Definitions to Know

The Arc of San Diego

Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Act

The Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Act (AB 846), also known as the Lanterman Act, is a California law, initially proposed by Assembly member Frank D. Lanterman in 1973 and passed in 1977, that gives people with developmental disabilities the right to services and supports that enable them to live a more independent and normal life. The legislation significantly expanded upon its landmark predecessor, the Lanterman Mental Retardation Services Act (AB 225), initially proposed in 1969. The original act extended the state's existing regional center network of services for the developmentally disabled, while mandating provision of services and supports that meet both the needs and the choices of each individual.

The Lanterman Act declares that persons with developmental disabilities have the same legal rights and responsibilities guaranteed all other persons by federal and state constitutions and laws, and charges the regional center with advocacy for, and protection of these rights.

In addition to persons with mental retardation, the regional centers are now mandated to serve persons with cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, conditions similar to mental retardation, or conditions that require treatment similar to the treatment required for individuals with mental retardation. In 1976, the Lanterman Act was amended to establish the right to treatment and habilitation services for persons with developmental disabilities.

Rights of the Disabled under the Act

The Lanterman Act protects the rights of people with developmental disabilities by mandating rights including:

- Services that protect liberty provided in the least restrictive (most integrated) way Dignity, privacy and humane care
- Treatment, services and supports in natural community settings, to the greatest extent possible
- Participation in an appropriate program of publicly supported education regardless of the degree of disability
- Prompt medical care and treatment
- Freedom of religion and conscience, and freedom to practice religion · Social interaction and participation in community activities
- Physical exercise and recreation
- Freedom from harm, including unnecessary physical restraints, isolation, excessive medication, abuse or neglect
- Freedom from hazardous procedures
- Choices in one's own life, including where and with whom one chooses to live, relationships with people in the community, how to spend time (including education, employment and leisure), the pursuit of one's chosen personal future, and the planning and implementation of a plan that fits the needs and desires of the individual
- The opportunity to make decisions and to have information understand to help make informed choices

Definitions to Know

The Arc of San Diego

Epilepsy

According to the Epilepsy Foundation of America, epilepsy is a physical condition that occurs when there is a sudden, brief change in how the brain works. When brain cells are not working properly, a person's consciousness, movement, or actions may be altered for a short time. These physical changes are called epileptic seizures. Epilepsy is therefore sometimes called a seizure disorder. Epilepsy affects people in all nations and of all races.

Some people can experience a seizure and not have epilepsy. For example, many young children have convulsions from fevers. These febrile convulsions are one type of seizure. Other types of seizures not epilepsy include those caused by an imbalance of body fluids or chemicals or by alcohol or drug withdrawal. A single seizure does not mean that the person has epilepsy.

Incidence

About two million Americans have epilepsy; of the 125,000 new cases that develop each year, up to 50% are in children and adolescents.

Characteristics

Although the symptoms listed below are not necessarily indicators of epilepsy, it is wise to consult a doctor if you or a member of your family experiences one or more of them:

- "Blackouts" or periods of confused memory;
- Episodes of staring or unexplained periods of unresponsiveness;
- Involuntary movement of arms and legs;
- "Fainting spells" with incontinence or followed by excessive fatigue; or
- Odd sounds, distorted perceptions, episodic feelings of fear that cannot be explained.

Seizures can be generalized, meaning that all brain cells are involved. One type of generalized seizure consists of a convulsion with a complete loss of consciousness. Another type looks like a brief period of fixed staring.

Seizures are partial when those brain cells not working properly are limited to one part of the brain. Such partial seizures may cause periods of "automatic behavior" and altered consciousness. This is typified by purposeful- looking behavior, such as buttoning or unbuttoning a shirt. Such behavior, however, is unconscious, may be repetitive, and is usually not recalled.

Cerebral Palsy

What is the definition of cerebral palsy? Cerebral palsy is a term used to describe a group of chronic conditions affecting body movements and muscle coordination. It is caused by damage to one or more specific areas of the brain, usually occurring during fetal development or infancy. It also can occur before, during or shortly following birth.

Definitions to Know

"Cerebral" refers to the brain and "Palsy" to a disorder of movement or posture. If someone has cerebral palsy it means that because of an injury to their brain (cerebral) they are not able to use some of the muscles in their body in the normal way (palsy). Children with cerebral palsy may not be able to walk, talk, eat or play in the same ways as most other children.

Cerebral palsy is neither progressive nor communicable. It is also not "curable" in the accepted sense, although education, therapy and applied technology can help persons with cerebral palsy lead productive lives. It is important to know that cerebral palsy is not a disease or illness. It isn't contagious and it doesn't get worse. Children who have cerebral palsy will have it all their lives.

Cerebral palsy is characterized by an inability to fully control motor function, particularly muscle control and coordination. Depending on which areas of the brain have been damaged, people with cerebral palsy may experience one or more of the following:

- Nuscle tightness or spasm
- Involuntary movement
- Disturbance in gait and mobility
- Abnormal sensation and perception
- Impairment of sight, hearing or speech
- Seizures

Down Syndrome

Definition:
Down syndrome is the most common cause of mental retardation (see mental retardation entry) and malformation in newborns. It occurs because of the presence of an extra chromosome.

