

Making it happen



A PARENT GUIDE TO
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSESSMENT
AT HARBOR
REGIONAL CENTER



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Introduction

Your child has been scheduled for a psychological assessment at Harbor Regional Center. This booklet will help you understand why a psychological assessment is needed, what it involves, how you can help ensure that your child is well prepared for the assessment, and what you can expect to happen once it has been completed.



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WHY IS AN ASSESSMENT NECESSARY? If you are

just now applying for services at Harbor Regional Center, the psychological assessment will help our clinicians find out whether your child has a condition which qualifies as a developmental disability and, if so, whether his condition constitutes a substantial disability. If your child has already been assessed and found to have a condition which might qualify as a developmental disability, we may still need to do an assessment because copies of the previous results may not be available to us in a timely way, or because we need information that is more up-to-date, more comprehensive or more detailed.

If your child is currently a client of the regional center, an updated assessment may be needed to see how he is progressing or to determine whether his service needs have changed.

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WHAT IS A PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT?

A psychological assessment is a structured series of activities or exercises intended to provide information about a child's knowledge, abilities, aptitudes, social functioning, and sometimes, personality. The professional conducting the assessment looks at how the child works with different materials or in different situations and puts this information together to form a profile of the child. The results of the assessment may help determine whether the child is eligible for regional center services, or it may guide the development of a plan for regional center services that will meet the needs of the child in areas such as self-care, socialization, education, and vocational development.

Assessments usually include formal ("standardized") tests, but they can also include less formal techniques such as observations of the child (for example, in the classroom). In addition, a parent or other caregiver is usually interviewed to obtain a history of the child as well as his or her perceptions of the child's development, strengths and

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challenges. Finally, the assessor may also review the child's school records and records of previous educational and psychological testing. The measures that are selected for any assessment are determined by the specific questions that the psychologist wishes to answer about the person being tested. The tests most commonly used as a part of regional center assessments measure intelligence, adaptive behavior, social functioning and perceptual-motor skills.

All regional center assessments are conducted by licensed clinical psychologists.



HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD PREPARE FOR THE

ASSESSMENT? There are some very simple guidelines for helping your child prepare for his or her meeting with the psychologist who will be conducting the assessment.

- Make sure the child has a good night's sleep the night before the assessment.
- Make sure the child has a good breakfast. If your appointment is near lunch, you may want to bring a lunch or snack.
- Be sure your child has his corrective lenses, hearing aid, or other necessary adaptive device.
- Make sure the child takes his regular medications.
- Do not tell the child that he is going to see the “doctor.” For some children, a visit to the doctor is associated with anxiety. Tell the child that he will be involved in different kinds of games or activities with the psychologist.

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- Be sure to keep the appointment that is scheduled for you. If you must cancel, please do so at least 48 hours ahead of time so that we can try to schedule someone else in your time slot.
- If you confirm an appointment and then do not attend, we may be unable to schedule another appointment for you for a month or more.
- Of course, if your child is ill on the day of the appointment, you should call and reschedule the assessment for another day, because the assessment will not accurately reflect your child's strengths.



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WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT FROM THE ASSESSMENT?

- An assessment usually takes at least two hours. The time may vary depending on the child's motivation, his ability to concentrate, or his health.
- The psychologist spends some of that time with the child and some time with the parent or caregiver asking questions about the child. It is important, therefore, for the child to be accompanied to the assessment by one or more adults who know about his typical behaviors and skills.
- If the child tends to be restless, it is helpful to have an “extra” adult come along to the assessment to entertain him during the parent or caregiver interview.
- We recommend that you not bring other children with you to the assessment. If you do, it is wise to have another adult accompany you who can look after the needs of these children.

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- Sometimes additional meetings are needed to complete the assessment process.
- The psychologist will be unable to provide parents with specific feedback about the child's diagnosis or functioning level immediately after the assessment.



Additional time is needed to score the tests and to integrate these results with information from other sources such as the parent interview, school records, and observations. Your regional center Counselor will schedule a follow-up session to discuss the results in detail.

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WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE ASSESSMENT?

The psychologist will submit a written report on the assessment to the Counselor within three weeks following completion of all sessions of the assessment. A copy of the report will be made available to the parents when they meet to discuss the findings. Your Counselor will discuss the test results with you initially and will also schedule a family team meeting with a staff psychologist, and if appropriate, a staff physician. At the family team meeting the psychologist will review the assessment report, explain the findings and implications, and answer questions. During this meeting the parents may also discuss service options for their child.

For more information about the assessment or intake process, talk to your Harbor Regional Center Counselor.

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