

Our Guide for Parents



What is a child psychiatric evaluation?

It is a mental health evaluation done by a specialized mental health Nurse Practitioner at Dig a Little Deeper, Psychotherapy & Counselling (DALD) to gather information about your child's symptoms to determine if your child has a psychiatric illness such as depression, anxiety, OCD or ADHD.

What should we expect?

Prior to your appointment, we may ask you to provide copies of any previous psychological assessment, psychiatric assessments, school report cards. We will also ask you to complete some questionnaires. All the above information will help us in determining if your child has a psychiatric illness.

Regarding **consent** and **age of consent**, there is no minimum age for health care consent in Ontario.

- Clients under 18 years of age can, if they are capable of understanding and appreciating the consequences of their decision, give consent for their own health care.
- For minors under the age of 16, consent is considered on a case by-case basis in light of the young person's capacity and applicable laws.
- Parents with court ordered Parenting Plans **must** provide their chosen clinician with a copy of the most current legal agreement and/or court order regarding responsibility for medical decision making ***before commencing assessment***.

During your child's appointment *parents* can expect the following:

- The psychiatric evaluation with the NP is usually 90-120 minutes because there is a lot of information to cover.
- It is important for the NP to understand the current behavioral issues your child is experiencing and how they developed. The NP cannot fully understand the concerning behaviours without putting it in context of you and your child's history and current environment. Psychiatric illnesses are caused by biological, psychological, and social factors. We must understand each of these factors and how they contributed to the development of the illness. Therefore you will be asked to fill out assessments online, as well as collect information (like report cards and forms filled out by your child's teachers) to submit ***ahead of your child's appointment***.
- The NP will start the interview with you and your child. During the interview with you and your child, the NP will ask what prompted you to come in to get help? The NP will ask when you started to have concerns and how they the concerns developed over time. The NP will begin to ask parents whether they have noticed any symptoms of depression, anxiety, ADHD and other common psychiatric conditions. The NP will also ask you about their mother's pregnancy whether there were any complications, the child's medical history, developmental history (i.e., did they walk and talk at the normal times), family history (i.e., any family members with a psychiatric illness or medical condition), educational history and social history. Once this

information is collected and discussed, the parents are excused to the waiting room and the NP will meet with the child on their own.

What to expect from the meeting *between the NP and your child*:

- The NP will spend time getting to know your child by asking general questions about their home life, school, sports/interests/hobbies, friends, their likes and dislikes, their strengths and struggles. During this time, the NP will also do a complete screening for symptoms of all major psychiatric illnesses (i.e., depression, anxiety, psychotic disorders, eating disorders, substance use disorders, ADHD and others as indicated by the initial concerns expressed by the parents).
- The **amount of time** spent with the child alone will depend on the age of the child and the main complaint. For younger patients, more time is spent with the parent and child together and less time with the child alone.
- **With teenagers**, the NP usually spends more time with the adolescent on their own. Some parents want to do much of the interview without their child present, but we try to discourage this, as the child and adolescent needs to know the NP is on their side and it is the NP job to help them feel better. The child needs to know that the NP will keep their information confidential provided that the NP has no concerns about the child's safety.
- Once the interview with the child is completed, the parents are asked to rejoin their child for discussion of the diagnosis and treatment planning. Various options for treatment will be discussed. Risks and benefits of each option will be reviewed. We will spend some time letting both parents and child ask questions.

Once a treatment plan chosen by the child and parents, the details for initiation of treatment and follow-up are discussed.