

BRIEF INSTRUCTIONS AND INTRODUCTION FOR THE COGNITIVE ABILITIES CAIS

Questions to Ask and Intervention Strategies

This part of the CAIS with the *Cognitive Abilities Questions to Ask* and *Cognitive Intervention Strategies* considers the **cognitive abilities, needs, and desires** of a **person** you are assisting or relating to. The other three parts of the CAIS consider this person's environment, their tasks and daily routines, and your communication with this person.

FOUR PARTS TO THE CAIS QUESTIONS TO ASK AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES:

1. **Cognitive Abilities**
2. Environment
3. Communication
4. Task and Daily Routines

On Website

The entire CAIS (in an interactive format and as pdf files), including all the Questions to Ask and the Intervention Strategies in all four parts of the CAIS, along with instructions and introductions (including these brief instructions and introductions for each part, and the complete instructions and introduction for the entire CAIS), as well as additional resources regarding the CAIS are available on the Michigan **Improving MI Practices (IMP) website** at this link:

<https://www.improvingmipractices.org>

Introduction

Changes in a person's **brain** occur as a result of various factors. These factors could include growth and development throughout a person's life from childhood throughout adulthood, an intellectual or developmental difference/disorder, dementia (or major neurocognitive disorder), stroke, mental illness, injury, or other factors that can affect a person's brain and their cognitive abilities.

Changes in **cognitive abilities** that result from brain changes can enhance a person's pleasure and their ability to understand their environment and abstract concepts. They can also cause a person to have difficulty communicating, performing a task, or understanding and interacting with their environment. They can cause a person to feel upset or to engage in behavior that might be distressing to themselves or others.

These changes in a person's cognitive strengths and needs can also make **someone else's behavior** (for example, your behavior) **unintentionally** feel distressing to a person with the cognitive changes. This behavior could include someone's words, movements, or actions.

Often the cognitive needs of a person are more challenging when there is not enough or the right kind of support from their environment, the structure of their tasks or daily schedule, and from various aspects of your interactions with them.

When the environment, your interactions, and the task and daily routines are not supportive enough, that is, they are too demanding or they overestimate or underestimate a person's cognitive abilities (that is, their cognitive strengths and needs), this person may show evidence of this "mismatch" in a variety of ways, including:

- Fatigue, withdrawal, or lethargy
- Emotional distress, anxiety, confusion, or irritation.
- Reduced success in performing a task, or task step.
- Engaging in behavior that reflects fatigue, unmet needs, or distress. This behavior may cause danger or distress to this person or to other people. Such behavior may also reflect distress in response to behavior or actions by someone else. Someone else's behavior may confuse and upset this person, by overestimating or underestimating this person's cognitive strengths and needs.

This Cognitive Abilities part of the CAIS **identifies** some of the many **cognitive abilities** of a **particular person** (of their specific cognitive strengths and needs). Then it gives you suggestions of how to support this person's cognitive strengths and needs by **adapting** their **environment**, your **communication** with this person, and their **tasks** and daily routines. These concrete everyday adaptations can help make tasks and interactions with their environment and other people easier for this person, and for you when you are assisting or relating to them.

Instructions

The instructions here are very brief. See the subheading "For More Information" below to find more **detailed instructions**.

Your responses to the **questions** you ask yourself about a particular person in the *Cognitive Abilities Questions to Ask* identify a pattern of **cognitive strengths and needs** regarding the cognitive abilities of this person at this time.

The list of **intervention** ideas in the *CAIS Cognitive Intervention Strategies* for each of these questions offers **specific** practical, concrete, **everyday** strategies that anyone can use to more effectively **adapt to** and support **this person's particular** cognitive strengths and needs.

Responses to the questions in this *CAIS Questions to Ask* can generate strategies that support a person's cognitive abilities while this person is trying to think, understand and respond to their surroundings, do a task, or communicate with you. The intervention strategies (support strategies) meet the needs of a person's cognitive abilities and build on the strengths of a person's cognitive abilities. The intervention strategies can also help increase comfort and confidence, and prevent or reduce stress, distress, frustration, and situations that are upsetting to this person, you, or others.

