

**Title:** Perceived Stigma and Mental Health Outcomes in Youth with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

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**Background:** The relation between perceived stigma and mental health among youth with IDD is not well understood and it remains unclear whether youth with different IDD diagnoses (e.g., intellectual disability [ID]) experience different levels of stigma. This study aims to examine levels of perceived stigma among youth with ID and/or DD (developmental disabilities) and its association with mental health outcomes.

**Methods:** We examined baseline data from an ongoing randomized trial investigating the efficacy of a mental health program in promoting mental health outcomes in a sample of youth with IDD. Descriptive statistics were used to examine depressive and anxiety symptomatology and perceived stigma. Independent samples t-tests were used to examine differences between youth with ID and youth with other DD diagnoses. Linear regression models examined associations between perceived stigma and depressive and anxiety symptomatology.

**Findings:** Baseline data has been collected from 218 youth with IDD, aged 13-20 years. Thirty-four youth reported an ID diagnosis. Across youth with IDD, the average perceived stigma score was 2.7. Average depression and anxiety symptomatology scores were 5.6 and 4.7, respectively indicating mild symptoms. Compared to youth with other DD diagnoses, youth with ID exhibited significantly higher anxiety and marginally higher depressive symptoms. There were no differences in perceived stigma scores between youth with ID and youth with other DD diagnoses. Controlling for age and gender, greater perceived stigma and ID were significantly associated with greater depression and greater anxiety severity.

**Conclusions:** Perceived stigma may contribute to negative mental health outcomes in the youth with IDD. Notably, youth with ID may be at risk of experiencing greater depression and anxiety severity compared to youth with other DD diagnoses, particularly in the context of perceived stigma. Addressing the effects of stigma and discrimination may promote mental well-being and improve quality of life for people with DD.