

Diagnosis and assessment of a disability

People with intellectual disability should be involved in all decisions about their health and wellbeing.

Some people can make decisions alone and some people will need support. It is critical that supporters know the person's will and preferences to make sure the right support is provided and the right decision is made.

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.

Diagnosis and assessment services in NSW Health also assist with complex health needs of some children and young people.

When can diagnosis and assessment help?

Diagnosis and assessment usually occurs in early childhood, but can also be useful in adolescence or adulthood. Diagnosis and assessment is particularly important for a person with complex or challenging needs. By learning more about a condition or symptom a person has, we can better help them live their healthiest and best life.

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 their child undergo regular health checks, from birth to age 4, done by a nurse or doctor. This is explained in My personal 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 areas that may suggest an intellectual disability.

Seeing your GP is a good first point of contact. They are likely to know what other services are available in your area. Your GP can 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 can 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 intellectual disability.

However, it is often 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 such as paediatricians, psychologists, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, nurses and social workers.

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 receive and work with other services, for example NDIS, 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, for example 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 who they see and what they can offer.

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

Other intellectual disability health services for children

Apart from diagnosis and assessment services, there are various other specialised intellectual disability health services in NSW for children and young people. See the **Specialised intellectual disability health services** fact sheet.

For more information

My personal health record www.health.nsw.gov.au

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 **2019**.

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 and Family Health Developmental Assessment Team	Gosford & Wyong area	4328 7900	0-12
Child Development Service nslhd-cds@health.nsw.gov.au	Northern Sydney, Hornsby, Northern Beaches, Ryde, Pennant Hills	9462 9288	0-6
Kogarah Developmental Assessment Service Includes Illawarra Shoalhaven Diagnostic Service (ISDAS)	St George & Sutherland area	8566 1222	All ages
Tumbatin Clinic, Randwick www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/find-a-service/health-medical-services/autism-spectrum-disorder/sch	South and East Sydney LHD and rural remote where no services available	9382 8189 9382 8191	0-5

Name of D&A Service	Area covered	Phone (02)	Age
Disability Specialist Unit, Croydon Community Health Centre Intake@health.nsw.gov.au	Ashfield, Burwood, Canada Bay, Canterbury, Leichhardt, Marrickville & Strathfield Council areas	9378 1100	0-16
Child Assessment Team, Macarthur (now part of Liverpool LHD) Central Intake: www.swslhd.health.nsw.gov.au	Campbelltown, Camden, Wollondilly area	4634 3553	0-12
Rainbow Cottage (Liverpool Hospital)	Liverpool and surrounding areas	9616 4405	0-18
Developmental Assessment Clinic, Nepean Hospital	Penrith, Hawkesbury, Blue Mountains	4734 3166	2-16
Parramatta Early Childhood Assessment Team (PECAT), Parramatta www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/ find-a-service/health-medical- services/developmental-delay- and-intellectual-disability/chw	Auburn, Baulkham Hills, Castle Hill, Holroyd, Parramatta, Blacktown, Penrith, Hawkesbury & Blue Mountains areas	9891 7200	0-6
Blue Mountains Child & Adolescent Development Unit www.nbmlhd.health.nsw.gov. au	Blue Mountains, Penrith, Lithgow	4784 6671	0-18

Name of D&A Service	Area covered	Phone (02)	Age
Auburn Child Development Assessment Team (Children's ward)	Auburn, Berala, Chester Hill, Regents Park, Lidcombe	8759 3225	0-5+
Child, Infant and Family Tertiary Service (CIFTS), Goulburn	Goulburn, Queanbeyan, Cooma, Yass, Southern NSW LHD	4827 3950	0-18
Bathurst Child Development Clinic	Bathurst, Mudgee, Cowra	6330 5363	0-18
Child and Family Health Team, Wallsend www.hnekidshealth.nsw.gov.au	Newcastle, Hunter, Lake Macquarie	4924 6400 4924 6190	2-12
Royal Far West, Centre for Country Kids, Manly www.royalfarwest.org.au	Rural and remote, must be 100km outside of Sydney	8966 8500	0-12
Child Development Unit, Westmead www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/find-a-service/health-medical-services/developmental-delay-and-intellectual-disability/chw	Statewide	9845 2395	0-16
NSW Centre for Effective Reading www.cer.education.nsw.gov.au	Dubbo, Manly, Wagga Wagga, Westmead	9687 0377	5-12
Illawarra Child Development Centre	Wollongong, Illawarra Area	4224 2900	2-12