**What Is Mental Illness?**

Mental illness is a disease resulting in a disorder of thought, mood, perception, orientation or memory. It severely impairs judgment, behavior, the capacity to recognize reality, and the ability to meet the ordinary demands of life.

If you encounter someone who may have a mental illness:
- **Do** be respectful
- **Do** attribute the symptoms to the illness
- **Do** maintain poise and self-control
- **Do** maintain personal space
- **Do** keep your voice low and calm
- **Do** use short, simple statements
- **Do** keep your hands in view
- **Do** be matter-of-fact
- **Do** reduce contact if the individual is especially ill
- **DON'T** give sharp commands or use threats
- **DON'T** challenge—verbally or physically
- **DON'T** argue, criticize or be judgmental
- **DON'T** make promises you can't keep
- **DON'T** take anger personally

**What Is Mental Retardation?**

A person with mental retardation learns at a slower rate which may result in low IQ and limitations in daily living and social skills like: self-direction, communication, employment and independent living.

Mental retardation is NOT a mental illness.

Questions to ask if you suspect someone has mental retardation or developmental disability:
- Where do you work? How many jobs have you had?
- Do you have a driver’s license?
- Where did you go to school? Were you in special education classes?
- How do you support yourself?

Individuals with mental retardation often look no different than the rest of the population. Looks alone can not indicate individuals with mental retardation.

**Interacting with Someone with Mental Retardation**

- Use simple language
- Use short sentences
- Allow for longer response time
- Ask one question at a time
- Use pictures and actions to help convey meaning
- Use concrete terms and ideas
- Avoid questions that tell the person the answer you expect
- Phrase questions to avoid yes or no answers
- When giving Miranda Warnings, ask the person to share their understanding
- Repeat questions from a slightly different perspective
- Ask for specific descriptions, colors, clothing
- Proceed slowly, show you want to listen to the person
- Avoid frustrating questions about time, complex sequences or reasons for behavior

For more information contact your local County Board of MR/DS

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**C.I.T. Voice Mailbox Instructions**

**If Portage Path Client**
1. Dial 330-253-3100
2. Wait for the system to answer
3. Dial 205
4. Listen to the message for instructions

**If CSS Client**
1. Dial 330-253-9388
2. Wait for system to answer
3. Dial 911
4. Listen to the message