



## **Psychoeducational and Neuropsychological Testing FAQs**

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### **1. My child already has a diagnosis from his or her physician. What will a psychoeducational or neuropsychological evaluation tell me?**

A diagnosis helps professionals understand the types of difficulties a child is having and the kinds of treatments that are likely to be helpful. While a diagnosis can be helpful in providing a “label” for what a child is experiencing and making a child eligible for specific types of treatments or interventions, it often does not give information about how an individual child is affected by his or her condition. Most behavioral diagnoses are lists of symptoms, and an individual child may meet some of these symptoms and not others. The severity of each symptom may differ in every person. Additionally, some diagnoses do not include other factors that may be contributing to the disorder or affect the type of treatment that may be appropriate. For example, children may have selective mutism for a multitude of reasons, including speech and language delays or disorders, anxiety, excessive shyness, sensory hypersensitivities, bilingualism, or autism spectrum disorders. Each of these conditions may impact both the development and maintenance of the individual’s selective mutism. A psychoeducational or neuropsychological evaluation can help to clarify what other factors may be contributing to the child’s experience and lead to more targeted and effective intervention techniques.

### **2. When should I consider having my child tested (or getting myself tested)?**

Psychoeducational and neuropsychological testing may be helpful in a number of situations. Some of the most common are listed below:

*The person is having difficulties in attention, emotional functioning, learning, memory, and/or behavior.* These types of difficulties may be due to a number of factors. A psychoeducational or neuropsychological evaluation can help to clarify why a person is struggling in these areas. By understanding *why* a person is having difficulties, it is easier to figure out *how* to help.

*At the time of initial diagnosis.* Psychoeducational or neuropsychological testing at the time of initial diagnosis can be very helpful in establishing a “baseline” level of functioning. Comprehensive testing will help to set treatment priorities and identify interventions that are more likely to be successful. Testing can also help to determine whether there are other factors that may be impacting current difficulties.

*The person has shown a significant change in mood, behavior, or academic ability.* Significant changes in behavior, personality, mood, or cognitive skills can signify a worsening of difficulties or the onset of another difficulty. An evaluation can help to clarify the nature of these changes and whether treatment needs to be adjusted or modified.

*The person has not responded to standard treatment or research-based educational interventions.* When a person has been provided with standard treatments or research-based educational interventions that have not been effective, a psychoeducational or neuropsychological evaluation may be warranted. It is possible that the person has additional complexities or other factors that are affecting how well the treatment works. It is also possible that the initial diagnosis was incorrect, or based on insufficient information. An evaluation can help to suggest reasons why the intervention has not worked, and identify treatments that may be more effective.

*The child requires special education or related services.* Federal education regulations require comprehensive evaluations in order to determine whether a child is eligible for special education and related services (e.g., speech therapy, occupational therapy, etc.). If a child is receiving special education and related services, re-evaluations are required *at least* every 3 years (every 2 years for individuals with a diagnosis of intellectual disability).

*An individual requires accommodations or modifications in a college or job training program, standardized testing situation, or in an employment setting.* An evaluation is often necessary to help determine whether a person is eligible for accommodations or modifications under the Americans with Disabilities Act. While a past diagnosis can be helpful, it is often insufficient to demonstrate current impairment and need. An evaluation can be useful in documenting the disability, the degree of impairment, and what types of accommodations or modifications may be necessary.

*The person has already been evaluated, but the evaluation was not comprehensive, inadequate, or invalid.* Evaluations may be less than thorough for a number of reasons. For example, the evaluator may not have experience or expertise in evaluating individuals with a particular disorder (especially if the disorder is rare). The person being tested may have refused to participate in the evaluation and no results could be obtained. The tests administered may not be appropriate for the individual’s diagnosis. These are examples of the many reasons that a previous evaluation may be inadequate or invalid. In these cases, a repeat evaluation may be useful.

### **3. How often should evaluations be repeated?**

In general, evaluations should be repeated every 2 to 3 years to provide an update on the individual's progress in treatment and determine whether treatment should be modified. In some cases, a re-evaluation may be unnecessary, especially if the condition that prompted the first evaluation has resolved and there are no further concerns. Federal education law requires that students receiving special education and related services are re-evaluated at least every 3 years (2 years if the child has an intellectual disability). However, a re-evaluation should be completed in shorter intervals if the person has a condition that results in progressive deterioration of functioning, if the person shows a significant change in behavior or functioning, or if the person is failing to respond to interventions.

