

## WHAT IS MENTAL ILLNESS?

**M**ental 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**n individual 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.

Funding for this card was provided by:



www.ocjs.ohio.gov

## 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

## SIGNS A PERSON MAY HAVE A SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS

### Appearance

Dirty clothing, lack of personal hygiene  
Disheveled, unusual or inappropriate clothing  
Evidence of self-inflicted wounds

### Behavior

Submissive/domineering, overly suspicious or uncooperative, non-responsive  
Talks too loud/soft, too fast/slow, mumbles/stammers  
Face is expressionless/inappropriately animated  
Movements are stiff/limp; experiences tremors  
Paces, rocks back and forth, rubs head or body  
Reacts impulsively

### Mood

Mood is inappropriate for situation  
Appears overly sad, anxious, fearful, angry or hostile  
Talks about suicidal or homicidal ideas

### Perception/Thinking

Sees or hears things that others do not  
Appears disoriented to time, place or self  
Isn't alert to surroundings  
Can't concentrate  
Has irrational fears and illogical thoughts  
Has delusions of possessing special powers, of thinking others are plotting against them or of thinking their thoughts are being controlled  
Has impaired judgment and insight into their problems

**OCJS** Funding for this card was provided by the Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services  
www.ocjs.ohio.gov

## 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/DD



**C.I.T. Partners**



County of Summit Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADM) Board  
Akron Police Department  
Community Support Services  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
Portage Path Behavioral Health  
Summit County Sheriff's Department