

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in the Mental and Behavioral Health Care Setting

Module 04

Navigating Appointments with Individuals with I/DD

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

Navigating Appointments and Interactions

OUTLINE

1. Introduction
 - a. Universal Design
 - b. Universal Precautions
2. Universal Design for Therapy Sessions
 - a. Physical Domain
 - b. Sensory Domain
 - c. Cognitive Domain
 - d. Communicative Domain
3. The Appointment
 - a. Pre-Appointment Preparations
 - b. The Appointment Preparations
 - c. Post-Appointment Considerations



Universal Design

“A process that enables and empowers a diverse population by improving human performance, health and wellness, and social participation.” - Steinfeld & Maisel (2012)



Equitable Use



Flexibility in Use



Simple & Intuitive in Use



Perceptible Information



Tolerance for Error



Size & Space for Approach & Use



Low Physical Effort

Universal Design for Learning



- Multiple Means of Engagement
- Multiple Means of Representation
- Multiple Means of Action and Expression



MHDD Universal Design webinar

Universal Precautions for TIC



Safety



Collaboration



Trustworthiness

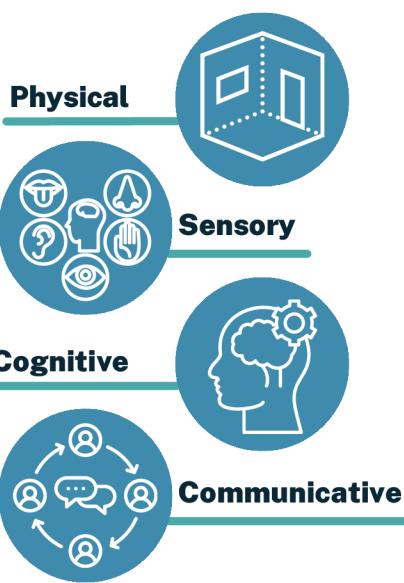


Empowerment



Choice

Universal Design in the Session



Physical Domain

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- **Is the building ADA compliant?**
- **Are all elements of the space easily accessible to people?**
- **Mobility/Visual/Hearing accessible?** - It's important to consider the space in light of reduced mobility, reduced vision, and reduced hearing.
- **Do elements (items) in the office allow for ease of use for all types of individuals?** (Chairs, tables, counters, mobility of furniture) If the client is in a wheelchair is it easy for them to enter and does their interaction with you put you on a "level playing field"?
- **Does the layout and the flow of the space make sense?** Ideally there isn't any confusion upon entering a space to figure out where to go or what to do next.
- **Are the elements of the space intentional?** Is it clear and functional or cluttered?
- **What is included in the space?** What kind of furniture, plants, lighting, sounds etc? Do these enhance accessibility or take away?

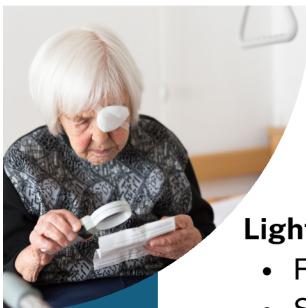
Notes:



Sensory Domain



The Sensory Domain considers all aspects of the clinic and therapy sessions that affect the five senses. Our senses are continually processing all the elements in our environment. This can have a profound effect on our emotions, information processing, and physical well-being. While we can't control all parts of the environment, there are many things that can be done to create a calm and focused environment for everyone.



Things to consider:

WAITING AREA

Colors:

- Blues and Greens are calming
- Reds and Oranges are aggressive

Lighting:

- Florescent and Bright Whites can be harsh
- Soft yellows are more calming
- Too bright? Too dim?

PRINT MATERIALS

Text and Signs:

- Are they clear with large enough text?
- Are there visuals to accompany text and help with processing?
- Is there too much text to process easily?
- Are the colors high contrast and appropriate for color blindness



SIGHT

Things to consider:

WAITING AREA

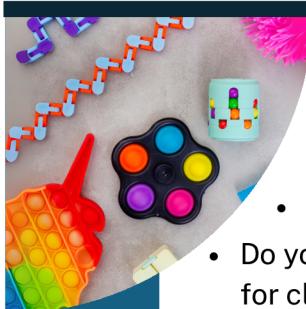
- Are there lots of background noises?
- What kind of music is played in the waiting room?

DURING THE SESSION

- Can you hear other people talking, office noises such as printer/copier/shredder?
- Do you look at the person when you speak to them? Can they see your lips?



SOUND



Things to consider:

WAITING AREA

- Is the seating hard and clinical or comfortable?
- What kinds of fabrics and textiles are used?
- Do you have fidget objects or tactile objects for clients who self-regulate through touch?



