

# What are Developmental Disabilities?

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The term developmental disability is a broad term that encompasses a variety of disabilities that may or may not include a physical disability or a cognitive impairment.

The World Health Organization defines disability as “any restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being”. Similarly, a developmental disability is based on not achieving certain developmental landmarks in functioning at expected ages. For example, most babies say their first words between 10 and 14 months. Most children begin to walk by the time they are 12 to 18 months old. These are examples of developmental landmarks. A child who does not pass through the landmarks at the expected age may have a developmental disability.

Developmental disabilities are permanent and begin at birth or during childhood. In general terms, developmental disabilities are fixed conditions that can cause people to have problems developing cognitively, but not always. Some conditions include, but are not limited to, mental retardation, autism, down syndrome, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and a variety of others and combinations. For any of these conditions, a person may experience only a physical impairment or only a cognitive impairment or both a physical and cognitive impairment.

A developmental disability usually affects a person in at least three of the following seven functional areas: self-care, language, learning, mobility, self-direction, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency.

A developmental disability is not a condition that can be cured. Often times, people with developmental disabilities find the community in which they live more disabling than the medical disability itself. Fortunately however, individuals are beginning to receive more community-based supports that enable them to gain skills, live more independently in their community, obtain employment, have friends, and enjoy a high quality of life.

For more information about developmental disabilities, please contact Robyn McMorris, Acting Manager of **Community Support** at **(403) 240-7306** or **odetted@ddrcc.com**



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