

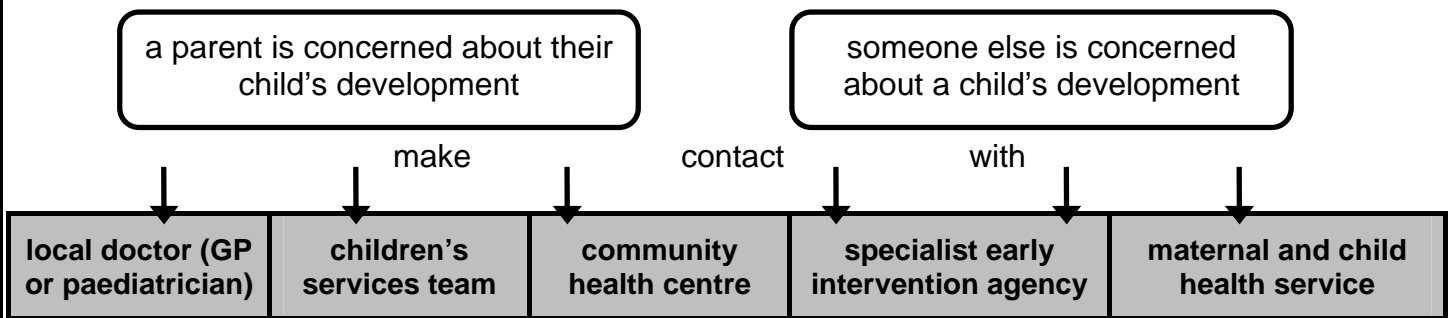
## Assessment Guidelines and Protocol for the identification of Autism Spectrum Disorders

The assessment and diagnosis of an Autism Spectrum Disorder must occur very carefully. The process should involve several professionals and will probably take a number of sessions. **Assessment** is the process of gathering information about the child and the family, including tests, interviews and observations. **Diagnosis** is when a name is given to describe the child's condition according to internationally agreed criteria.

The decision to arrange for an assessment is normally made by the family or by a designated case coordinator. Assessments can be

- made by a publicly funded autism assessment team
- made by a specialist autism service
- arranged privately by the family

### Pathways leading to an assessment



### RECOMMENDATION TO SEEK AN ASSESSMENT



**In consultation with parents/carers, an assessment should ideally include input from:**

paediatrician	psychologist	speech pathologist	child psychiatrist	audiologist	occupational therapist	educational adviser
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**and lead to a diagnosis and preparation of a management plan.**

Copies of this document are available from Autism Victoria - see details on the back page.

Name of Child:..... DATE OF BIRTH ...../...../.....

Name of Assessment Coordinator:..... AGENCY:.....

ADDRESS:.....PHONE:.....

Name Date Written Report Supplied?

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PAEDIATRIC MEDICAL CONSULTATION

by ..... on .....

COMMUNICATION ASSESSMENT

by ..... on .....

COGNITIVE ASSESSMENT

by ..... on .....

AUDIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

by ..... on .....

SENSORI INTEGRATIVE ASSESSMENT

by ..... on .....

PSYCHOSOCIAL ASSESSMENT

by ..... on .....

BEHAVIOURAL OBSERVATIONS

by ..... on .....

CHILD PSYCHIATRIC CONSULTATION

by ..... on .....

RATING SCALE

by ..... on .....

MULTIDISCIPLINARY CASE DISCUSSION

by ..... on .....

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DISCUSSION WITH PARENTS

by ..... on .....

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN/  
GENERAL SERVICE PLAN/  
INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM PLAN

by ..... on .....

**FAMILIES SHOULD BE PROVIDED WITH RELEVANT INFORMATION ABOUT:**

Carer Payment (form available direct from Centrelink)

Autism Spectrum Disorders

Autism Victoria

Family Support Services

Government Agencies

Educational Programs

Respite Care

Home Help Services

Other.....

# **Guidelines for Assessment Services for Children suspected of having an Autism Spectrum Disorder**

Whenever a child with developmental delays is suspected of having an Autism Spectrum Disorder it is essential that there is an adequate assessment. These Guidelines list the components that professionals in the field believe are essential (marked with an \*) or desirable for an adequate assessment. Although one practitioner may undertake several of these components, it is necessary for a multidisciplinary team to be convened to cover the whole range. If the service of first contact is not able to arrange the whole assessment it will be necessary for collaboration with other services to ensure that the whole range of items is covered.

Whether or not it ultimately confirms a diagnosis of an Autism Spectrum Disorder, an adequate assessment is still necessary for appropriate program planning. It is desirable for all involved in the assessment to be experienced with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Parents should be given a copy of this brochure to assist their understanding of the process and to encourage them to keep accurate records of professionals consulted and reports received. The following notes describe what should be covered in each component.

## **PAEDIATRIC MEDICAL ASSESSMENT\***

This component is necessary to ensure that possible underlying medical disorders are investigated. A thorough medical assessment forms the baseline for monitoring for conditions that may develop later in life.

## **COMMUNICATION ASSESSMENT\***

This component should be undertaken by a speech pathologist experienced in the assessment of children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

## **COGNITIVE ASSESSMENT\***

This psychological testing of abilities needs to be undertaken by a psychologist who is experienced with children with Autism Spectrum Disorders because of the frequently encountered difficulties in interpreting the behavioural responses. This assessment contributes valuable information for program development.

