

Cheat Sheet for Neuropsychological Evaluation

A **neuropsychological evaluation** is a term used to describe a series of tests that measure a student's cognitive skills and overall brain functioning. They include formal evaluation of skills such as intelligence, visual perception, language, memory, learning, attention, executive functioning, and social pragmatics. Neuropsychological evaluations are tools designed to identify neurocognitive strengths and weaknesses for an individual. These evaluations should be completed by a specially trained psychologist; Acera maintains a list of specialists we have collaborated with effectively in the past, including psychologists who excel at working with and accurately assessing our gifted students.

Why should I get a neuropsychological evaluation for my child?

The concise response is to gain a deeper understanding of the remarkable capabilities of your child's brain, including their personal strengths and growth opportunities.

Other motivations may encompass the core objective of a neuropsychological assessment, which is to discern how an individual's brain operates in relation to their mental and behavioral capacities. This evaluation offers a thorough insight into an individual's optimal learning processes while highlighting potential obstacles to effective learning. Having a current evaluation can help set the student up for success by qualifying for additional services and/or accommodations from their home district through an IEP or 504 plan.

What is the evaluation process like?

1. Contact the provider and let them know you'd like to schedule an evaluation;
 - a. Many practices book out 3-6 months for the initial evaluation
 - b. Testing will typically be 2 or 3 sessions in close proximity to one another
2. Prior to your first session, you will likely receive some checklists, questionnaires, etc to fill out and return - some may also need to be given to teachers, specialists to fill out.
3. Your child will participate in the testing battery; the assessments given may shift contingent upon how your child does during the testing or how they respond to particular components of assessment tools.
4. The psychologist will spend time generating a written report and offer a meeting with you (and sometimes a second meeting with your child present) to discuss the findings and recommendations. This report will be yours to distribute as you like to those that work with your child.

What does the written report include?

Each psychologist may follow a slightly different format for their reports, but the general framework includes:

- Background information about your child
- The reason for the evaluation (what are you hoping to learn?)
- The assessment tools used (and results for each of them)
- Conclusions that may be drawn from these assessments, including any relevant diagnoses
- Recommendations that may help increase your child's engagement and success in academic, familial, and social pursuits

Why does Acera want me to get one done?

Many of the students at Acera have had a neuropsychological evaluation done at some point in their lives. Some families have had one evaluation done and use that singular evaluation to help guide supports and accommodations for their child, while other families opt to have the evaluation redone every 3 years (the

“industry” recommendation). Educators may guide parents towards pursuing an evaluation when their child is presenting with some degree of challenge within the classroom, when their child is articulating frustration or anxiety about their educational experience, or when their child is demonstrating difficulties with social dynamics in a way that may indicate a gap in skills.

If you decide to pursue a neuropsych eval for your child, it is your decision who gets access to the results once the evaluation is complete and the report is written. It is generally in your child’s best interest to share the report with their school, as it both outlines what your child’s individual needs are and provides recommendations on how to best support those needs.

I’m worried...

Is my child going to be asked to leave or “flagged”?

Students are not counseled out of Acera contingent upon results of any evaluations that are conducted, including neuropsych evals. Neither will your student be “flagged” as anything other than a student with potential individualized needs, which we will partner with you to ensure that we are collectively providing. Students that are part of our Student Support Program and have an SSP framework as part of their enrollment do so independent of the presence of a neuropsych eval as part of their record.

If an evaluation finds that my student’s IQ is lower than it was at the time of their admission, will my child be asked to leave?

No. There are a variety of factors that impact the results of an individual IQ test, and any new results of an IQ test will be taken into consideration alongside the results offered at admission. In actuality, areas that are of most value to know more about here at Acera are any significant gaps between domains, such as two or more standard deviations between Processing Speed and Working Memory, for example. A gap such as this may indicate lagging skills or asynchrony that is affecting the student’s academic experience in a way that we are able to address with the recommendations and insights that the neuropsych eval offers.

The evaluation is so expensive; what are my options for cheaper/free quality assessments?

You have a number of options to explore when scheduling a neuropsych eval for your child:

Free - The school district you reside within may be able to provide your child with a neuropsych eval, if they have a psychologist on staff that is adept at working with and assessing gifted children. It is worth asking your special education administrator for more information.

Partially covered by insurance - Depending on your insurance plan, a neuropsych evaluation can be administered by a psychologist within your network. It is worth calling your insurance provider for a list of psychologists that may be available.

Private pay - You select whichever psychologist you prefer and ask them to conduct the evaluation, and you pay the entire cost out-of-pocket, typically at the time that the testing occurs. This is the most expensive avenue but the one that allows the greatest flexibility.