Description:
Chromosomes are structures that carry genetic information in cells. They carry the instructions that tell cells what functions they are to perform. They determine the way a person's body looks and the way it functions.
Cells normally carry two matched sets of twenty-three chromosomes for a total of forty-six chromosomes. One set of twenty-three chromosomes comes from each parent. Down's syndrome occurs when one chromosome pair is damaged. That pair is designated as chromosome #21.

Chromosome #21 can be damaged, for example, if one parent has two chromosomes at location 21, rather than one. A child will then get two #21 chromosomes from one parent and one #21 chromosome from the other parent, for a total of three #21 chromosomes. This form of Down's syndrome is called trisomy 21, meaning that the #21 chromosome has three units rather than two. Overall, the child has forty-seven chromosomes, rather than forty-six chromosomes. This pattern of changes occurs in more than 90 percent of all Down's patients.

Definitions to Know

Chromosome #21 can also be damaged during cell replication. Cells grow and reproduce over time. As they do so, they make copies of the original chromosomes from the parents. Sometimes, the chromosomes from the parents are normal but a problem occurs when the new cells are reproducing. Two normal chromosomes at location 21 become three chromosomes in some cells.

This condition is known as a mosaic disorder. People with this disorder have some cells containing forty six chromosomes, and some containing forty-seven chromosomes. They may have less severe symptoms than a person whose cells all contain forty-seven chromosomes. A mosaic condition occurs rarely. Less than 2 percent of all Down's cases are caused by mosaic disorder.

Chromosome #21 can also be damaged when a normal chromosome from the parent breaks into two pieces. One piece of the chromosome becomes attached to another chromosome. This process is called translocation. Translocation occurs in about 3 to 4 percent of all Down's patients.

Symptoms:

Babies with down syndrome can often be diagnosed at birth because of some common physical characteristics. For example, they tend to be unusually quiet, less responsive, and weak. Other physical signs include:

- Flat face
- Small head
- Flat bridge of the nose
- Smaller than normal, low-set nose
- Small mouth, causing the tongue to stick out and look unusually large · Upward slanting eyes
- Extra folds of skin at the inside corner of each eye
- Rounded cheeks
- Small, misshapened ears
- Small, wide hands
- A deep crease across the center of each palm
- A malformed fifth finger
- A wide space between the big and second toes
- Unusual creases on the soles of the feet
- Overly-flexible joints (as in people who are double-jointed)
- Shorter than normal height

Definitions to Know

The Arc of San Diego

Autism

Autism is normally diagnosed before age six and may be diagnosed in infancy in some cases. The degree of autism varies from mild to severe in different children. Severely afflicted patients can appear profoundly retarded.

Autism Overview

Autism falls under the "Pervasive Developmental Disorders", or PDD (more on this later) is not that uncommon - it is estimated that nearly 1 in 150 births result in some form of Autism. According the the U.S. Department of Education, this number is on the rise. Autism is around 4 times more likely to occur in boys than girls.

Definition Of Autism

Autism is defined by the Autism Society of America (ASA) as: "Autism is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life and is the result of a neurological disorder that affects the normal functioning of the brain, impacting development in the areas of social interaction and communication skills. Both children and adults with autism typically show difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication, social interactions, and leisure or play activities. Autism is one of five disorders that falls under the umbrella of Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD), a category of neurological disorders characterized by "severe and pervasive impairment in several areas of development."

Characteristics Of Autism

Most signs or characteristics of Autism are evident in the areas of speech or communication (verbal and non-verbal). Many of the signs or symptoms of Autism begin presenting themselves between 2 and 6 years of age.

The research indicates the following symptoms are the most commonly found characteristics of Autism:

The child is unable to coo by 12 months.
The child also does not point or gesture by 12 months.
The child does not say single words by 16 months.
The child does not say 2 or more words by 24 months.
Has lost some of social skills or language abilities.

Other Characteristics include:

No fear of danger.
Over or under sensitivity to pain.
May avoid eye contact with you.
May prefer to be by him/herself.
Has difficulty expressing what they want or need - may then try to use gestures.
May echo words or phrases.
May have inappropriate attachments to objects.
May spin his/herself or objects.

Prolonged repetitive play.
May insist on things/routines always being the same.
May exhibit inappropriate laughing (laughing when not appropriate to the situation). May display tantrums for no apparent reason.
May avoid cuddling.
May exhibit self injurious behavior when upset i.e. biting selves or banging heads.
An overall difficulty interacting with others.

Causes Of Autism

The research indicates that the cause of Autism is likely biological, but this may not be the only cause. Evidence has shown that 1 in 3 people diagnosed with Autism have had around 1-2 epileptic seizures by the time they reach adulthood. Also, Autism tends to run in families, pointing to a possible genetic cause. And autopsies of the brain have shown deficits in various parts of the brain (i.e. cerebellum, frontal lobes, brain stem). Scientists have also found abnormal levels of neurotransmitters in the brain, such as Serotonin.