



Diagnosis and Assessment of a Disability

Key facts

Families and support workers can benefit from having a good understanding of the nature and cause of a person's intellectual disability or developmental delay. This helps people to understand and meet the person's needs.

“Diagnosis and assessment” is the process of working out the nature and cause of a disability and providing advice about the person's needs and available services. Each step of this process should add to your understanding of the person's difficulties with development, their strengths, and how to find the right services to help you meet the person's needs and maximise their potential.

When can diagnosis and assessment help?

Diagnosis and assessment usually occurs in early childhood, but can also be useful in adolescence or adulthood. It is good to get good information as soon as possible so you can plan to meet the person's needs.

Diagnosis and assessment is particularly important for a person with complex or challenging needs.

How to get diagnosis and assessment

If you suspect that a child has an intellectual disability, there are a number of services that can help.

NSW Health encourages parents to have regular health checks done by a nurse or doctor from the birth of a child to age 4. This is explained in *My first health record* which is given to all parents of newborns. These checks help to detect any delay in a child's development or learning – two factors that may suggest an intellectual disability.

Seeing your GP is always a good first point of contact. They are likely to know what other services are available in your area. Your GP can also check to see if there are other conditions that are causing the person's difficulties, such as a hearing problem or a deficiency in nutrition. The GP can identify and treat general health conditions. They will probably also refer your child to a paediatrician or child health service.

A paediatrician can say whether a significant problem is likely and link your child with intervention services. The paediatrician may do some tests to try to find a cause for the disability.

School counsellors and psychologists can also do assessments to identify an intellectual disability.

However, it often is best to go to a diagnosis and assessment service that is a “multidisciplinary” team. These teams have a number of different kinds of health professionals working together.

About diagnosis and assessment services

Diagnostic and assessment services are usually multidisciplinary teams of health professionals with expertise in intellectual disability – for example, a paediatrician, psychologist, speech pathologist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, nurse and social worker.



The main roles of diagnosis and assessment services are:

- Assessment of the extent and cause of the disability.
- Assessment of the person's strengths, difficulties and potential.
- Recommendations for ways to help the person achieve their potential.
- Support to get and work with other services, eg case managers, early intervention.
- Health assessment and referral, for complex health needs.
- Information, counselling and support for families.
- Case reviews at key stages in the person's life, eg starting or leaving school, when complex health and medical needs are suspected, or when a sudden change occurs in the person's health or abilities.

How do I find a diagnosis and assessment service?

See the contact details below of NSW diagnosis and assessment services. These services are multidisciplinary teams. They vary in the age range they serve and in the range of health professionals in the team.

There may be other local services that provide some diagnosis and assessment.

New health services opening in 2012

Disability Specialist Unit – Fairfield

This will be a multidisciplinary health service for children, young people and adults with intellectual disability. For children and young people, it will include specialist services in sports medicine, obesity, gynaecology and mental health. For contact information, phone the Child Development Unit Westmead on 9845 2395

Illawarra and Shoalhaven - This multidisciplinary service will have a central focus on young people with intellectual disability and complex health needs. Phone 9587 2444.

For more information

My first health record www.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/2009/child_health_record.html

You might be interested in these fact sheets

- **Causes of intellectual disability and health care**
- **Children – what kinds of health services are there?**
- **Specialised intellectual disability health services**

This fact sheet was updated in December 2011.

The fact sheet contains general information only and does not take into account individual circumstances. It should not be relied on for medical advice. We encourage you to look at the information in this fact sheet carefully with your health professional to decide whether the information is right for you.

**NSW diagnosis and assessment services**

Name of D&A Service	Area covered	Phone (02)	Age
Child Health Assessment Team, Central Coast	Gosford & Wyong area	4328 7900 4328 7901	0-5
Child Development Service	Northern Sydney	9462 9288	18 months-6
Kogarah Developmental Assessment Service	St George & Sutherland area	8566 1222	All ages
Tumbatin Developmental Assessment Clinic, Randwick	Eastern Sydney & children from other areas	9382 8189	0-8
Disability Specialist Unit, Burwood	Ashfield, Burwood, Canada Bay, Canterbury, Leichhardt, Marrickville & Strathfield Council areas	9701 6300	All ages
Child Assessment Team, Campbelltown	Campbelltown area	4634 3553	0-5
Bankstown	Bankstown area	9780 2777	0-18
Bowral	Wingecarribee area	4861 0888	0-18
Fairfield	Fairfield area	9616 8237	0-16
Nepean	Penrith, Hawkesbury, Blue Mountains	4734 3166	0-18
PECAT, Parramatta	Auburn, Baulkham Hills, Castle Hill, Holroyd, Parramatta, Blacktown, Penrith, Hawkesbury & Blue Mountains areas	9891 7200	0-6
Blue Mountains Child & Adolescent Development Unit	Blue Mountains	4784 6671	0-18
Auburn Child Development Assessment Team	Auburn, Berala, Chester Hill, Regents Park & Lidcombe	8759 3102	0-5+
Child, Infant and Family Tertiary Service (CIFTS), Goulburn	Goulburn, Queanbeyan, Cooma, Yass, Young and South Coast areas	4827 3950	0-18
Bathurst Child Development Clinic	Bathurst, Mudgee, Cowra etc	6330 5363	0-18
Child and Family Health Team, Wallsend	Newcastle, Hunter etc	4924 6400	0-7+
Royal Far West Children's Health Scheme, Manly	Rural and remote	8966 8500	0-16
Child Development Unit, Westmead	Statewide	9845 2395	0-16
Centre for Effective Reading	Rural and remote	9687 0377	5-12