## **AUDIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT**

Again, because of the unusual auditory responses of “acting as though deaf” it is essential for this component to be undertaken by a person experienced with children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

## **SENSORI INTEGRATIVE ASSESSMENT**

This specialised assessment by an appropriately qualified occupational therapist is not essential to the diagnostic process and is not always readily available. However, it is regarded as highly desirable because it leads to valuable program advice for the child’s development.

## **PSYCHOSOCIAL ASSESSMENT\***

This should summarise the family and social history and the developmental history of the child. It is desirable that both parents participate in this process. A checklist can be used to assist parent recall, for example, the checklist compiled by Gillberg.

## **BEHAVIOURAL OBSERVATIONS\***

These should describe the characteristics of the child directly observed during the assessment, and should ideally be carried out in a variety of contexts, for example the classroom, playground and home.

## **CHILD PSYCHIATRIC CONSULTATION\***

This is a process of gathering together the assessment information and discussing the diagnostic conclusions to assist families in understanding the significance of the assessment and the impact of the diagnosis on the child and family. This process can be undertaken by a professional other than a child psychiatrist, however that person should be familiar with other disorders which produce autistic-like behaviours and the other emotional and behavioural disorders which occur in children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

## **RATING SCALE\***

The diagnostic conclusion is based upon clinical criteria, not upon rating scale scores. However, this item is useful because it objectively describes the child’s behavioural pattern at the time of assessment. This is quite valuable for comparison with later descriptions. Scales used can include the Childhood Autism Rating Scale (CARS), the Developmental Behaviour Checklist (DBC) or the Autism Behaviour Checklist (ABC). Another instrument of value here is the Psycho Educational Profile - Revised (PEP-R), used in the cognitive assessment.

## **MULTIDISCIPLINARY CASE CONFERENCE/DISCUSSION\***

The purpose of a multidisciplinary case discussion is to draw together all the information gained from the various components of the assessment to formulate a clear picture of the child’s needs, strengths and weaknesses and share that with the parents and providers of services so that informed choices can be made about future programs. If there are gaps in the availability of the components of the assessment, the local autism association should be notified.



## Assessment Services Directory - Victoria

The following are funded centres for the diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorders:

<b>Austin CAMHS – Developmental Assessment Program</b> Austin Health - HEIDELBERG <b>Phone (03) 9496 3620</b>	<b>RCH Mental Health Services Travancore – Autism Spectrum Assessment Team</b> 50 Flemington Street - FLEMINGTON <b>Phone (03) 9345 6011</b> (Western Suburbs to age 15)
<b>Alfred CAMHS – Developmental Assessment Service</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor - 999 Nepean Highway - MOORABBIN <b>Phone (03) 8552 0555</b>	<b>Monash Autism Program - MAP</b> Monash CAMHS Monash Medical Centre - CLAYTON <b>Phone (03) 9594 1300</b> (Coordinator)
<b>Developmental Disabilities Clinic - Paediatrics</b> Monash Medical Centre - CLAYTON <b>Phone (03) 9594 2399</b> (medical referral required)	<b>Gateways Support Services</b> 10-12 Albert Street - GEELONG WEST <b>Phone (03) 5221 2984</b> (for children under age six)
<b>Eastern CAMHS</b> <b>Phone (03) 9870 9788</b> (Intake Worker – for a list of local clinicians who do assessments for Autism Spectrum Disorders)	<b>North East CAMHS - Autism Spectrum Assessment Team (ASAT)</b> <b>Phone (03) 5722 4837</b> (Wangaratta) <b>Phone (02) 6024 7711</b> (Wodonga)
<b>Northern Mallee - CAMHS - Autism Spectrum Support &amp; Evaluation Team (ASSET)</b> 107 Pine Avenue - MILDURA <b>Phone (03) 5018 7900</b>	<b>Gippsland Autism &amp; Related Disorders Assessment Service</b> LRH Mental Health Services - TRARALGON <b>Phone (03) 5171 1255</b> (Triage)
<b>Barwon Children’s Health Service</b> 1 Reynolds Road - BELMONT <b>Phone (03) 5226 7075</b> (school age children)	<b>Bendigo CAMHS – Autism Assessment Team</b> <b>Phone (03) 5440 6500</b>
<b>Warrnambool CAMHS</b> <b>(03) 5561 9100</b>	
<b>Grampians Region Autism Assessment &amp; Diagnostic Team</b> Ballarat CAMHS <b>Phone (03) 5320 4100</b>	<b>Goulburn Valley CAMHS – GV Autism Spectrum Assessment Team (ASAT)</b> (operating in Seymour and Shepparton) <b>Phone (03) 5799 0943</b>

### Private Assessments:

Contact AUTISM VICTORIA for details of some private practitioners and teams who conduct autism assessments on a fee-paying basis. For adults seeking an assessment this is usually the only option.

### Other avenues for advice and general assistance:

#### Department of Human Services

Team Leader, Specialist Children’s Services - for children under age six.  
 Disability Services Intake Officer - for people over six years of age.  
 See the White Pages for Office in your region.

#### Department of Education

Contact your local School Principal or Regional Guidance Officer for details of educational support available.

#### Catholic Education System

Contact local school Principal or the Catholic Education Office on (03) 9267 0228

#### AUTISM VICTORIA

PO BOX 235 ASHBURTON VIC 3147

35 High Street GLEN IRIS VIC 3146

PHONE: (03) 9885 0533

Email: [admin@autismvictoria.org.au](mailto:admin@autismvictoria.org.au)