

## BRIEF INSTRUCTIONS AND INTRODUCTION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT CAIS

### Questions to Ask and Intervention Strategies

This part of the CAIS with the *Environment Questions to Ask* and *Environmental Intervention Strategies* considers a person's **environment**. The other three parts of the CAIS consider this person's cognitive abilities, 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 the brain can affect a person's cognitive abilities, that is, their ability to think, understand, and respond to their environment and to other people. Their brain may have more difficulty figuring out what to do when there is not enough information and support from their environment, the right kind of information and support, or when their environment is unfamiliar. The **dependency on the environment** often increases with increasing changes in the brain. A person with many cognitive needs may depend on their environment for information about what to do, where to go, and to feel safe, comfortable, confident, and reassured.

The environment plays a very **important role** in helping a person perform a task, understand, or communicate. It can make communication or a task much easier or harder to do. It also affects how a person is feeling. It can reduce or increase fatigue and confusion. When an environment is not meeting a person's cognitive needs, this person can feel tired and overwhelmed. Even when this person appears to be sitting and doing nothing, an environment that has lots of sound or clutter can wear this person out.

A person usually **works much harder** to understand and move around in their environment than you or even they realize, particularly when they have many cognitive needs. A simple task such as picking up a spoon or putting their cup down after drinking water may take a great amount of cognitive energy. **Even for a person who moves around a room or performs a task well**, making their environment easier for them can conserve their energy for more difficult or more pleasurable experiences, and can help prevent fatigue, confusion, and emotional distress or irritation.

You can make a task or communication easier for this person and for yourself as you interact with or assist them, by **adapting** their environment, or **explaining** and **reassuring** this person in a way that reduces the impact of a challenging environment.

An environment that does not meet a person's needs can make your attempts to help much more difficult.

In general, an **environment** that is **supportive**:

1. Helps a person feel and be safe and comfortable.
2. Stimulates a person to have energy and a desire to do something.
3. Tells this person where things are and what is happening, and provides options of what to do and how to participate.
4. Helps this person save energy for other pleasurable or difficult tasks by making a task as easy and relaxing as possible.
5. Helps this person feel and be competent, independent, respected, and engaged.
6. Supports only as much as this person needs or wants; not too much or too little.

This Environment part of the CAIS gives you suggestions of how to help this person by changing their environment to make it more supportive. The suggested interventions address this person's cognitive abilities (that is, their cognitive strengths and needs). They can make **tasks** and **interactions easier** for this person and for you, and reduce or prevent distress and upsetting situations.

### **Instructions**

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

The *CAIS Environment Questions to Ask* gives you some **questions** you can ask yourself to help you understand how well the environment supports this person and their cognitive abilities. The questions explore how their environment helps or hinders this person. They look at how their environment might be helping this person communicate and do a task more easily, feel competent and comfortable, as well as how it might be contributing to this person's stress, frustration, distress, or inability to do something, or to situations that are upsetting for this person, you, and others.

This *CAIS Environment Intervention Strategies* gives ideas of some **intervention strategies** for each question on the *CAIS Environment Questions to Ask*. Your response to the questions directs you to the list of interventions when your response suggests the environment needs to be more supportive for this person. These **specific** practical, concrete, **everyday** intervention strategies that anyone can use suggest ways to modify the environment to make it more supportive of this person's cognitive strengths and needs.

The Environment CAIS consists of **four documents** with the **same questions** in each document:

1. Yes/No Response Format
2. Four Point Response Format
3. Additional Instructions for Response (optional)
4. Intervention Strategies

The **additional instructions** give more explanation, examples, elaboration, detail, rationale, and help with quantifying your responses for each question. They are **optional**. The instructions on the first page of the *Environment CAIS Questions to Ask* may be sufficient.

### **Steps for Using the Environment CAIS**

1. Complete the *CAIS Environment Questions to Ask Yes/No Response Format* or the *Four Point Response Format* by following the instructions on the first page of the CAIS Environment Questions. Choose the format you prefer. If you would like more assistance, review the document called *Environment Questions to Ask Additional Instructions for Response*.
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 Environmental **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 Environment **Questions to Ask** again.
5. **Keep using these interventions** 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 frequently **modify** intervention strategies to adapt to the changes. As a person's cognitive abilities and circumstances change, this person's environment will need to change.

It is important to change the interventions **only when, how, and as much as is necessary** and **helpful** to this person, however. **Consistency, familiarity, and predictability** in their environment (for example, the furniture arrangement, colors, people, and objects) will help this person be able to think, understand, and respond more easily and to feel comfortable with you. Keep change to a minimum, even when it is necessary. The environment intervention strategies address this in more detail.

### **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 *Environment CAIS Questions to Ask* in this Volume II has a **brief** introduction and instructions for asking the questions and finding the interventions.
- The *Additional Instructions* for the Environment Questions to Ask give more explanation, examples, detail, rationale, and help with quantifying your responses for each question. This document is also in this Volume II.
- 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 3** focuses on the **environment**.
- The 43 **CAIS Handouts** in Volume I give more in-depth information and intervention suggestions about the brain, cognitive abilities, and the environment, and a variety of other related topics.
- 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 3** focuses on the environment. **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>**