

# Tools to Assess Emotional Well-Being for People with Intellectual Disabilities are Lacking, New Study Finds

*Specialized training and tools are required to improve emotional well-being and the overall health of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.*

CLEARWATER, FL, UNITED STATES, March 25, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [A newly released study](#) published by researchers at the University of Connecticut found significant gaps in assessing the emotional well-being of children and adolescents with intellectual disabilities. Researchers noted few measures exist to assess the emotional well-being of those with severe or profound intellectual disabilities.



According to the study, emotional well-being has been connected to positive social, emotional, behavioral, and health outcomes for people with intellectual disabilities. Those with higher levels of emotional well-being are more likely to participate in fulfilling activities, cultivate meaningful relationships, and have stronger feelings of inclusion. Emotional well-being may also encourage resilience. (1)

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*Dr. Craig Escudé, President of IntellectAbility*

While emotional well-being is an integral part of improving overall physical and mental health, the available tools and metrics are typically developed for people without disabilities. Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) who experience higher mortality rates than non-disabled individuals continue to suffer

disproportionately from unrecognized and underdiagnosed emotional distress.

People living with IDD express emotional well-being differently than those without disabilities. For example, many people with IDD do not use words to communicate, which makes it difficult to simply ask, "How are you feeling?" As a result, physicians and supporters must develop more customized parameters to examine signs of emotional instability.

"For people with IDD, early signs of emotional distress may appear as a prolonged change in a person's demeanor, significant changes in behavior, or a notable change in a person's baseline level of interaction with others," states Dr. Craig Escudé, President of IntellectAbility. "Being attuned to identifying these changes is essential for family members and supporters to recognize and report these changes so that interventions can be implemented early."

IntellectAbility provides tools and training to agencies, governmental entities, and supporters of people with IDD to foster early recognition and mitigation of health risks. By providing person-centered training, IntellectAbility helps caregivers and physicians empower people with IDD to live healthier, more fulfilling lives.

Emotional distress can lead to serious and often deadly health issues for people with IDD. "It's known that emotional stressors can lead to increased risk for heart disease, poorer glucose control for people with diabetes, and early death. Stress also can worsen the risks for obesity, Alzheimer's disease, depression, and gastrointestinal problems," states Dr. Escudé.

For many people with IDD, signs of stress are exhibited by changes in behavior. IntellectAbility developed the Health Risk Screening Tool (HRST) to better assess health destabilization in people with IDD. The tool looks at 22 specific areas of risk, including five that specifically relate to behavior: self-abuse, aggression, the need for physical behavior support, chemical behavior support, and the use of psychotropic medications.

Dr. Escudé notes, "One's overall emotional state heavily influences their overall quality of life. For people with IDD who are already subject to social isolation, higher rates of mental health issues, and increased numbers of chronic diseases, implementing interventions to improve overall emotional well-being is exceedingly important. And, it starts with having an effective way to screen for it."

IntellectAbility provides tools and training to agencies, governmental entities, and supporters of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to foster early recognition and mitigation of health risks, thereby improving health and wellness. One such tool is the Health Risk Screening Tool (HRST), of which they are the sole developer, producer, and distributor. The web-based HRST is the most widely used and validated health risk screening instrument for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. IntellectAbility also provides numerous health-related and person-centered service training for supporters of people with IDD. With an unrelenting focus, IntellectAbility works to fulfill its mission of improving health and quality of life for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and other at-risk populations. For

more information, visit [www.ReplacingRisk.com](http://www.ReplacingRisk.com)

Sources:

1. <https://today.uconn.edu/2025/03/new-study-finds-gap-in-tools-assessing-emotional-well-being-in-individuals-with-intellectual-disabilities/>

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