A Model for Assessment Accommodations for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

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Introduction

Benefits of Psychoeducational Assessment:
• Reveals a pattern of cognitive strengths and weaknesses
• Informs educational placement decisions and intervention plans
Data may show effectiveness of current pharmaceutical trials or educational interventions

Challenges of Assessment:
• Stressful experience
• Difficult to obtain valid test results

Guiding Question:
• What are some strategies and accommodations to enhance the benefits of assessment and mitigate challenges when assessing individuals with IDD?

Research Team:
• Part of a multi-site NIH grant funded team validating a new assessment with individuals with Intellectual Disability
• School psychologists, special educators, and trainees

Methods:
• Extensive field research and a review of literature

References

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Evidence Based Practices Within the Assessment Cycle

Planning
• Interview caregivers and/or teachers
• Pre-assessment questionnaire to gather information about the examinee:
  - Strengths and interests
  - Anxiety
  - Current behaviors and behavior system
  - Current classroom/home supports
  - Vision, hearing, or motor difficulties
  - Communication style/familiar language
  - Sensory needs
  - Conduct observation in one or more settings
  - Create social story and visual schedule of assessment session
    (include pictures of activities, examinee, and setting)
  - Use test validated for specific populations

Implementation
• Interpret results and report relative strengths along with needs and areas for growth
• Utilize person-first language
• Report accommodations used during testing
• Describe testing behaviors in relation to daily behaviors (typical for this individual?)
• Consider translating the raw data with z-score normalization to avoid floor effects and skew

Evaluation
• Start with down time or a sensory calming activity
• Visual schedule and First/Then board
• Use familiar language and behavioral strategies
• Provide breaks
• Use reinforcement and behavior systems, checklist to show progress
• Use relevant accommodations
  “Always ask yourself, ‘Am I still measuring the target skill with this accommodation?’”

Types of Accommodations:
1. Alter Presentation and/or Format
   • Example: Use simplified directions to emphasize key phrases

2. Alter Response Procedures
   • Example: Allow pointing rather than naming to indicate response

3. Alter Administration
   • Example: No time limits or test over multiple days

Practical Strategies

Behavioral:
• Barcode
• Essential Emotional/Social
• Increase
• Minimize Anxiety
• Plan ahead (giving visual cues)
• Visual Co- and Behavioral Expectations

Environmental:
• Familiar Setting
• Yearly Prior to Test
• Cozy Corner
• Sue Story
• Sensory Area
• Touch/Assist Multiple Days

Communication:
• Visual Schedule
• Graphic Story
• Word Wall
• Picture Chart
• Alternative Communication
• Picture Exchange System (PESC)

Motor:
• Reach/Best
• Developmental
• Handwriting
• Use of assistive technology

Sensory:
• Suggest Problem
• Writing Plan
• Picture Cards
• Use aversive
• Auditory

Relational:
• Name
• Team
• Reading
• Visual
• Picture
• Pair
• Contact with Positive Reactions

Key Concepts in Accommodations

Definitions of Key Concepts:
Accommodation: What can help the examinee overcome a barrier, lack of accessibility, etc.
Access Skill: What underlying abilities are needed to show this skill?
Barriers: What aspects of the disability prevent the examinee from showing the skill?
Scope: What is the skill assessed or measured?
Examples of Key Concepts:
Target Skill: Writing a simple story
Target Scope: Writing a simple story
Access Skill: Writing legibly
Barriers: Difficulties with coordination
Scope: Writing a simple story

What is a Test Accommodation?
• Minor adaptation to standardized assessment
• Reduces barriers, making the assessment accessible to an individual with IDD
• Does not alter the construct being assessed or measured
• Results in scores that are comparable to those on the original test