The Cognitive Abilities CAIS consists of **three documents** with the **same questions** in each document:

1. Yes/No Response Format
2. Four Point Response Format
3. Intervention Strategies

Steps for Using the Cognitive Abilities CAIS

1. Complete the *CAIS Cognitive Abilities Questions to Ask Yes/No Response Format* or the *Four Point Response Format* by following the instructions on the first page of the CAIS Cognitive Abilities Questions. Choose the format you prefer.
2. For each of your responses to the questions that is a “No” or a “1” or “2” see the same question in the CAIS Cognitive **Intervention Strategies**. All of the questions in the Questions to Ask are included verbatim in the Intervention Strategies.
3. **Review** the **intervention** ideas listed in the CAIS Intervention Strategies for each of the questions identified in step #2 above. **Choose** interventions to try that seem to make sense for this person and you at this time.
4. **Evaluate** the effectiveness of the interventions you’ve chosen by completing the CAIS Cognitive Abilities **Questions to Ask** again.
5. **Keep using these interventions** whenever you are with this person as long as they are helpful.
6. Do steps #1-5 **periodically** or whenever you recognize a **change** needs to be made, or a change has occurred in this person’s cognitive abilities or in their situation or conditions.

It may be helpful to go through these steps with someone else or a team rather than by yourself.

The CAIS is **individualized** to a particular person at a particular time. The abilities and desires of this person will be different from every other person and will also **fluctuate** and **change** over time. It is important therefore to ask the CAIS Questions **frequently** and to **modify** intervention strategies to adapt to the changes. As a person’s cognitive abilities and circumstances change, your support and intervention strategies with this person will need to change.

Careful observation is key to recognizing when additional or a different type of assistance and support is needed. When a person’s body becomes tense or their face and eyes reflect confusion, anxiety, or irritation, this may suggest that this person’s cognitive abilities are either overestimated or underestimated. When you see this, immediately use the suggested interventions on the spot (for example, slow down to give them time), and also include them in your intervention planning with the goal of improving this person’s quality of life.

Try at all times, to **accurately match the demands** of the environment, your interactions, and the task with this person’s abilities, needs, and desires to help this person relax and feel and be comfortable and competent.

Use these intervention and support strategies to:

- **Use, build, draw on, and rely on** the specific cognitive strengths and abilities of this person. For example, help this person’s cognitive abilities to grow and improve. Or draw on this

person's artistic, music, and singing skills as this person's speech declines. Or increase the contrast between an object and its background, so this person's ability to scan an area to find the object can be more often used and relied on as the ability to remember where an object is declines.

- **Help, support, nurture, adapt to, or compensate** for this person's specific cognitive needs. For example, do a part of a task for this person. Or if this person doesn't recognize an object when they see it but does recognize the name of the object when it's said aloud, then point to the object as you name it aloud.
- Make **task** performance and **interactions** with others and their environment **easier** for this person. For example, sing a rhythmic song with a person on the way to lunch, so walking becomes easier for them.
- Appropriately stimulate this person to **grow**.
- Help this person feel and be **competent** and **content**.

For More Information

- The CAIS and all three volumes of this manual, including all of the 43 CAIS handouts, and all instructions and CAIS resources are on the **website Improving MI Practices** at <https://www.improvingmipractices.org>
- The CAIS is available in an **interactive format** and as pdf files on the **Improving MI Practices** website at <https://www.improvingmipractices.org>
- The **first page** of the *Cognitive Abilities CAIS Questions to Ask* in this Volume II has a **brief** introduction and instructions for asking the questions and finding the interventions.
- The more **complete** and **detailed instructions** and **introduction** for the entire CAIS (all four parts) are in this Volume II under the heading "Complete Instructions and Introduction for the CAIS Questions to Ask and CAIS Intervention Strategies".
- More information about the CAIS is in both the "**Introduction to Volume II**" and in the **introduction** section of the "Complete Instructions and Introduction for the CAIS Questions to Ask and CAIS Intervention Strategies" in this Volume II.
- **Chapters 1-5 in Volume I** explain the concepts and give examples from the CAIS. They also give additional tips. **Chapter 1** focuses on the **brain and cognition**. **Chapter 2** focuses on **cognitive abilities**.
- The 43 **CAIS Handouts** in Volume I give more in-depth information and intervention suggestions about the brain and cognitive abilities and a variety of other related topics.
- CAIS Handout #5 "**Recognizing Cognitive Abilities: Suggestions for Recognizing Evidence of a Person's Cognitive Strengths and Needs**" describes **how to identify** a person's **cognitive strengths** and **needs** by watching them perform a task and in other ways. This handout is at the end of Volume I in the section called "**CAIS Handouts**".
- CAIS Handout #26 "**Emotions: Suggestions of How to Recognize Nonverbal Evidence**" describes how to identify a person's emotions by watching this person for subtle indications. This handout is at the end of Volume I in the section called "**CAIS Handouts**".
- An **online course** of five one-hour modules called "Beyond Behavior: The CAIS" explores concepts and gives examples and tips from the CAIS. It also **shows how to use the CAIS**. **Module 2** focuses on cognitive abilities. **Module 1** focuses on the brain and cognition. It is available for you to view or take on the Michigan website **Improving MI Practices** at <https://www.improvingmipractices.org>