

HEALTH CARE CHALLENGES

for Children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

The Let's Go! Toolkit for Children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities contains tools that help address many of the health care challenges faced by children with I/DD.

Children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) face a number of challenges when it comes to accessing care. Below are some examples of the challenges that can increase their risk for obesity. By recognizing the challenges they face, health care providers can start working to improve access and quality of care for children with I/DD.

Disparities in Care

Given the number of other health issues to address with patients with I/DD, healthy eating and physical activity are often overlooked. This means that children with I/DD may not receive the same type of healthy habit counseling as their typically developing peers.¹

Barriers to Care

Health care providers may lack training, experience, and comfort working with children with I/DD. This can impact the quality and effectiveness of care.²

Medication

Certain medications are critical in the treatment of children with I/DD but can interfere with appetite and metabolism. Children who take these medications may experience additional challenges to maintaining a healthy weight.¹

Lack of Training

Community service providers, such as case managers and behavioral health professionals, play a significant role in the lives of children with I/DD, but typically do not receive training on healthy eating and active living behaviors.

Multiple Services and Transitions

Children with I/DD receive support from many different groups of people within schools, health care, and community settings. As they move from early childhood to adolescence to adulthood, their eligibility for services changes. These multiple services and transitions can be difficult for families to navigate. It is particularly difficult to coordinate the use of consistent messages and strategies to promote healthy eating and active living behaviors across settings.²

¹ Bandini L, Danielson M, Esposito L, et al. Obesity in Children with Developmental and/or Physical disabilities. *Disability and Health Journal*. 2015; Vol. 8 (Issue 3): 309-316.

² Maine Primary Care Association. Health Care Safety Net Series: Leverage Points in Delivery System Reform: Improving Care for Complex Patients. April 2013.

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