

What is a Developmental Disability

"A developmental disability is a severe and lasting mental and/or physical impairment that occurs prior to the age of 22 and is likely to continue indefinitely. The disability results in significant limitations in three or more major life activities: self-care, language, learning, mobility, self-direction, living independently, economic self-sufficiency. About one out of ten families has a member with a developmental disability; 2.5 million children under 18 have significant developmental delay."

--From *Solving the Mysteries of Development* by John F. Kennedy Center on Human Development

Developmental disabilities include: mental retardation, autism, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, down syndrome and other neurological conditions.

Mental retardation—currently there are more than 7.5 million people who met the definition of having mental retardation. Slightly more than 125,000 children are born each year who have mental retardation. Today, one out of every ten Americans has a family member with mental retardation.

Autism—Autism is a developmental disability that is the result of a neurological disorder. Children and adults with autism typically have deficiencies in communication. Some people have difficulty with social interactions and leisure or play activities. They may exhibit repeated body movements, unusual responses to other people or attachments to objects. Autism presents itself differently from person to person.

Cerebral Palsy (C.P.)—Cerebral Palsy is a functional difficulty caused by damage to the brain during pregnancy, delivery, or shortly after birth. This condition exhibits in the form of mobility differences, communication difficulties seizures or any combination of these.

Down Syndrome—Down Syndrome is characterized by the presence of an extra chromosome 21.

Epilepsy—The word epilepsy means to have seizures. Epilepsy is a chronic condition of recurrent unprovoked seizures. It is not a disease. It is a symptom of a neurological difficulty.