

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 Injury Screening Resources:

- **NASHIA's OBISSS:** <https://www.nashia.org/obissprogram> – The OBISSS is highly recommended. It is made up of the OSU screening tool, a Symptoms Questionnaire and Strategies. It can be used electronically, on a computer, phone or ipad. It can be self-administered.
- **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>

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

Symptom Questionnaire and Cognitive Strategies:

- Adult: bit.ly/3FLkz0V
- Juvenile: bit.ly/4iS2bSC



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:

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- 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>



<https://www.tndisability.org/brain>
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