

# Brain Injury and Disability Health



Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is a leading cause of death and disability in the United States. (biausa.org) Brain Injury can both precede another disability and be an outcome of a disability.

1 in 4



Adults in the US reported having a disability in 2022. (cdc.org)

Over 5 Million



The number of people in the United States who have a disability related to Brain Injury. This is 1 in 60 people. (biausa.org)

47%



Just over 47% of people 40 or older with a history of Brain Injury live with a disability in at least one area of functioning. (Schneider, Wang, et al., 2021).



Disabilities following Brain Injury often cannot be seen. For this reason, Brain Injury has been called the "silent epidemic" for decades.

## BEST PRACTICE

Care providers working with people with disabilities should:

- **SCREEN** and/or **REVIEW FILE** for prior history of Brain Injury
- **ASSESS** Cognitive & Functional Impairment
- **EDUCATE** staff on Brain Injury
- **EDUCATE** the person about their Brain Injury
- **PROVIDE** and **TEACH** Accommodations
- **CONNECT** person served with Community Resources

## COMMON PROBLEMS

After Brain Injury, we often see problems with:

- Attention, memory and new learning
- Slowed speed of processing
- Organization, problem solving & impulsivity
- Irritability, frustration & agitation
- Balance, dizziness & headaches
- Poor awareness of deficits & difficulties
- Difficulty being flexible, poor self-monitoring

For people with a disability, look for a worsening of a difficulty area to determine if there has been a change due to an injury

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Care providers working with people with disabilities may see:

- Looking uninterested because they cannot pay attention
- Appearance of defiance because they cannot remember the rules
- Slow to follow directions because they cannot process quickly
- Getting into fights because of irritability, anger and impulsivity
- Falling into things, often getting hurt
- Difficulty re-entering community because of cognitive changes
- Gets stuck on an idea or a way of doing something, does not recognize mistakes
- **A worsening of a particular problem area after hitting their head**

"The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has recognized traumatic brain injury (TBI) as a chronic health condition, starting in January 2025. The National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates 29.5%, or almost one in three Tennesseans, are living with some form of disability. According to the CDC, that's higher than the national average of 25.6%, or about one in four Americans."

# Common Accommodations for Brain Injury Challenges

Here are some common and simple accommodations:

## For the person:

- Working for shorter periods of time
- Getting rid of distractions around you, like noise or movement
- Taking notes (on paper, in a notebook, on a phone or computer)
- Using a phone to set timers to remember appointments

## For the care provider:

- Repeating information to the person
- Slowing down when talking; giving them more time to respond
- Giving the person a list of house rules, written directions, or pictures to help them understand and remember
- Coaching the person with the injury to "Stop, think and plan" then act
- Coaching the person to take deep breaths when feeling angry or anxious



Take Note

## Tools for Best Practice

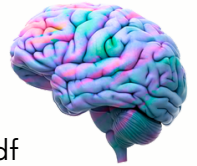
**Brain Links' Strategies & Accommodations Tool:** <https://www.tndisability.org/rehabilitation>

**Symptom Questionnaire:** <https://mindsourcencolorado.org/adult-symptom-questionnaire/>

**Cognitive Strategies Guidebook:** <https://mindsourcencolorado.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Strategies-and-Accommodations-Guidebook-CJ-Professionals-5.6.19.pdf>

## Brain Injury Screening Resources:

- **OSU TBI Identification Method:** <https://wexnermedical.osu.edu/neurological-institute/neuroscience-research-institute/research-centers/ohio-valley-center-for-brain-injury-prevention-and-rehabilitation/osu-tbi-id>
- **NASHIA's OBISS:** <https://www.nashia.org/obissprogram>



## Tennessee Resources

**Brain Links' Website** with many resources:  
[tndisability.org/brain](https://www.tndisability.org/brain)

**Brain Links' Toolkits** (for Service Professionals and Survivors): <https://www.tndisability.org/brain-toolkits>

**TN Department of Health TBI Program:**  
<https://tinyurl.com/3v5jrdt3>



**Tennessee Brighter Futures' Resource Pages & Training for Brain Injury:**

<https://www.tndisability.org/tbf-brain-injury>



**Resource Pages & Training for Disability Health:**

<https://www.tndisability.org/tbf-social-determinants-health>

**TN Brighter Futures is organized and facilitated by Brain Links through a contract from the TN Department of Health TBI Program.**



Disability  
Health  
Resources

## References:

- Schneider ALC, Wang D, Gottesman RF, Selvin E. Prevalence of Disability Associated With Head Injury With Loss of Consciousness in Adults in the United States: A Population-Based Study. *Neurology*. 2021 Jul 13;97(2):e124-e135. doi: 10.1212/WNL.00000000000012148. Epub 2021 May 26. PMID: 34039721; PMCID: PMC8279570.
- Disability & Health U.S. State Profile Data for Tennessee (Adults 18+ years of age). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/impacts/tennessee.html>

