

Elizabeth MacKenzie, Ph.D.
Licensed Psychologist
4746 44th Ave SW, Suite 202
Seattle, WA 98116
Phone: (206)486-3976
emackenzie@west-seattle-psych.com

Information about Testing for Children and Adolescents (2024)

I provide comprehensive testing services for learning disability and/or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD, sometimes referred to as ADD, especially in reference to the inattentive presentation of ADHD). I also assess co-occurring emotional and behavioral conditions that impact school and home settings such as anxiety, depression, and adjustment disorders.

My Background. I have a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I completed psychoeducational, behavioral, and personality testing with children, teens, and adults across clinic, school, and psychiatric hospital settings. I completed my pre-doctoral internship at the University of Florida Health Science Center, which was also an assessment heavy program. I conducted psychoeducational, behavioral, personality, and neuropsychological assessments at the psychology clinic and at Shands Hospital.

Since I have a Ph.D., I also have extensive research training. I have also worked as a researcher in academic settings, on clinical trials (evaluations of treatment programs), most recently, at the University of Washington. I have publications in peer-reviewed journals and presented at scientific conferences though I am no longer an active researcher, spending full-time in private practice. I have had a private practice since 2003 where I specialize in the assessment of learning, behavior, and ADHD as well as in the treatment of behavior problems in young children. Since I am a child clinical psychologist, my work is also informed by my training and expertise in other mental health issues, for example, anxiety and depression.

My Approach. I am conscientious, experienced, and thorough. I try to provide practical and effective recommendations based on testing data and evidence-based practices. I often help parents navigate educational and healthcare systems and to prioritize treatment and educational recommendations. I take care to write my reports in a compelling manner to make a strong case for your child's needs and to include only recommendations that I judge to be important for your child.

Fees for 2024: I charge \$250/hour for testing. I conduct comprehensive testing because the reports are the most useful and they meet the documentation requirements of districts, college entrance tests (ex., SAT, ACT), and of universities. In recognition of the quality of my services, I am endorsed by the Learning Disabilities Association of Washington.

I am out-of-network with all insurance plans. I collect ½ of my full fee at the intake session and the remaining ½ at the feedback session. I accept cash, check, and credit card (VISA, MC) as payment. I do accept flexible spending or HSA cards but please make sure that there are adequate funds in the account.

1. Comprehensive assessments: Comprehensive assessments are \$3500.

Assessments take me a minimum of 14 hours including the time I spend with you and your child, scoring, record review, and report-writing. If I do a school observation, the total is \$3750. This includes:

- (1) A background interview with parents and adolescent-aged children.
- (2) Individually administered intellectual assessment (Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Fifth Edition or Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Fourth Edition, depending on student age).
- (3) Individual achievement assessment (Wechsler Individual Achievement Test-4th Edition).
- (4) Administration of self-, parent-, and/or teacher-report standardized questionnaires, if ADHD/ADD is suspected (Examples: Conners' 4 Rating Scale; Behavior Inventory of Executive Functions-2nd Edition). When I administer these questionnaires, I don't charge extra for the time I spend scoring and interpreting these measures.
- (5) Administration of self-, parent-, and/or teacher-report standardized questionnaires, if other emotional issues are suspected.
- (6) 6-9 hours of test scoring, record review, interpretation, and report writing).
- (7) A 1 to 1 ½ hour long interpretive feedback session with parents (Children are included as appropriate.)
- (8) An approximately 6-11 page-long report, which includes recommendations as well as background information and test results.

Sometimes I attend school meetings, at your request. The cost for that is \$250/hour and I prorate in 15-minute increments.

The reports themselves include background information and test results as well as detailed and practical recommendations. For students who may be eligible for PSAT, SAT, ACT testing accommodations, I write the report so that it meets the testing agencies' documentation requirements for testing accommodations. These agencies are strict so it is very important that students not be denied accommodations for which they may have otherwise qualified because I did not document properly.

Note: I charge based on the **minimum** amount of time that is required for me to do a comprehensive assessment. I don't charge additional fees if I add more questionnaires, an additional test, review extensive background materials, make phone calls to other care providers/teachers, etc. Further, some children and teens take longer to complete testing. I don't charge you extra for that. I do, however, charge any additional services after the feedback meeting, for example, attending a school meeting.

- 2. Briefer ADHD/Behavioral Assessments:** Sometimes I perform briefer assessments solely focused on ADHD and behavioral functioning. When I do it is for young children who show **no** signs of co-occurring learning issues. These assessments cost \$1750 and include the following:
1. Background interview.
 2. Child interview and/or parent/child play interaction.
 3. Four hours of scoring, record review, interpretation, and report-writing.
 4. A one-hour long interpretative parent feedback session.
 5. An approximately 4-5 page-long report, which includes recommendations as well as background information and test results.

