

Modification of Approach: Intake and Assessment

Sometimes, it is difficult to get all the information necessary to help a person with Behavioral Health and Intellectual/Developmental Disability needs. Below is a list of some basic modifications that might help to provide the best quality of care:

Environmental modifications:

- Let the person schedule intake. If they or their team request an appointment or call, use that opportunity and **ask for additional information, including data** on what's been happening.
- Allow **more time** for assessment and consultation.
- Allow for a **larger space** when available.
- Be aware of mobility and **sensory needs**, including access to assistive devices, seating options, and sensitivity to light or sound.

Modifications to your approach:

- Use **open-ended questions**. People tend just to answer the way they think you want them to when asking close-ended questions, especially when they don't know you.
- **Avoid abstract** questions; keep it straightforward.
- Ask follow-up questions. Sometimes, people need **more opportunities** to give you more details.
- **Simplifying language** is generally a good thing to do with anyone, regardless of diagnosis.
- Increase structure and **explain the purpose** of the meeting **and why** you are working with them.
- **Ask the person what they need or want the purpose to be** and incorporate that into consultation.
- Minimize distractions.
- **Be direct and concrete**, especially regarding safety and suicide questions.
- Allow extra time for responses so the person can process questions. **Sit with that awkward silence** a little longer.
- Use visuals.
- Arrange for **interpretation**, if needed.
- If the person is okay with it, **include a support person** or family member in the conversation.

System collaboration modifications:

- Keep a list of **key contacts** within different care and support systems in your area.
- Make connections and **build rapport** with people in different parts of the system.
- Create a **team that integrates care** across systems.
- Facilitate **regular check-ins** with the whole team.
- Have a **unified care plan with defined roles** rather than each system keeping its own treatment plan that duplicates efforts.

