



## Facts and Fallacies

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<b>Fallacy</b>	<b>Fact</b>
1. Intellectual disabilities are passed on from parent to child.	Most children of parents with intellectual disabilities have average intelligence.
2. Persons with intellectual disabilities start young and 'breed like rabbits'.	Parents with intellectual disabilities often start later, and typically have the same number or fewer children than other parents.
3. Parents with intellectual disabilities think and behave like children: they have the mental age of a child.	How parents think, reason and behave depends on a complex and continuous interaction of biology and experience across the lifespan: the concept of 'mental age' has long been discredited.
4. Parents with intellectual disabilities cannot learn parenting skills.	Parents with intellectual disabilities can and do learn parenting skills when appropriate teaching methods are used.
5. Intelligence quotient (IQ) is a useful indicator and predictor of parenting capacity	IQ is a poor predictor of parenting capacity. The capacity of any parent to care for their children depends on a complex and continuous interaction of multiple intra and interpersonal factors and environments.
6. Children of parents with intellectual disabilities have to take on adult responsibilities: they are 'parentified'.	Families (all families, not just those headed by parents with intellectual disabilities) are diverse with respect to the way they share responsibilities and perform tasks.
7. Parents with intellectual disabilities will abuse their children.	Parents with intellectual disabilities rarely maltreat their children: physically, sexually or emotionally. Unintentional physical neglect is the most common concern leading to child welfare intervention.

## Further Reading

Llewellyn, G. (1993) Parents with Intellectual Disability: Facts, Fallacies and Professional Responsibilities. *Community Bulletin* 17 (1), 10 – 19.

Llewellyn, G. (1990) People with Intellectual Disability as Parents: Perspectives from the Professional Literature. *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Developmental Disabilities*, 16 (4), 369 – 380.



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