### **4. Why choose the SMart Center?**

Psychoeducational and neuropsychological evaluations are completed by Dr. Rosemarie Manfredi. Dr. Manfredi is a licensed psychologist in Pennsylvania and Delaware, and a certified school psychologist in Pennsylvania. Dr. Manfredi has extensive training and experience in psychoeducational and neuropsychological evaluations of individuals with neurodevelopmental disorders, such as autism spectrum disorders and developmental concerns; intellectual disabilities; learning disabilities; developmental delays; genetic and neurological disorders; and attention problems. Additionally, the SMart Center specializes in working with individuals with selective mutism and other social communication disorders, and evaluations are enhanced by this level of expertise and experience. We have expertise in differentiating social communication disorders from other disorders with similar presentations, as well as identifying co-occurring conditions that may be contributing to social communication and other difficulties.

### **5. What ages do you evaluate? Do you see adults?**

The SMart Center provides evaluations for children, adolescents, and adults, starting at 2 ½ years old. The type of evaluation that is most appropriate will vary depending on the individual's age and identified concerns.

### **6. What is a diagnostic evaluation?**

A diagnostic evaluation is a targeted evaluation designed to evaluate for a specific condition. For example, an evaluation may help to determine whether an individual who shows symptoms actually has selective mutism. Additionally, an individual with already diagnosed with selective mutism may be evaluated to determine whether they also have an autism spectrum disorder. These evaluations are designed to answer a specific diagnostic question, and are not intended to be comprehensive in nature. They are most

appropriate for preschool-age children, or those who have already had a comprehensive evaluation and need follow-up testing for a specific area of concern.

### **7. What is a psychoeducational evaluation?**

A psychoeducational evaluation is a comprehensive evaluation that is focused on learning and academic performance. It includes a clinical interview and developmental history, assessment of intellectual functioning and academic skills, and screenings for emotional and behavioral disorders that may impact academic performance. A review of previous records (such as the most recent IEP, previous evaluations) is also included. A written report that contains all of the test findings and interpretations of the results is provided approximately 3-4 weeks after the evaluation. This evaluation is most appropriate for children entering or already in school. This evaluation is most helpful in identifying possible learning differences or disabilities, and making recommendations for academic accommodations and/or modifications.

### **8. What is a neuropsychological evaluation?**

A neuropsychological evaluation is the most comprehensive evaluation offered, and is focused on broad cognitive, behavioral, and emotional functioning. It includes a review of relevant records (e.g., most recent IEP, previous evaluations); a clinical interview and developmental history; assessment of the following cognitive domains: intellectual functioning, verbal and nonverbal reasoning and problem-solving, attention and executive functioning, memory and learning, and fine motor and visual-motor integration; and screenings for emotional and behavioral disorders. Testing for academic performance may be included when relevant. A written report that contains all of the test findings and interpretations of the results is provided approximately 3-4 weeks after the evaluation. This evaluation is most appropriate for school-age children, adolescents, and adults. It is most helpful for those who have neurological disorders or injuries (such as genetic disorders, epilepsy, or traumatic or acquired brain injuries), disorders that have an impact on neurological functioning (such as autism spectrum disorders or prematurity), those with concerns about memory or a deterioration in functioning, and those looking for a very comprehensive evaluation.

### **9. What should I tell my child about the testing appointment? How should he or she prepare for the evaluation?**

The specific language you use will differ depending on your child's age and his or her level of understanding. All individuals should be told that they will be doing a number of different things and that some of them will be easy and some will be harder. They should try their best on all of the tests. For some individuals, it may be necessary to let them know that, while they are going to see a "doctor," there will be no physical exam or "shots." For younger children, it is often helpful to tell them that they are going to play some learning games to show what they know. Older children and teens should be

told that these “tests” are different from tests they take in school, they do not get a “grade,” and their performance will not affect their grades in school.

To prepare for the evaluation, individuals should get a good night’s sleep and eat a nutritious breakfast. It is also often helpful to arrive for the evaluation about 10 minutes before the appointment to give the child time to acclimate to the environment.

