12.1: Introduction

Learning Objectives

- Assess children or adolescents with mental health disorders, developmental disabilities, or disruptive behaviors
- Assess family dynamics and include family members in planning nursing care for children and adolescents
- Describe psychotherapy, behavioral therapy, and medical treatments for children or adolescents with mental health disorders, developmental disabilities, or disruptive behaviors
- Discuss conditional confidentiality and mandatory reporting related to caring for children and adolescents
- Apply the nursing process to children or adolescents with mental health disorders, developmental disabilities, or disruptive behaviors
- Identify community resources for children and adolescents with mental health disorders that enhance individual and family functioning
- Evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

Mental health disorders among children are described as “serious changes in the way children typically learn, behave, or handle their emotions, causing distress and problems getting through the day.”[1] One in six children in the United States aged 2 to 8 years (17.4%) has a diagnosed mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder. Behavior problems are more common among children aged 6 to 11 years.[2]

This chapter will discuss common mental health disorders and disabilities in children and adolescents, as well as interprofessional treatments and related nursing plans of care.