



Who Provides Autism Spectrum Disorder Assessments in WA?

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WAADF Inc's Function

WAADF Inc (WAADF) functions as an organization of professionals who share a special interest in the provision of quality Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) assessment and diagnosis in Western Australia (WA). WAADF's membership is comprised predominantly of paediatricians, speech pathologists, psychiatrists, and psychologists; however, its membership also includes social workers, educators and a range of intervention service providers.

WAADF does not provide direct Autism Spectrum Disorder assessment or diagnostic services to individuals.

What's involved in an ASD assessment?

In Western Australia, an individual is diagnosed with an ASD if a team of professionals, all experienced in ASD assessment and diagnosis, agree on the diagnosis. Therefore:

- Children (aged up to 12 years) must be seen by a paediatrician (and a psychiatrist if mental health concerns are also identified), a psychologist and a speech pathologist; and
- Assessments for adolescents (aged 12 to 17 years) and adults (aged 18 years and older) are carried out by a clinical psychologist, a paediatrician (up to 17 years) and/or a psychiatrist. A speech pathologist is consulted as needed.

ASD assessments may be conducted:

- within a multidisciplinary team setting (such as those provided at Disability Services Commission – Metropolitan and Country Autism Services, or the Health Department's Child Development Centres); or
- by individual professionals who work separately but collaboratively (such as those in private practice).

Regardless of the assessment model used, once the assessments are completed, the professionals involved communicate their findings with the other members of their assessment team and reach a joint decision regarding the most appropriate diagnosis.

What happens after the assessment is completed?

Once the assessment is completed;

- if the team has found that the individual does not have an ASD, recommendations for seeking appropriate intervention and/or additional assessment services may be provided;
- if an ASD diagnosis has been made, one or more members of the assessment team contacts the family and/or individual and discusses the team's findings, reasons for the diagnosis and recommended interventions;
- if applicable, one member of the assessing team forwards the individual's assessment results to DSC's Eligibility Officers. These officers then make a decision as to whether or not the referred person meets the agency's eligibility criteria for services. DSC then informs the individual and/or family or care providers accordingly;
- a member of the assessing team is also assigned to forward all appropriate information to the "WA Register for Autism Spectrum Disorders."

What is the WA Register for Autism Spectrum Disorders?

The Register collects information that is useful in helping to describe the pattern of Autism in WA. It includes information such as:

- the number and ages of people diagnosed;
- the severity of disability;
- shared biological, psychiatric and developmental features;
- individual or group changes over time.

All information provided to the Register is strictly confidential and is stored in a secure location.

The Register form is filled in by a member of the assessment team at the completion of the ASD assessment. The clinician includes the diagnostic and demographic details that are available to them. Confidential information (name, date of birth, postcode) is only included on the form if consent is obtained from the parent/guardian of a child or the person themselves. By agreeing to provide confidential information to the Register, families and individuals with an ASD diagnosis can assist in the development of a greater understanding of ASDs in WA as this information helps to:

- provide greater accuracy in identifying the numbers of people with ASDs by eliminating double counting;
- provide more information about the different types of ASD diagnoses;
- recognise changes in diagnoses within the same person over time;
- assist with collecting information about the numbers diagnosed in each of the public centres as well as in private practice.

Please consider giving your consent to include confidential information on the Register form.

Giving your consent is a way of assisting ongoing development of (a) the understanding of ASDs and (b) the community's ability to plan for the needs of those affected. Your consent to include this information also provides an opportunity for the family to be contacted for possible research participation. Copies of the Register's annual report can be downloaded from www.autismwa.org.au

CURRENT OPTIONS FOR ASD ASSESSMENT AND DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Assessment Providers

Public assessment providers:

Disability Services Commission (DSC): For further information please contact:

- for metropolitan based services, the IFS Coordinator for the Autism Team at either Myaree (08) 9329 2300 or Joondalup (08) 9301 3800
- for country based services, the Country Services Coordinator based at head office in West Perth (08) 9426 9374

Health Department (Child Development Centres)

The majority of assessments are currently conducted at the State Child Development Centre, 4-16 Rheola Street, West Perth. For further information please call (08) 9481-2203.

Private assessment providers:

Paediatricians and suitably experienced psychologists and speech pathologists in private practice.

Additional information sources

When looking for an assessment provider, families/carers or individuals can gather information from a range of community sources including the following:

- other parents or individuals who have already gone through the assessment process
- medical or other service providers who are already working with the individual (and who may have suggested seeking an ASD assessment in the first place)
- educational personnel such as the school psychologist
- WAADF's website Membership Listing at www.waadf.org.au
- WAADF's booklet "*The Diagnostic Process for Children, Adolescents and Adults Referred for Assessment of Autism Spectrum Disorders: Family and Service Providers' Version.*" This booklet is available free of charge to families living in Western Australia by contacting the Autism Association of WA, 37 Hay Street, Subiaco WA Ph: 9489-8900, Email: autismwa@autism.org.au

Some Questions to Ask an Assessment Provider

It is important for families/carers and individuals seeking assessment and diagnostic services to choose a service that they are comfortable with. Here are some questions that may assist you in gathering the information that will help you when making these decisions:

- What sort of experience does the professional have in doing ASD assessments?
 - How long have they been doing assessments?
 - Where have they done their assessments – in public agencies, in private practice, or both?
- Have they had any additional specialist training in ASD assessment?
- Are they familiar with WAADF's recommended assessment and diagnostic guidelines?
- Are their reports routinely accepted by DSC's Eligibility Coordinators?
- Do they have a waitlist and how long is it?

Waiting Lists

Currently waiting lists for ASD assessments in public organizations are quite long though they may vary depending on where you are located (e.g., in the metropolitan or country areas). Most, though not all, adult assessments are completed in the private sector.

Service Costs

Costs of assessment services may vary considerably depending on who the service provider is.

Public Service Providers

Currently all assessments conducted by Disability Services Commission and Health Department service providers are free of cost.

Private Service Providers

Costs of services provided by private practitioners will vary and individual providers should be consulted directly. Medicare and private health insurance agencies should be consulted directly regarding their rebate policies for ASD assessment services.

If you have any additional queries please feel free to contact the WAADF Secretary or Chairperson at the email addresses below.