



## Autism Spectrum Disorders: Assessment Process in Western Australia

### What's Involved:

A team assessment is required<sup>1</sup>. Professionals involved in the team process may differ according to the person's age.

1. **Children** are seen by at least a **paediatrician, psychologist, and speech pathologist**.
2. **Adolescents** are seen by a **paediatrician and clinical psychologist**.
3. **Adults** are seen by a **psychiatrist and clinical psychologist**.

Special Note: At the recommendation of the assessing team and / or Disability Services Commission:

- **Psychiatrists** may be consulted for **children and adolescents**.
- **Speech Pathologists** may be consulted for **adolescents and adults**.

### Where:

Team assessments may occur across two settings:

1. The Government Sector, e.g., Disability Services Commission, State Child Development Centre, and some local Child Development Centres.  
Special Note: Referral to Disability Services Commission requires a paediatrician referral.
2. Private Sector.

### Disciplines Involved

- Paediatrician / Psychiatrist: The paediatrician and / or psychiatrist will investigate the history of your child's developmental and medical health. They will also meet your child and ask them to do a number of tasks, which helps them examine your child's overall physical and developmental health. Paediatricians / Psychiatrists: interview parents / caregivers; review any previous reports or medical investigations; and review and / or request additional medical investigations if these are required. They will then recommend further assessment into the presence or absence of an Autism Spectrum Disorder by other team members (see descriptions below).
- Psychologist: The psychologist / clinical psychologist investigates your child's cognitive, thinking and developmental skills in specific detail.
- Speech Pathologist – The speech pathologist investigates your child's communication, language and play skills in specific detail.



All professionals will meet your child and ask your child to do a range of different formal and / or informal tasks. They will also speak with parents at length regarding their child's skills. Professionals will delve into quite some detail within their own areas of expertise. With your consent, the team members may review previous assessment results, liaise with other team members to share important and useful information, and speak with other community members (e.g., day care or school staff) to gain an overall picture of your child's developmental needs. The team will then address the specific assessment criteria needed for an Autism Spectrum Disorder diagnostic assessment. The results of these professional assessments will be documented in formal reports for you to keep and share with other agencies as required.

<sup>1</sup> Johnson CP, Myers SM, Coun Children D. Identification and evaluation of children with autism spectrum disorders. *Pediatrics*. [Review]. 2007 Nov;120(5):1183-215.

## The Importance of Diagnostic Reports

Access to support and services within the school, work and community settings frequently relies on the full diagnostic process having been completed. Agencies may request copies of diagnostic reports in order for your child to access services. Access to these services may occur at any point during their lifetime.

## Costs

- **Government Sector:** For **permanent Australian residents**, there is no cost for assessments completed in the government sector. In particular, Disability Services Commission requires the person is referred prior to the age of 16yrs, and the person must be a **permanent Western Australian resident**.
- **Private Practitioners:** There are individual costs involved. Medicare and / or private health care rebates may be applicable. There is usually a gap between the cost of the assessment and the rebate received - please speak with the individual practitioners regarding costs and codes needed for rebates. You may also like to contact Medicare on 132 011 and / or your private health fund once you have these details.
- **Where Can I Get More Information on Medicare Rebates?** There are very specific referral requirements to claim rebates through Medicare. More information can be found at:
  1. Department of Health and Aging: [Department of Health and Ageing \(DoHA\)](#). Fact Sheets for parents and professionals can be found via links on this page.

## How Do I Find Out Where I Can Get An Assessment Done:

Assessments may be completed in either the government or private sectors. Government agencies include the Child Development Services and Disability Services Commission. Details of professionals working in the area can be found as follows:

1. WAADF Website ([www.waadf.org.au](http://www.waadf.org.au)) has a Member's List. This is not a complete list as it only reflects professionals who are WAADF members and have chosen to have their details listed publicly. Details of current waiting times for some agencies are detailed here (see "Diagnosis in WA", then "Waiting Times").
2. Autism Association of Western Australia (9489 8900 or visit [www.autism.org.au](http://www.autism.org.au)). For children aged 0 – 6 years of age, the Autism Advisor Program may be of assistance.
3. For questions you may want to ask individual professionals conducting assessments, especially those in the private sector, go to "Diagnosis in WA" on the website: [www.waadf.org.au](http://www.waadf.org.au).

## Autism Register

WA is the only state in Australia that currently has an Autism Register – The Western Australian Register for Autism Spectrum Disorders ([www.autismwa.org.au](http://www.autismwa.org.au)). This register collates data on the number of new cases identified in Western Australia each year. It is a confidential register held at the Telethon Institute for Child Health & Research, and informs service providers, among others, of the need for intervention services across the state of Western Australia. If your child receives an autism spectrum disorder diagnosis, one of the assessing team members will discuss referral to the Autism Register with you.

