

Eyewitness memory performance in children with intellectual disabilities

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This paper reviews two experiments that concern the ability of children with intellectual disabilities (ID) to recall the details of a witnessed event. Children with ID are rarely called as witnesses, despite being at increased risk for sexual abuse, physical abuse and criminal victimisation (Westcott & Jones, 1999). Several aspects of recall are assessed, including free recall, accuracy in response to specific questions and suggestibility. It is concluded that children with ID can have certain strengths as witnesses. In particular, evidence is presented that those with mild ID can obtain age appropriate levels of free recall and suggestibility. However, children with ID also have certain vulnerabilities, particularly in relation to changing responses to repeated questions. Additionally, those with moderate ID are considerably more vulnerable as witnesses, with weaker levels of recall and greater levels of suggestibility.