

Brain Injury and Minority Health

“The residents of Tennessee experience poorer life expectancy than the residents of most other states. Additionally, there are many significant differences in this outcome across racial, ethnic, gender, and geographic lines within Tennessee.”

People in racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to sustain a TBI and more likely to have worse outcomes. Reasons for higher rates of TBI include: Motor vehicle accidents, Substance Use, Suicide and Domestic Violence.

In Tennessee, Hispanics have the highest proportion of work-related Traumatic Brain Injuries.

Minorities are more likely to drop out of long-term studies for a variety of reasons. They are also less likely to receive follow-up care and rehabilitation related to a lack of insurance.

Native American & Alaskan Natives: highest rate of TBI & fatality from TBI

Best Practices

Care providers working with people in racial & ethnic minorities should:

- SCREEN for prior history of Brain Injury
- ASSESS Cognitive & Functional Impairment
- EDUCATE staff on Brain Injury
- EDUCATE the person about their Brain Injury
- PROVIDE and TEACH Accommodations
- CONNECT person served with Community Resources

COMMON PROBLEMS

After Brain Injury, we often see problems with:

- Attention, memory and new learning
- Slowed speed of processing

Organization, problem solving & impulsivity
Irritability, frustration & agitation
Balance, dizziness & headaches
Poor awareness of deficits & difficulties
Difficulty being flexible, poor self-monitoring

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Care providers working with people in racial & ethnic minorities may see:

Looking uninterested because they cannot pay attention
Appearance of defiance because they cannot remember the rules
Slow to follow directions because they cannot process quickly
Getting into fights because of irritability, anger and impulsivity
Falling into things, often getting hurt
Difficulty re-entering community because of cognitive changes
Gets stuck on an idea or a way of doing something, does not recognize mistakes

Black & Hispanic children are more likely to be impacted by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) than White & Asian children. Cognitive & behavioral changes that ACEs can produce can look similar to brain injury. A brain healthy lifestyle will help.

Common Accommodations for Brain Injury Challenges

Here are some common and simple accommodations:

Working for shorter periods of time
Getting rid of distractions around you, like noise or movement
Taking notes (on paper, in a notebook, on a phone or computer)
Using a phone to set timers to remember appointments
Repeating information to the person
Slowing down when talking; giving them more time to respond
Giving the person a list of house rules, written directions, or pictures to help them understand and remember
Coaching the person with the injury to “Stop, think and plan” then act
Coaching the person to take deep breaths when feeling angry or anxious

Tools for Best Practice

Brain Injury Screening Resources:

NASHIA's OBISSS: <https://www.nashia.org/obissprogram> - The OBISSS is highly recommended. It is made up of the OSU screening tool, a Symptoms Questionnaire and Strategies. It can be used electronically, on a computer, phone or ipad. It can be self-administered.

OSU TBI Identification Method: <https://wexnermedical.osu.edu/neurological-institute/neuroscience-research-institute/research-centers/ohio-valley-center-for-brain-injury-prevention-and-rehabilitation/osu-tbi-id>

Brain Links' Strategies & Accommodations Tool: <https://www.tndisability.org/rehabilitation>

Symptom Questionnaire and Cognitive Strategies:

Adults: bit.ly/3FLkz0V

Juvenile: bit.ly/4iS2bSC

Tennessee Resources

Brain Links' Website with many resources: [tndisability.org/brain](https://www.tndisability.org/brain)

Brain Links' Toolkits (for Service Professionals and Survivors):

<https://www.tndisability.org/brain-toolkits>

TN Department of Health TBI Program:

<https://tinyurl.com/3v5jrdt3>

Tennessee Brighter Futures' Resource Pages & Training for Brain Injury:

<https://www.tndisability.org/tbf-brain-injury>

Resource Pages & Training for Minority Health

<https://www.tndisability.org/tbf-social-determinants-health>

Tennessee Brighter Futures is organized and facilitated by Brain Links through a contract from the Tennessee Department of Health TBI Program

References:

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