#### **10. How long does testing take? Why does it take so long?**

The length of testing varies depending on the individual’s age, the identified concerns, and the type of evaluation conducted. Additionally, testing is also affected by the individual’s need for breaks, endurance, attention and focus, and pace of working. On average, diagnostic evaluations take approximately 2-3 hours of testing, as well as 2-3 hours of report writing and records review. Psychoeducational evaluations typically take approximately 4-6 hours of testing and 4-5 hours of report writing and records review. Neuropsychological evaluations take approximately 6-10 hours of testing, plus 5-8 hours of report writing and records review. An individual person’s testing may take more or less time than expected. The SMart Center charges a flat rate for evaluations so that families know how much it will cost, regardless of the specific number of hours required. In many cases, the evaluation can be completed in a single day. However, evaluations may also be conducted over multiple days if necessary.

#### **11. What should I bring to the evaluation?**

Many individuals bring snacks or drinks to the evaluation for breaks. In addition, for lengthier evaluations, the individual will be given a break for lunch. Individuals may bring their own lunch, or go to one of the many local restaurants. Some individuals like to bring an activity for breaks, such as an iPad or tablet or a preferred toy, which helps to maintain their motivation during the testing. Younger children may also bring “comfort” items, such as a small stuffed animal.

It is also helpful to bring relevant previous records to the evaluation. These include previous evaluations, the child’s most recent IEP (if applicable), the child’s most recent report card or standardized test results, or relevant medical records. SMart Center staff can make copies of records and return originals to families.

#### **12. Will medical insurance cover testing costs?**

The SMart Center is an out-of-network provider and does not accept payments from any insurance company. Patients are responsible for the full cost of the evaluation. Payment may be made in cash or via check or credit card. Once the evaluation has been completed and report written, the patient will be provided with a statement that includes the diagnostic and procedural codes necessary to submit for insurance

reimbursement, if eligible. Patients should ensure that they submit for *reimbursement*, and the insurance company should pay them directly.

Medical insurance coverage will vary depending on the specific limits of your health insurance plan, your out-of-network coverage, your deductible, and the need for pre-authorization or pre-certification. Unfortunately, SMart Center staff cannot tell you whether your insurance will partially reimburse you for any of the costs of the evaluation because of the significant variability in plans, coverage, and deductibles. Additionally, coverage may vary depending on the individual's diagnosis, which will not be known until after the evaluation is complete, and the number of hours required for testing, scoring, interpretation, and report writing, which will also not be known until the evaluation is completed. You may call member services for your health insurance plan prior to your appointment to determine whether you have out-of-network benefits, if there is any deductible that would need to be met, whether psychological testing is a covered service (psychological testing CPT code: 96101; neuropsychological testing CPT code: 96118), and if there are any limits to coverage (e.g., a limit to the number of hours covered or the number of evaluations that can be completed within a year) to help determine whether you may be eligible for reimbursement and provide a possible estimate of coverage.

### **13. Will my child's school accept the results of the testing?**

While many public and private schools will consider the results, they are not always required to implement any or all of them. In many cases, schools will review the results of the evaluation and consider the recommendations made. Some schools will request to do their own evaluation of the child. Dr. Manfredi is a certified school psychologist in Pennsylvania. As a result, Pennsylvania public schools will be required to acknowledge and consider the results of the report. However, they may choose to do their own evaluation, or implement alternative interventions. Families who would like assistance in getting their child's school to implement recommendations or interventions should consult with an educational advocate.

### **14. I am a school administrator. Can I contract with the SMart Center to do an evaluation of a student at my school?**

Yes! The SMart Center can provide evaluations for students at their school or at the SMart Center main office. Dr. Manfredi is a certified school psychologist in Pennsylvania and has worked with a number of public and charter schools to provide evaluations. We accept purchase orders from school districts for payment. Please contact the SMart Center for additional information or to discuss how we can help you.

***For more information on testing and assessments at the SMart Center,  
Please contact us: [SMartCenter@SelectiveMutismCenter.org](mailto:SMartCenter@SelectiveMutismCenter.org) ~ 215-887-5738  
[www.SelectiveMutismCenter.org](http://www.SelectiveMutismCenter.org)***