

Social Work Tip Sheet

SW Tip Sheet

Some tips for SW include:

- Statistically speaking, most people with DD function in the “mild” range – some people equate this to an age equivalent that is similar to a 9-12 year old. However, people will have various areas of strength . Always try to involve the patient as much as possible.
- People with DD may have lower rates of comprehension. Asking the person to repeat/explain in their own words can often highlight these gaps. Sometimes this is referred to as “the cloak of competence”. A person may be more conversant, and appear as though they are following along, when in reality they are struggling. When left undetected, this can result in poor history provided, and missed follow up.
- Whenever possible, it is important to take the time to get collateral information. Individuals with developmental disabilities may not be the best historians and having a second perspective can be very helpful in understanding the presenting issue and making treatment decisions.
- If you are not able to connect with or locate a caregiver, the **DSO** (Developmental Services Ontario), may be able to share with you which agencies (if any) the person is connected to. The DSO is the gatekeeper to developmental services (See Developmental Services Ontario: What you and your patients need to know).
- People with DD have extremely high rates of trauma/abuse - they may be afraid of hospital, or escalate when feeling unsafe. A trauma-informed approach is always recommended for people with DD. Try to find out what calms the person (likes/dislikes) and any triggers that they may have.
- People with DD are commonly very sensitive to change (no matter how big or small). Difficulty coping is a precipitant of many ED visits.
- Ask if the patient (or caregivers) has a **Crisis Plan**. If not, this may be something to introduce prior to discharge. A template is available here.
- Prior to discharge, offer to complete an **Exit Interview** with the patient. This may improve continuity and prevent a repeat visit by reviewing in clear language today’s visit and any follow-up.