



Alliance for the Betterment of
Citizens with Disabilities

Empowering People: Providers Shaping Policies

The IDD Population is Heterogeneous, So Too is Their Pain

ABCD has previously written that the State's assessment tool, the NJCAT, largely disregards mental health issues as a driver for additional care needs.¹ An individual who exhibits behavioral or mental health issues will often receive a behavioral acuity level from the NJCAT. Though this translates into more funding, it does not always translate into the right type of care.

Bafflingly, the only service in the DDD system for those with behavior or mental health issues is behavioral supports.² So, while receiving services from DDD licensed and certified community providers, numerous treatment modalities such as counseling, the creative arts therapies of art, music, dance, and drama, EMDR, cognitive behavioral therapy, trauma informed care, and a multidisciplinary approach to treatment are unavailable to the IDD population with behavioral acuity. It is unlikely that a singular approach and an overreliance on one model for behavioral and mental health care is anyone's definition of best practice.

*What impresses me most is how recalcitrant mental illness is, how difficult it is to comprehend, how hard it is to come up with effective treatment and, ultimately, how it is best to be honest about what we don't know so we pursue a more eclectic approach to treating it and not be certain we know the right answer.*³

Further, with non-existent or inadequate prevention and crisis care, costs escalate due to the overdependence on restrictive, long-term hospital stays and readmissions.⁴ We need to take the pressure off the crisis system.

The IDD population is heterogenous, so too is their pain, so too should be their care.

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¹ ABCD *New Jersey Comprehensive Assessment: A Review*. September 2021. <https://www.abcdnj.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/NJCAT-A-Review-9-22-21.pdf>

² An evidenced based intervention which employs a variety of approaches and techniques to teach new skills and make changes in a person's environment to improve their behavior.

³ Curwen, Thomas. *Q &A: He Studied Mental Illness for 50 Years. Here are all the Things we are Doing Wrong*. LA Times. May 10, 2022. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-05-10/q-a-andrew-scully-severe-mental-illness>

⁴ ABCD *Developing a System of Mental Health Care for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*. November 2022 <https://www.abcdnj.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Developing-a-System-of-Care-for-IDDMH.pdf>