I sometimes include school observations. Sometimes I attend school meetings, at your request. The cost for these services is \$250/hour and I prorate in 15-minute increments.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is masking required in your office?

Yes. Although the federal emergency is no longer in effect, Covid-19 is still a potentially serious and highly contagious disease. I conduct evaluations in-person and feedback via Zoom. If I am doing a briefer ADHD specific evaluation, it is all done via Zoom. For in-person work, I have developed a set of safety procedures, including masking, a true HEPA filter, and increased ventilation. I have taken every vaccination series and booster that has been offered as soon as it is available.

Although most people do not wear a mask in public anymore, it is important for me to keep my services as accessible as possible given the shortage of psychologists who do this kind of work. If I get sick and must cancel the appointment that you waited six months for, there is no one who can cover for me, and you will have to wait even longer until after I recover and am able to catch up on my caseload.

I also work to keep my office accessible for people who are health compromised or live or work with others who are health compromised. Most people do not know that having ADHD is a significant risk factor for severe Covid-19 so I see a lot of people who are vulnerable and don't realize it. If you would like more information, you can find it here on the CDC website under "Disabilities": https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/clinical-care/underlyingconditions.html#anchor_1618433687270

Why does testing cost so much?

Since starting my practice in 2003, I have raised my hourly rate six times, which on average, is only every 3.5 years to keep up with rising business costs. Further, testing takes a lot of time, a minimum of 14 hours for a comprehensive assessment. Scoring, record review, consultation with educators and healthcare providers, interpretation, and report-writing take a lot of time and it is work done "behind the scenes."

Why do I have to fill out so much paperwork and crawl in my attic to get old progress reports and report cards?

Learning disorders and ADHD are neurodevelopmental disorders. As such, it is important that I understand a child's development and how they have functioned in different environments, the main ones being at school and at home. Further, family history is important as there is often a genetic component for learning and attention difficulties. Finally, I need to get information about other conditions that may be responsible for the difficulties your child is experiencing.

Although it is hard to locate all your child's progress reports/report cards and standardized testing results, bringing copies of these materials is very important in getting the most out of the testing process.

Who does this kind of testing?

The only professionals who can do learning disability testing that includes an intelligence test (state, college, and testing organizations require the inclusion of an intelligence test in a learning disability and evaluation) are clinical, educational, school, or neuropsychologists with specialized training and experience. A psychologist must have a Ph.D. and a license to practice psychology in your state. One exception is in K12 schools, in which individuals with master's degrees in school psychology and special certification provide these services. However, school psychologists cannot assess ADHD, anxiety, or other health conditions.

Other professionals such as physicians (MD's or DO's) and psychiatric nurse practitioners (ARNP's) assess ADHD. However, they use somewhat different assessment methods, and it is rare that these assessments include recommendations regarding the need for specialized instruction or accommodations for school. Similarly, if part of the purpose of the assessment is to help document eligibility for accommodations for standardized testing such as the SAT or P/SAT, intelligence and achievement testing must be completed. Medical providers aren't trained in this type of testing. Moreover, it is important to know that approximately 2/3 of individuals with ADHD have a co-occurring psychological/educational disorder.

Other professionals such as educators and speech/language pathologists may offer evaluations of dyslexia, language-based disabilities, or learning disabilities. These reports may be very helpful in better understanding a student's learning and planning interventions. However, they cannot be used as documentation for eligibility for services in schools, universities, or college entrance testing agencies.

Only specially trained and credentialed clinical, educational, school and neuropsychologists (a subspecialty of clinical psychology) can administer and interpret the results of intelligence tests. Because of this, the companies that sell intelligence tests can only legally sell them to professionals with the proper training, licensure, and credentials. There are other cognitive measures that can be administered by other professionals, for example the COGAT, but these are group-administered screening instruments, which are less precise than actual intelligence tests.

Will insurance cover testing?

Many insurance plans cover at least a portion of the testing fees and some cover it well. Other insurance plans cover it, but you may have to pay a deductible.

I highly recommend that you call insurance to get an estimate of your coverage.

