

AUSTIN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CENTER
GARY YORKE, PH.D. & JANE YORKE, M.A.

One Hand On The Door

(Answers to questions patients like to ask as they are leaving, with one hand on the door!)

Comorbidity and Psychiatric Diagnoses

A Comprehensive Assessment is necessary to identify co-existing conditions. For example, up to 50% of children with ADHD are suspected of having a learning disability. Many children with ADHD develop Oppositional-Defiant Disorder, and Major Depression.

Children who suffer from Anxiety, may also be depressed. Children with an Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder frequently manifest attentional problems and generalized anxiety. A variety of cognitive deficits are often a concern for children with Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder (Bipolar Disorder) and High Functioning Autism (Asperger's Disorder).

A Comprehensive Assessment will have sufficient variety and breadth of tests that educational, emotional, and cognitive issues will be identified.

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The Key Components of a Comprehensive Psychological and Neuropsychological Assessment

The most significant component of a Comprehensive Assessment, and sometimes the most overlooked, is the initial clinical interview, sometimes referred to as a Diagnostic Assessment. The Diagnostic Assessment involves interviewing parents and child, and reviewing intake questionnaires and relevant records. Standardized questionnaires are used to include teachers in the process. Information gathered during the clinical interview allows the Psychologist to determine if they are dealing primarily with learning, behavioral, developmental, or psychological issues, or in many cases, there may be concerns in more than one of these domains. Until a complete clinical picture is obtained, data from psychological and neuropsychological tests cannot be accurately interpreted. The Diagnostic Assessment assists the Psychologist in determining if testing is even appropriate, what tests should be administered, in what order, and the duration of any one testing session.

Once the Diagnostic interview is completed the clinician can move to the next stage of assessment, gathering data using standardized tests and questionnaires. Diagnostic questions and treatment concerns, identified during the Diagnostic Assessment, will determine which tests and questionnaires are used. Tests may evaluate attention, emotional functioning, academic skills, executive functioning, developmental levels, language, intellectual ability, memory, and a variety of other cognitive skills.

The selection of tests is critical. For children, almost every battery will need to include an assessment of intellectual functioning, academic ability, and screening for emotional problems. This "basic battery" will be augmented by a variety of other tests based on the child's needs and diagnoses under consideration. A "one size fits all" battery does not exist, and the use of the same standard battery with each client is very problematic.

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Frequently Asked Questions about Psychological Evaluations

Who do you evaluate?

We evaluate children beginning at age two through adult.

What do psychological tests measure?

Psychological tests measure many things and specific tests are chosen depending on the referral question. For example, a learning disability evaluation will include a complete history, school records, parent questionnaires, and tests of intelligence, achievement, processing abilities, and if needed tests for attention and emotional functioning.

Psychological tests offer a formal way to measure traits, feelings, beliefs and abilities. Some tests assess the presence of certain conditions, such as depression, anxiety, anger control issues, or susceptibility to stress. Other tests measure general well being and provide an overall picture of a person's personality. Upon a referral for psychological testing, one should recognize that the intent is to gain a deeper, more complete understanding of the problem than can be gained from a brief office visit. Such a referral does not mean that the problem is particularly serious, difficult to understand or complex. It just means that additional information is needed before designing the best approach to address the problem.

How are the results of a psychological evaluation shared with the referring doctor or the patient?

After an evaluation the results are scored and interpreted and a formal report is written. The results and recommendations are reviewed with the client prior to release of the report. If it is a child evaluation the results are reviewed with the parents. This report is then sent to the referring physician. We make sure that the information is understood completely and we will consult with any other professionals following receipt of a signed Release of Information.

Who has access to assessment report?

In most cases, the report is sent to the referring doctor requesting the evaluation. If an insurance company pays for a Psychological Evaluation a reviewer (doctor, nurse, licensed mental health professional) working for the company may also request a copy of the report. The report is only released to third parties with written permission, and there are strict rules of confidentiality that must be followed.

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One Hand On The Door Newsletter

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In this issue:

- **Key Components of a Comprehensive Assessment**
- **Frequently Asked Questions about Psychological Evaluations**
- **Comorbidity and Psychiatric Diagnoses**

ON THE WEB AT WWW.AUSTINBEHAVIORAL.INFO

...Continued from inside

Key Components of a Comprehensive Assessment ...

The Comprehensive Assessment is more than an evaluation. It is also an intervention that contributes to the child and parents coming to a new, or clearer, understanding of the presenting issues, and provides recommendations based on the conclusions drawn from the Assessment. Recommendations should address all aspects of the child's environment, including home, school, and recreational. Children with disabilities often need services and accommodations from their school district, and this should be covered in the Comprehensive Assessment as well.

To summarize, the Key Components of a Comprehensive Assessment are:

- Intake Questionnaire
- Diagnostic Assessment interview with child and parents
- Teacher feedback, notes, report cards
- Review of relevant records and prior assessments
- Standardized tests and standardized questionnaires
- Feedback appointment
- Report summarizing results, diagnosis, and recommendations

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Frequently Asked Questions About Psychological Evaluations

How much do psychological assessments cost?

The cost depends upon what type of assessment is required (Psychoeducational, Psychological, Career Testing, etc.). The range is generally between nine hundred and thirteen hundred dollars.

Will insurance pay for psychological assessment?

It depends. Some insurance policies have mental health benefits that will pay for a limited amount of psychological testing. Medical insurance policies may cover all or part of psychological testing if it can be shown to be "medically necessary." Each insurance company has their own way of determining what is medically necessary and they usually do not share that information. Insurance companies typically do not pay for psychological evaluations that focus on educational concerns, learning disabilities, or are court ordered. Our practice does not accept insurance but we will provide clients with a bill that has all of the information for them to submit to their insurance company.

If you would like to see a sample report please email yorke@austin.rr.com and we will be glad to send you one.