



**The Arc**  
*of South Carolina*

# **Supporting Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in South Carolina**

A Guide for Families, Caregivers, and Educators



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**Title:** Supporting Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in South Carolina

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## **Supporting Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in South Carolina**

This guide aims to equip you with the knowledge and skills necessary to support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Through a combination of expert input, practical strategies, and a deep dive into state-specific resources and laws, participants will become more effective and compassionate supporters. We'll provide an introduction to intellectual and developmental disabilities, communication strategies, and behavioral support and management. You'll learn about legal rights and advocacy, and how to navigate healthcare and educational services. Learn the skills necessary to build independence and improve quality of life.

Understanding how to support individuals with IDD is essential for creating a society that values diversity, practices inclusion, and ensures equality for all its members. It benefits not only individuals with disabilities but also enriches the broader community, fostering an environment of mutual respect and support. Let's get started!

### **Module Breakdown:**

#### Module 1: Introduction to Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

- Overview of intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Common challenges and misconceptions
- Importance of empathy and understanding

#### Module 2: Communication Strategies

- Effective communication techniques
- Non-verbal communication
- Using technology aids

#### Module 3: Behavioral Support and Management

- Understanding behavioral challenges
- Positive behavior support strategies
- Creating supportive environments

#### Module 4: Legal Rights and Advocacy

- Understanding the legal system and rights in South Carolina

- Advocacy strategies and resources
- Preparing for IEP meetings and healthcare appointments

#### Module 5: Navigating Healthcare and Educational Services

- Overview of South Carolina-specific services and supports
- Medicaid, waivers, and insurance navigation
- Working with schools and healthcare providers

#### Module 6: Building Independence and Quality of Life

- Life skills development
- Community involvement and socialization
- Planning for the future

\*Resource Library: Compilation of South Carolina-specific resources, contacts, and services.

### **Why is it important to learn to support individuals with IDD?**

Learning how to support individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) is important for several reasons, touching on societal, personal, and ethical dimensions. This knowledge not only benefits individuals with IDD but also enriches communities, workplaces, and social networks by fostering inclusivity, diversity, and understanding. Here are some key reasons why learning to support individuals with IDD is crucial:

#### **1. Promoting Inclusion and Equality**

Everyone deserves the opportunity to participate fully in society. Understanding how to support individuals with IDD helps break down barriers to inclusion, ensuring that people with disabilities have equal access to education, employment, recreational activities, and community life. It aligns with the principles of equality, human rights, and social justice.

#### **2. Enhancing Quality of Life**

Effective support can significantly improve the quality of life for individuals with IDD by promoting independence, self-determination, and personal fulfillment. It can help them develop skills, engage in meaningful activities, and establish fulfilling relationships. This, in turn, contributes to their emotional well-being and overall health.

#### **3. Fostering Understanding and Reducing Stigma**

Lack of knowledge and understanding about IDD can lead to misconceptions, stigma, and discrimination. By learning about these disabilities, people can challenge their own prejudices and become advocates for change. Education fosters empathy and understanding, which are essential for building supportive and respectful communities.

#### **4. Improving Support and Care**

For caregivers, educators, healthcare professionals, and family members, understanding IDD is fundamental to providing appropriate care and support. It enables them to tailor their approaches to meet the unique needs of individuals with IDD, from adapting communication methods to designing effective learning strategies and behavioral interventions.

#### **5. Advancing Social Integration**

Knowledge of how to support individuals with IDD facilitates their social integration and participation. It helps create environments where people with and without disabilities can interact positively, learn from each other, and build strong, inclusive communities.

#### **6. Empowering Advocacy and Policy Change**

Informed individuals can become powerful advocates for the rights of people with IDD. They can contribute to policy discussions, influence legislation, and ensure that services and supports are designed to meet the actual needs of individuals with disabilities, leading to systemic improvements.