DURING THE SESSION

- Do you have tactile and fidget objects for individuals?
- What sort of sensory items do you have to offer that might calm an individual?



Things to consider:

WAITING AREA

- What sort of fragrances and odors are in the clinic space?



SMELL

DURING THE SESSION

- Are there outside odors that seep in (ie kitchen smells?)
- Do you have candles in your space?
- Do you regularly wear perfume or cologne?

Things to consider:

DURING THE SESSION

Taste will probably not be a source of over stimulation in a clinical setting, but sour chewy candies such as sour patch kids and starburst, can help some individuals to regulate if they are feeling panicky or overstimulated. It draws the attention away from other feelings and sensations and allows someone to focus on one intense sensation.



TASTE



COGNITIVE OVERLOAD

The experience of being unable to process or respond to new information because the brain is overloaded with stimuli, whether from excessive sensory input, information overload, or a combination of both.



Agony Autie
Video

Cognitive Overload is when too much information or over-stimulation creates a barrier in a person's brain not allowing them to take in any more information and can cause them to "shut down" or be unable to communicate effectively. This is something that anyone can experience, and most people have experienced at some point in their life.

Can you think of a time when you experienced Cognitive Overload? How did you feel?



Cognitive Domain



Cognitive Domain

The Cognitive Domain focuses on how information is presented and how information is processed, this goes hand in hand with the Communicative Domain.

- Consider how you present information? Do you do it in multiple ways? Verbally, written, digital, physical, words, images?
- Do you allow time and space for people to process both complex AND simple concepts (Remember what seems simple to you may feel very complex for the individual you are working with. Simple and Complex are very subjective!)
- Are you able to identify when an individual is having difficulty understanding and do you have multiple ways of presenting the information to help comprehension?
- Are concepts and treatment plans clear and direct and easy to understand?



Additional Notes:



Communicative Domain

The Communicative Domain refers to how information is exchanged between individuals, including speech, writing, non-verbal communication, and communication via assistive devices.



This domain is especially important because individuals with I/DD often have difficulties with communication. By implementing some Universal Design principles in this area, additional modifications will be easier and less time-consuming. Plain Language and Visual Representation are two of the biggest concepts to implement which benefit not only individuals with I/DD but anyone who comes to the clinic. We all benefit!

All the tips are provided in checklists at the [back of this guide](#). Consider the difference between the first one (small print, no visuals) and the second one (larger font, visuals, better organization) which is easy to use for everyone?



Barriers to Care Video

Additional Notes:

Considerations for Preparations

Scheduling Procedures

Are your scheduling procedures accessible?

- Multiple ways to schedule?
- Phone receptionist able to communicate in plain simple language?
- Recognize when an individual needs additional time to process and make a decision?
- Patient and respectful on the phone?

How are appointment reminders handled?

- Multiple ways to receive reminders?
- Do you ask the individual's preference for reminders?
- Provide written details?

Our goal should be a successful visit and therapy session. The purpose of doing all these things is to set up the individual for success and hopefully eliminate stressors and triggers that could culminate in a crisis for the individual.

Check in Procedures

- How clear are check in procedures?
- How long are individuals waiting before being seen?
- Do you offer longer appointment times to accommodate late arrival & longer communication times?
- Do you communicate clearly and directly to the individual?
- Do they understand how long they are expected to wait?
- Do they know where they should wait and where restroom facilities are?

Preparing for the Individual

Are you prepared to receive the individual?

- Know the individual's specific needs and prepare for them.
- Ensure your office space is set to accommodate both the individual and anyone accompanying them.
- Make sure your office is set up with safety in mind, in case of crisis.

Is the individual prepared to meet you?

Consider providing some of the following to patients to get to know you before the appointment.

- Video introduction
- Written introduction with picture
- Potential virtual walk-through prior to visit if that might be helpful
- No contact tour
- Social Stories



Considerations for the Appointment

During the Appointment

Communication

- If a parent or guardian gives consent on behalf of the individual, it is still important to help the individual understand the treatment, what are ways you can do this?
- Do you have visual ways of explaining concepts prepared ahead of time?
- Do you have multiples ways of explaining a concept ready to share?
- Are you prepared for the whole appointment to move at a much slower pace?

Signs of agitation

- Do you know the signs of being triggered for this individual?
- Do you know the individual's safety plan?
- Do you have strategies ready for de-escalation?

Remember what your goals for the therapy are and reflect ahead of time and after the fact to ensure your interactions with the individual is moving in that direction.

