2021). Straight from the horse's mouth: Increasing self-report in mental health assessment in individuals with intellectual disability. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disability*, 1-9, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jar.12952>



**THE OHIO STATE
UNIVERSITY**
NISONGER CENTER

The contents of this paper were developed as part of a Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) on Health and Function awarded to The Ohio State University (OSU) Nisonger Center through a grant from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR grant number 90RTHF0002-01-00). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents of this paper do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, or HHS, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

Recommended citation: The Ohio State University Nisonger RRTC on Health and Function. (2021). Hear me: Getting mental health information from individuals with intellectual disability.



<https://go.osu.edu/RRTC>

ORIGINAL ARTICLE: Havercamp, S. M., Barnhill, L. J., Bonardi, A., Chapman, R., Cobranchi, C., Fletcher, R., Rabidoux, P., Seeley, J. R., Tassé, M. J. and the Nisonger Center RRTC on Health and Function. (2021). Straight from the horse's mouth: Increasing self-report in mental health assessment in individuals with intellectual disability. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disability*, 1-9, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jar.12952>