#### **7. Meeting Legal and Ethical Obligations**

The United States has legal frameworks that mandate the rights of individuals with disabilities, including the right to accessibility, education, and nondiscrimination. Learning how to support these individuals is not just an ethical responsibility but also a legal one, ensuring compliance with laws like the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

#### **8. Creating Diverse and Productive Workplaces**

In the workplace, understanding and supporting employees with IDD can lead to a more diverse and inclusive environment. It can enhance productivity, creativity, and employee satisfaction by recognizing and valuing the unique contributions of all employees, including those with disabilities.

Learning how to support individuals with IDD is integral to building a society that values diversity, practices inclusion, and ensures equality. It benefits not only those with disabilities but

also enriches the lives of all members of the community by fostering an environment of understanding, respect, and mutual support. By embracing these principles, societies can move closer to achieving true inclusivity and equality for all their members.

## **Module 1: Introduction to Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities**

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) represent a diverse group of conditions characterized by significant limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior, which includes social and practical skills. These conditions manifest before the age of 18 and can influence an individual's ability to perform everyday tasks.

### **Overview of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities**

IDD encompasses various disabilities that may impact cognitive abilities, physical health, learning, language, and behavior. Conditions such as Down syndrome, autism spectrum disorders, cerebral palsy, and Fragile X syndrome fall under IDD. While each condition presents unique challenges, they share common features in terms of the need for support in daily activities and learning.

### **Common Challenges and Misconceptions**

Individuals with IDD often face numerous challenges, including difficulty in communication, learning, self-care, and social integration. These challenges are compounded by societal misconceptions, such as the belief that people with IDD cannot learn or lead fulfilling lives. Another common misconception is viewing IDD solely in terms of limitations, overlooking the individual's abilities, interests, and potential.

Misconceptions can lead to stigma, discrimination, and exclusion from community and educational opportunities. It's crucial to challenge these views by highlighting the capabilities and achievements of individuals with IDD and recognizing the diversity within this community.

### **Importance of Empathy and Understanding**

Empathy and understanding play a critical role in supporting individuals with IDD. Empathy involves seeing the world from another person's perspective and responding with compassion and kindness. Understanding the unique experiences of those with IDD helps in developing more effective support strategies tailored to their needs.

Educating society about IDD promotes a culture of inclusivity and respect. By fostering an environment where empathy and understanding prevail, we can dismantle barriers and

empower individuals with IDD to participate fully in all aspects of life. Recognizing the value of diversity enriches our communities, making them stronger and more cohesive.

An informed approach to supporting individuals with IDD not only enhances the lives of those directly affected but also benefits society as a whole. Through education, empathy, and understanding, we can create a more inclusive world where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. You can learn more about IDD on our website at <https://www.arcsc.org/i-dd>.

## **Module 2: Communication Strategies**

Effective communication is pivotal in enhancing the quality of life and independence of individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). Adopting a multi-faceted approach that includes verbal, non-verbal, and technological methods can significantly improve understanding and interaction. Here's how:

### **Effective Communication Techniques**

1. **Simple Language:** Use clear, concise, and straightforward language. Avoid jargon and complex sentences that may be difficult to understand.
2. **Be Patient:** Allow extra time for the individual to process the information and respond. Patience is key in building a trusting and effective communication channel.
3. **Consistency:** Consistently use the same words or phrases to represent concepts or instructions, which helps in reinforcing understanding.
4. **Visual Supports:** Incorporate visual aids like pictures, symbols, or written words to complement verbal communication, especially useful for those with limited verbal skills.

### **Non-Verbal Communication**

1. **Facial Expressions:** Expressive use of the face can convey a message more effectively than words alone.
2. **Gestures:** Simple hand gestures can significantly aid in communication, especially for those who struggle with verbal expression.
3. **Body Language:** Be mindful of your body language as it conveys a wealth of information. Positive, open body language can create a more welcoming and reassuring environment.

4. **Observation:** Pay close attention to the individual's body language, facial expressions, and gestures, as these non-verbal cues may be their primary mode of communication.