Working with the Support Team in the Appointment

- What are appropriate ways to work with the support team?
- What are things you can do if you feel the support team is too intrusive in the session?
- How can you enlist the support team when it comes to session and follow up?

Skill building with the Individual

Scaffolding skill building for success

- Know the individual's specific needs and prepare for them.
- When working on skills in the therapy session, communicate also with the support team so they can reinforce between sessions.
- Have patience, skill development can take a long time, but with careful work to scaffold the steps, they can acquire them.
- Ensure the individual is getting the help and support to develop the daily living skills they need to reach their goals.
- Advocate for them if you feel the support they are receiving isn't adequate.

Considerations for Post Appointment

Checkout and Follow up Procedures

Does the individual understand what happens next?

- Make sure all directions are simple and clear.
- Have steps written down for them so they don't have to remember.
- If you need to communicate with between sessions, make sure you know their preferred communication method.
- If they need to make a follow-up appointment at checkout, write down all the information.
- Don't rely on verbal instructions alone.

Our goal is that the individual is successful in implementing recommended activities and committed to the full course of therapy treatment. Follow up and follow through can be a very important step with individuals with I/DD.

Connecting the Individual

- Encourage shared experiences and peer support through group therapy and support groups.
- Involve trusted friends and family to help provide support and follow-up for the individual.
- Encourage community involvement as appropriate.

Connecting the IDT

Following up with others for integrated care

- Does anyone on the Interdisciplinary Team need to be updated after the session?
- Do any referrals need to be made?
- Do you need additional information from anyone on the IDT?
- Are you in contact with other social workers who can help to coordinate care and ensure the individual is aware of resources available to them?
- Seek out other's expertise, when you aren't sure how to proceed.
- ADVOCATE for case reviews



Reflection and Notes:

Something you want to remember...

Something you want to share...

Something that surprised you...

General Communication Tips

Person-Centered

- Use individual's name.
- Make eye contact when appropriate.
- Address questions to individual first.

Accessible

- Try re-wording the information or request.
- Some individuals may need to hear something more than once.
- Be patient and give time to process and respond, wait a long time. It might feel awkward for you, but it could take a LONG time for them to respond, 30seconds or more would be normal.

Respectful

- Consider your tone and body language for the individual's perception. How will you be perceived. Most of our communication is through non-verbal, body language. We are all very aware of body language, this is just as true for individuals with I/DD. They will pick up on any unsaid, non-verbal communication.
- Do not pretend to understand if you don't
- Don't finish a sentence for them, allow them to finish their thought
- Be patient with stuttering or repeating words/phrases

Plain Writing Tips

Remember that Plain language should always be the goal - consider the age, educational background, primary language, culture etc... for maximum understanding and accessibility by all people,

Plain and Simple

- Sentences should be short! between 12-20 words
- Use concrete language
- Use active voice

Clear

- Clarify vocabulary or symbols
- Don't use acronyms
- Omit unnecessary details

Visual

- Use bullet lists rather than text heavy paragraphs
- Include visual representation where possible

Digital and Print

- Text should be clean easy to read not a decorative font
- Size should be 14 point or larger
- In Digital Media font should be 18 points or larger
- Use Accessibility and Reading Level scanners in Word

Dignity

- Some individuals have better receptive language abilities than expressive, don't speak down to them.
- If an individual is unable to verbally respond to questions, continue to interact respectfully with them while involving caregivers or support staff in the interaction.

Plain Speaking Tips

Clarity

- Use clear, concrete language
- Avoid jargon and metaphors
- Clarify vocabulary and symbols

Processing

- Allow for extra time to explain concepts and terms
- Provide glossary/dictionary of terms and concepts

Language

- Provide written materials in individual's chosen language
- Provide professional interpreters

Visuals

- Have visuals to clarify and provide an additional way to process
- Charts and timelines can also be helpful

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Tips for Plain Language

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Clarity and Processing



Writing

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- Omit unnecessary details

Speaking

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- Provide glossary/dictionary of terms and concepts
- Avoid jargon and metaphors

Visuals



Writing

- Use bullet lists rather than text heavy paragraphs
- Include visual representation where possible

Speaking

- Have pictures and visuals to clarify and provide an additional way to process
- Charts and timelines can also be helpful

Language



- Provide written materials in individual's chosen language
- Provide services in preferred language or provide interpreters where possible

Digital and Print



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- Size should be 14 point or larger for print materials
- In Digital Media also should be 18 point or larger
- Use Accessibility and Reading Level scanners in Word

References Module 04

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