

# CHILD PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATIONS

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## What is a Child Psychological Evaluation?

A psychological assessment (also called a psychological evaluation) is one of many ways to learn about a person. Client-centered and individually-tailored, these assessments go beyond just identifying a specific disorder or disability. Utilizing scientifically-grounded and sensitively-delivered psychological testing procedures, we can gain a better sense of how a person's mind works in-the-moment. The primary goal is to help people better understand a person's needs and appreciate their psychological strengths.

The primary "product" people receive from a comprehensive psychological assessment is information. This is given both verbally and in the form of a detailed written report.

There are some components common to most psychological assessments we complete. These include:

- A meeting between a psychologist and the person (or his/her parents), to discuss the developmental history, strengths, and the nature of current concerns [approximately 60 minutes].
- Meetings between the psychologist and the person participating in the assessment, to complete psychological testing. This involves two (or more) sessions, each about three hours in length.
- Interviews with teachers, therapists and/or other important people in the person's life, if indicated.
- Review of any relevant medical, mental health, and/or school records.
- One or more debriefing meetings with the person participating in the assessment and/or with his/her parents or DHS caseworker.
- Consultation with school personnel, treatment providers, or other people in the person's life, if requested.

By integrating information from so many different sources, we are often able to gain a robust and sophisticated understanding of a person's needs, gifts, and/or struggles.

## Psychological Evaluations in the Child Welfare System

Children involved with the child welfare system often participate in multiple assessments and evaluations with behavioral health professionals. These assessments are used for different purposes— to identify service needs; to clarify diagnoses; to inform treatment planning; to identify educational needs; to provide case-planning consultation; to inform placement decisions; etc. Unfortunately, a single assessment or evaluation rarely serves all of these different purposes. Therefore, it is not uncommon for people involved in a child's care and case to experience frustration or confusion when trying to apply the findings/conclusions from a particular assessment/evaluation to the situation at-hand.

The information obtained from “psychological assessments” and “neuropsychological evaluations” can be particularly variable from assessment to assessment. This is because such evaluations do not come with a one-size-fits-all set of procedures; the sources of information used, the findings, and the recommendations can shift dramatically depending upon the setting, the referral source, and the nature of the questions being asked. The utility and benefit of such evaluations in any given decision-making process is therefore really shaped by the initial referral and the scope of the assessment.

This training will include information about the different “types” of behavioral health assessments, including psychological assessments, available in the community, as well as the purposes for which each can be used. Guidance about how to frame referral questions so a psychological evaluation provides pragmatic, actionable information will be presented. Applications, strengths, and limitations of “specialty” evaluations (such as Child-Parent Relationship Assessments) will also be discussed.

Different types of psychological assessments:

- Mental Health Assessments/Behavioral Health Assessments/Psychodiagnostic Interviews

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- Psychoeducational Evaluations

*Notes:*

- Psychiatric Assessments

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- Neuropsychological Evaluations

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- Psychological Assessments/Evaluations

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- Relational Assessments

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