### Using Technology or IT Assistance

1. **Communication Devices:** Specialized communication devices and apps can facilitate expression for those with limited verbal abilities. These range from simple picture-based apps to complex voice output devices.
2. **Educational Apps:** There are numerous apps designed to teach communication skills, including vocabulary, sentence structure, and social interaction.
3. **Social Media and Platforms:** For some, digital communication via emails, social media, and messaging platforms offers a comfortable and accessible way to express themselves and connect with others.
4. **Custom Solutions:** Tailor technology solutions to the individual's needs, abilities, and preferences. Customization can include choosing the right device, app, or software that facilitates easier communication for them.

Incorporating these strategies into daily interactions can significantly improve communication with individuals with IDD. Through verbal simplicity, patient listening, expressive non-verbal cues, and the innovative use of technology, we can create a more inclusive and understanding world for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Visit USC's School of Medicine Columbia - SC Assistive Technology Program at <https://sc.edu/medicine/scatp> to learn more.

## Module 3: Behavioral Support and Management

Behavioral challenges can be a significant aspect of the lives of individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). Understanding and addressing these challenges through positive support and management strategies are essential for promoting their well-being and inclusion in society.

### Understanding Behavioral Challenges

Behavioral challenges in individuals with IDD may include aggression, self-injury, property destruction, non-compliance, and withdrawal. Recognizing that these behaviors are often forms of communication is crucial. They might indicate unmet needs, discomfort, or frustration due to communication barriers, environmental factors, or sensory sensitivities.



## **Positive Behavior Support Strategies**

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA): Identify the underlying causes or triggers of challenging behaviors through observation and assessment. Understanding "why" a behavior occurs is the first step in addressing it effectively.

- **Individualized Support Plans:** Develop personalized strategies that focus on teaching new skills, providing alternatives to challenging behaviors, and modifying the environment to reduce triggers.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** Reinforce desired behaviors through positive feedback, rewards, or privileges. This encourages the individual to repeat those behaviors in the future.
- **Skill Building:** Teach coping strategies, communication skills, and social skills to empower individuals to express their needs and manage their emotions in more constructive ways.
- **Consistency:** Ensure that everyone involved in the individual's care uses the same approaches and strategies. Consistency helps in reinforcing learning and behavior change.

## **Creating Supportive Environments**

- **Predictable Routines:** Establish and maintain routines that provide structure and predictability, reducing anxiety and confusion that can lead to behavioral challenges.
- **Sensory-Friendly Spaces:** Design environments that accommodate sensory preferences and sensitivities. This might include quiet areas, controlled lighting, or access to sensory toys or objects.
- **Accessibility and Accommodation:** Ensure that physical and social environments are accessible and accommodating to the needs of individuals with IDD. This can include clear signage, ramps, or technology aids that assist in communication and mobility.
- **Community and Social Inclusion:** Facilitate participation in community activities and social gatherings that are welcoming and inclusive. Being part of a community can improve self-esteem and reduce feelings of isolation, which can mitigate behavioral challenges.

Supportive behavioral management is about understanding the individual needs and perspectives of people with IDD and responding with empathy, respect, and creativity. By focusing on positive behavior support strategies and creating environments that promote comfort and inclusion, caregivers and professionals can significantly enhance the quality of life for individuals with IDD. Find positive behavioral support resources at the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) website here: [Behavior \(aaid.org\)](https://www.aaid.org/behavior)

## Module 4: Legal Rights and Advocacy

Supporting individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) involves navigating a complex landscape of legal rights and advocacy. This section outlines key elements to understand the legal system and rights in South Carolina, offers advocacy strategies and resources, and provides guidance for preparing for Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings and healthcare appointments.