Questions to ask include the following:

1. Do I have out-of-network coverage?
2. Do I have coverage for psychological testing (CPT codes 96130/96131, 96136/96137*).
3. If yes, what is the coverage?
4. Are there limits on the number of visits or hours of testing?
5. Are there any diagnostic exclusions? For example, is testing for educational purposes excluded?
6. If your insurance company asks for a diagnostic code, the most common suspected diagnoses that I submit are F90.x (ADHD) and F81.x (Specific Learning Disorder).

Can schools perform combined learning disability and ADHD assessment? No, this is because ADHD is considered a health condition that may or may not impact academic functioning, rather than as an educational classification. Consequently, schools can neither (1) assess ADHD, (2) provide integrated assessment and recommendations for students who have both learning disability and ADHD, or (3) perform differential diagnostic assessment to determine whether ADHD, learning disability, or some other another issue is causing a student's learning problem.

Further, schools are not able to assess other mental health conditions, for example, anxiety, depression, or neurodevelopmental disorders that may significantly impact functioning at school. Moreover, schools cannot do differential diagnosis because that is not the responsibility of the educational system.

If psychotherapy is recommended, will you provide it?

My psychotherapy specialty is behavioral parent training for parents and young kids with challenging behavior problems. Although I provide psychotherapy follow-up when my schedule allows, with the increase in testing demands during the pandemic, I have not been able to offer treatment services for a few years.

Is there a smaller number of tests that can be given?

Parents understandably ask this question because testing is expensive. Unfortunately, there is no quick or cheap way to properly diagnose a learning disability or ADHD and make meaningful recommendations about how to best address it. If there were, I would do it! And practically speaking, a shorter battery of tests will also not satisfy legal requirements to determine eligibility for special education services at schools or accommodations for standardized tests. Psycho-educational testing is unique in that it provides information that other sources cannot provide.

What information is obtained from testing?

The amount of information obtained from testing varies somewhat depending on the amount of available background information as well as the strength of the patterns that emerge from all the data (background information, my observations during testing, and the results of the tests).

At a minimum, testing answers the following questions:

1. Does my child meet criteria for a diagnosis/es?
2. Is the diagnosed condition judged to be a disability?
3. What is the area of disability?
4. Does my child appear to meet eligibility criteria for special education services and/or an accommodations/modification plan?
(I used the phrase, “appear to meet” because the evaluation is used as one criterion, albeit a very large one, in the eligibility determination process by the district, university, or testing organization, such as the College Board for the SAT).
5. How are any diagnosed conditions impacting my child’s academic functioning?
6. What are some factors that appear to be contributing to the difficulties?
7. What are some of my child’s strengths and weaknesses?
8. What are some things we can do to help?

If the assessment also includes evaluation of ADHD, at the minimum the evaluation will answer these additional questions:

1. Does my child meet criteria for a diagnosis of ADHD?
2. If not, can symptoms be explained by another condition?
3. Is there evidence of co-occurring conditions, for example, depression, anxiety, or another neurodevelopmental disorder?
4. What domains of functioning are most negatively impacted?
5. Are there associated areas of difficulties such as social skills difficulties, behavior problems, anxiety, difficulty managing negative emotions, or slower processing speed?
6. What specific goals are the most appropriate focus of treatment?

What should I tell my child about testing?

For parents of young children, you might explain to your child that they are going to see a special doctor called a psychologist. She is a talking doctor, and her office is like a little living room. Her job is to do activities with children to find out about their learning so that they can do their best in school. Some of the things will be kind of like school but other things will be different. Their job is to try hard and do their best. It is best to avoid telling children that they will play games.

For parents of older kids and teens, you can explain that they are going to see a psychologist for testing for learning so that they can do their best in school. There are no bubbles to fill in (lots of kids are tired of filling in little circles) and they will be working

one on one with me throughout the tests. It can be helpful to acknowledge that you see that they have been working hard but still struggling. (Kids with learning problems are some of the hardest-working students though they often get the message that they are not trying hard enough.) Tell them that their job is to try hard to do their best. It is best not to tell kids that the tests “have no right or wrong answers” as a way of reassuring them. The tests do have right and wrong answers; kids figure that out quickly. An alternative form of reassurance is to let them know that it is important for me to know what is easy for them and what is hard.

What about labeling a child with a diagnosis? Isn't that harmful?

Labels can and have been misused. There's no denying that. Labels can be harmful when they are used to define the entirety of a person rather than used to provide useful information to help guide educational efforts. It can help you, your child, teachers, and do a better job supporting academic success.

Avoiding a diagnostic label can also cause problems. Students eventually notice that they have a problem. So do teachers and parents. These individuals will try to come up with a way to describe the problem. Teachers may label your child, “lazy,” for example. Your child may label him or herself, “stupid.”