

Health Care Guidelines for SCDDSN

INTRODUCTION

What are health care guidelines?

Health care guidelines are statements that help define the standards of quality care and provide direction to the health care professional in making decisions about appropriate health care for specific clinical situations. Guidelines provide linkages among clinical conditions, interventions, and outcomes of care that are provided to individuals or groups of people. In addition, guidelines provide a basis for review of care and allocation of resources. The health care guidelines included in this manual were developed to assist nurses, physicians, and other members of the health care team to make decisions about health care for individuals with intellectual and related disabilities and establish a means to review practice. In addition to specific recommendations for screening tests, they include information about the kinds of health and medical conditions that individuals with intellectual and related disabilities are at risk for and suggestions for early intervention and the provision for quality care.

Why were the *Health Care Guidelines* developed?

The goal of the *Health Care Guidelines* is to describe recommendations for evaluation and treatment of specific conditions. These guidelines have the potential to improve the quality of clinical decision-making. The guidelines are intended to help nurses, physicians, and others involved in clinical decision-making by describing recommended courses of action for various clinical situations specific for individuals with intellectual and related disabilities.

How are guidelines used?

The *Health Care Guidelines* reflect recommended options for care. The guidelines can be used to review the adequacy and appropriateness of health care practice. While these guidelines were developed to address the typical clinical conditions of individuals with intellectual and related disabilities, not every guideline may be appropriate or applicable for every individual. In addition, not all interventions that are within a particular guideline may be applicable or indicated. Using practice guidelines to review health care practices, therefore, requires that nurses, dentists, physicians, and other health care professionals use clinical judgment to evaluate the appropriateness of the guideline(s) to meet the needs of an individual.

How will this manual be helpful to health care professionals?

This manual consists of several guidelines that highlight areas of concern when providing health care to individuals with intellectual and related disabilities. The guidelines will provide information to nurses, physicians, and other health care providers that may assist them in making decisions about health care needs, implementing health care, and providing adequate documentation. Comparing the actual care provided and the level of care outlined in the guidelines may confirm for the health care team that the appropriate level of care is being provided or that consideration should be given modifying the current treatment plan. The guidelines may also be used by quality and technical assistance teams to identify priority areas where assistance may be needed to improve health care. In addition, the guidelines may also help identify areas where resources are needed to attain or maintain the desired level of health care. This information may assist health care administrators in making decisions about the distribution of resources.