### Understanding the Legal System and Rights in South Carolina

1. **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):** The ADA protects individuals with disabilities against discrimination in various areas, including employment, education, and access to public services. Link: [The Americans with Disabilities Act | ADA.gov](https://www.ada.gov/)
2. **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):** IDEA ensures students with disabilities are provided with Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) that is tailored to their individual needs. Link: [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](https://www.ideadata.org/)
3. **South Carolina Specific Laws:** Familiarize yourself with state-specific laws and provisions that offer additional protections or resources for individuals with IDD. This includes understanding the eligibility criteria for state-funded programs and services. Link: [Code of Laws - Title 44 - Chapter 20 - South Carolina Intellectual Disability, Related Disabilities, Head Injuries, And Spinal Cord Injuries Act \(scstatehouse.gov\)](https://www.scstatehouse.gov/laws/Title44-Chapter20-SouthCarolinaIntellectualDisabilityRelatedDisabilitiesHeadInjuriesAndSpinalCordInjuriesAct)

### Advocacy Strategies and Resources

1. **Educate Yourself:** Understanding the legal rights and available services is the first step in advocating effectively. Utilize resources provided by organizations like [The Arc of South Carolina](https://www.thearc.org/) or [Disability Rights South Carolina](https://www.disabilityrightsouthcarolina.org/).
2. **Build a Support Network:** Connect with other families and advocacy groups to share experiences, strategies, and resources.

3. **Effective Communication:** Develop clear and concise communication for advocating with educators, healthcare providers, and government officials. Be specific about needs, rights, and desired outcomes.

### [Preparing for IEP Meetings](#) and [Healthcare Appointments](#)

1. **Documentation:** Gather all necessary documentation, including medical records, evaluations, and any previous IEP documents. This preparation will support your case for specific services or accommodations.
2. **Goals and Concerns:** Before the meeting, outline specific goals and concerns you have for the individual with IDD. This will help keep the meeting focused and productive.
3. **Know Your Rights:** Familiarize yourself with the procedural safeguards under IDEA. This includes understanding how to dispute decisions or seek mediation if necessary.
4. **Collaborative Approach:** While it's important to stand firm on your rights and needs, approach meetings with a collaborative mindset. Working together with educators and healthcare providers often leads to better outcomes.
5. **Follow-Up:** After meetings, ensure you have a clear understanding of agreed actions. Follow up with written communication to confirm these actions and maintain a record.

Navigating the legal rights and advocating for individuals with IDD in South Carolina can be challenging but is crucial for securing necessary supports and services. By becoming well-informed, building a network of support, and preparing effectively for meetings, caregivers and advocates can make significant strides in ensuring the rights and well-being of individuals with IDD are upheld.

## **Module 5: Navigating Healthcare and Educational Services**

Supporting individuals with IDD involves understanding and navigating the complex landscape of healthcare and educational services. South Carolina offers a variety of services and supports designed to meet the diverse needs of its residents with disabilities. Here's how to effectively access and utilize these resources:

### **Overview of South Carolina Specific Services and Supports**

South Carolina provides a range of programs and services for individuals with IDD, including early intervention, residential services, vocational training, and more. Key agencies such as the

[South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs \(DDSN\)](#) and the [South Carolina Department of Education](#) play pivotal roles in delivering these services. Familiarizing yourself with these organizations and their offerings can help you advocate for the necessary supports.

#### Medicaid, Waivers, and Insurance Navigation

- **Medicaid:** South Carolina Medicaid offers comprehensive coverage for individuals with disabilities, including doctor visits, hospital care, prescriptions, and specialized services for those with IDD. Understanding eligibility criteria and application processes is crucial.
- **Waivers:** South Carolina offers Medicaid waiver programs like the Intellectual Disability and Related Disabilities (ID/RD) Waiver, which provides services to help individuals live more independently in their communities. Learning about the different waivers, eligibility, and application procedures is essential.
- **Insurance:** For those not covered by Medicaid, exploring private insurance options and understanding what services are covered can provide additional support.

#### Working with Schools and Healthcare Providers

- **Educational Services:** Engaging with the local school district and special education services is vital. Individualized Education Programs (IEP) are tailored plans that outline specific educational goals and accommodations for students with disabilities. Active participation in IEP meetings and regular communication with educators ensure that educational needs are being met. Link: [Special Education Services - South Carolina Department of Education \(sc.gov\)](#)
- **Healthcare Coordination:** Establishing a strong relationship with healthcare providers ensures comprehensive care. This includes regular check-ups, specialist visits, and coordinating between different healthcare professionals. For complex cases, consider a care coordinator or advocate to help navigate healthcare services and ensure the individual's health needs are comprehensively addressed. Link: [Case Management | Department of Disabilities and Special Needs \(sc.gov\)](#)

#### Tips for Effective Navigation

1. **Stay Informed:** Regularly update your knowledge of the services, supports, and legal changes that may affect healthcare and education for individuals with IDD in South Carolina.

2. **Document Everything:** Keep detailed records of meetings, healthcare visits, assessments, and communications with service providers.
3. **Build a Support Network:** Connect with other families, support groups, and advocacy organizations. These networks can provide valuable advice, experiences, and resources.
4. **Advocate:** Be a proactive and persistent advocate. Attend workshops and training sessions on advocacy to better understand your rights and how to effectively communicate your needs and those of your loved one. Learn about Disability Advocacy Day here: [#DisabilityAdvocacyDaySC | scpdo](#)

Navigating the healthcare and educational services in South Carolina for individuals with IDD can be challenging, but understanding the available resources and how to access them can significantly impact the well-being and development of those with disabilities. Through proactive engagement, advocacy, and informed decision-making, caregivers and supporters can ensure that individuals with IDD receive the comprehensive support and services they need to thrive.

## **Module 6: Building Independence and Quality of Life**

Empowering individuals with IDD to lead independent and fulfilling lives is a multifaceted process that involves life skills development, community involvement, socialization, and future planning. By focusing on these areas, supporters can help individuals with IDD achieve their full potential and enhance their quality of life.

### **Life Skills Development**

Life skills are essential for independence and daily living. These skills range from basic hygiene and self-care to more complex tasks like managing finances, cooking, and using public transportation. Developing these skills often requires:

- **Personalized Learning Plans:** Tailor instruction to the individual's abilities and needs, setting realistic goals and using adaptive tools and strategies.
- **Practical Experiences:** Provide opportunities for hands-on learning in safe, real-world settings. Incremental challenges can help build confidence and competence.
- **Consistency and Repetition:** Regular practice and consistent reinforcement are key to mastering life skills. Celebrate achievements to motivate further learning.

- Community Involvement and Socialization
- Engagement with the community and active socialization play critical roles in enhancing the quality of life for individuals with IDD. These experiences promote a sense of belonging, improve social skills, and can lead to meaningful friendships and relationships. Strategies include:
  - Participation in Group Activities: Encourage involvement in community groups, clubs, or sports that align with the individual's interests. This can foster social connections and a sense of community.
  - Volunteer Opportunities: Volunteering can provide a sense of purpose and contribution, in addition to developing social and vocational skills.
  - Supportive Social Environments: Create and seek out environments where individuals with IDD feel welcomed and accepted, ensuring they have opportunities to interact with others in positive and enriching ways.

## Planning for the Future

[Future planning](#) is crucial for ensuring long-term well-being and security. This includes considering living arrangements, employment, and guardianship or legal matters as the individual transitions into adulthood and beyond.

- [Transition Planning](#): Begin transition planning early, especially for transitions from youth to adulthood. This should cover education, employment, and independent living.
- [Financial Planning](#): Explore financial tools such as [special needs trusts](#) and [ABLE accounts](#) to secure the individual's financial future while maintaining eligibility for government benefits.
- Legal Considerations: Consider legal arrangements like [supported decision making](#), guardianship, or power of attorney to protect the individual's rights and interests. Engage with legal experts familiar with IDD to navigate these decisions.

Building independence and enhancing the quality of life for individuals with IDD requires a comprehensive approach that addresses their unique needs and strengths. By focusing on life skills development, community involvement, socialization, and future planning, caregivers and supporters can empower those with IDD to live rich, fulfilling lives. Each step taken towards

independence not only benefits the individual but also enriches the broader community, showcasing the value of diversity and the strength of inclusion.

### **Conclusion and Overview:**

Supporting individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) in South Carolina is a journey that encompasses understanding their needs, advocating for their rights, and empowering them to live fulfilling lives. We've covered crucial areas including effective communication strategies, behavioral support, legal rights, healthcare navigation, and building independence and quality of life. These elements are foundational in creating a supportive environment that recognizes the dignity and potential of every individual with IDD.

The journey is multifaceted, involving the development of life skills, fostering community involvement, advocating for necessary supports, and planning for the future. It's about ensuring that individuals with IDD are not just included but are also valued members of society, with opportunities to contribute, learn, and grow.

To families and caregivers embarking on this path, your role is profoundly impactful. While challenges may arise, the steps you take to support your loved ones are immeasurable in their importance. The journey towards independence and quality of life for individuals with IDD is not a solo endeavor but a collective one, enriched by the support, understanding, and advocacy of families, communities, and professionals.

It's natural to encounter obstacles and feel discouraged at times, but remember the broader goal: enhancing the lives of individuals with IDD so they can thrive. The progress made, whether in small steps or leaps, contributes to a more inclusive, equitable, and compassionate society.

Stay informed, seek support, and remain steadfast in your advocacy. The efforts you make not only transform the lives of individuals with IDD but also set a precedent for acceptance and understanding that uplifts the entire community. Let this be a call to action to embrace the journey, celebrate the milestones, and persist in the face of challenges. Together, we can make a significant difference in the lives of individuals with IDD, championing a future where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential. Please feel free to reach out to us at [thearc@arcsc.org](mailto:thearc@arcsc.org) if you have any questions or would like to provide feedback.

## Resource Library

### State Agencies and Services

- **South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (DDSN):** Provides services and supports for individuals with disabilities, including residential and employment services. Link: <http://ddsn.sc.gov/>
- **South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department:** Assists individuals with disabilities in achieving independence through employment. Link: <https://scvrd.net/>

### Educational Resources

- **South Carolina Department of Education – Office of Special Education Services:** Offers information about special education programs and services. Link: <https://ed.sc.gov/districts-schools/special-education-services/>
- **Special Education Services in South Carolina (IEP Assistance):** Link: [IEP Assistance | arcsc](http://arcsc.org/)

### Advocacy and Support Groups

- **The Arc of South Carolina:** Advocates for the rights and full participation of all individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Their resource section includes a [statewide disability resource directory](http://arcsc.org/). Link: <https://arcsc.org/>
- **Disability Rights South Carolina:** Offers legal services and advocacy for individuals with disabilities in South Carolina. Link: <https://www.disabilityrightssc.org/>
- **Family Connection of South Carolina:** A network of parents who provide support, advice, and resources to families of children with special needs. Link: <https://www.familyconnectionsc.org/>

### Healthcare Resources

- **South Carolina Medicaid:** Health insurance program for individuals with low income, including those with disabilities. Link: <https://www.scdhhs.gov/>
- **BabyNet:** South Carolina's interagency early intervention system for infants and toddlers under three years of age with developmental delays. Link: <https://scfirststeps.org/babynet/>



- **Supported Decision Making:** For information about guardianship, alternatives to guardianship, and supported decision making, visit [supporteddecisionmaking.org](https://supporteddecisionmaking.org) or call them at 800-681-6805

### **Community and Recreational Programs**

- **Special Olympics South Carolina:** Provides year-round sports training and athletic competition for children and adults with intellectual disabilities.  
Link: <https://www.so-sc.org/>
- **Able South Carolina:** A Center for Independent Living run by and for people with disabilities, offering various programs and services. Link: <https://www.able-sc.org/>