Department of Education
Learners first, connected and inspired

Tasmanian Autism Diagnostic Service
formally known as TASDAS
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We are a community service providing comprehensive diagnostic assessments for children and young people suspected of having an autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

We work with public and private diagnostic services, including paediatricians, psychiatrists and psychologists when a decision has been reached that a comprehensive and specialised autism spectrum assessment is appropriate.

Our team is staffed with three psychology positions supported by an executive officer.

1. **Who do we see?**

   The assessment service is provided for people across Tasmania under 18 years of age.

   Although the service is based in Hobart, the team travels around the state conducting regular assessment clinics in various locations.

2. **Who can refer a child?**

   Referrals are accepted from a paediatrician, child/adolescent psychiatrist or psychologist.

3. **What information is required prior to assessment?**

   - Referral from a paediatrician, child/adolescent psychiatrist or psychologist
   - Completion of the parent questionnaire including signed consent to undertake the autism assessment
   - A paediatrician’s letter outlining social or behavioural concerns, including the results of any relevant medical or genetic tests if available
   - Completion of a teacher/day carer’s questionnaire
   - Copy of the most recent, if available:
     - cognitive, developmental or adaptive assessment
     - recent speech pathology assessment
     - and other relevant reports occupational therapy assessment for example
4. What does the service offer?

The assessment process focuses on answering one central question only: “Does the child have an autism spectrum disorder?” The assessment does not provide a more general picture of the child’s development.

The assessment provides a detailed picture of the child’s diagnostic profile. We then provide a report including treatment and programming suggestions and recommendations for referral to appropriate agencies and service providers where required.

5. Referral forms

- Referral Form
- Parent/Guardian/Carer Form
- Teacher or Service Provider Questionnaire

6. What happens during the assessment?

We usually see the child or young person for a play based or social assessment. The team uses the Autism Diagnostic Assessment Schedule (ADOS) and it generally lasts about 45 minutes to an hour. Children who are non-verbal or have limited language are accompanied by their parents or guardians. Children or young people with fluent language attend the assessment by themselves. During the play based or social assessment, the clinician will work with the child or young person in a range of various activities and games. They will also have the opportunity to have a chat with the child. Those with fluent language will be asked about their social relationships.

After the play based or social assessment, the clinician will conduct an in depth parent interview – it seeks to establish whether there is evidence of an autism spectrum disorder. The interview usually lasts about 2 – 2 ½ hours. Given both the nature of the questions and the length of the interview, it is strongly recommended the child or young person is not present during this part of the assessment.

The interview will establish parental concerns. It also determines various developmental milestones such as when the child learned to walk and talk. The majority of the interview concentrates on the social difficulties the child or young person is experiencing with their families, their peers and others.

There will be many questions asking the parent to think specifically about when their child was 4-5 years old. It may be helpful to look at photograph’s of when your child was at this stage, particularly when they were interacting with family and friends. The photographs are not required at the interview.

After the parent interview, the clinician may provide you with immediate feedback on the outcome of the diagnostic process or they may contact other people who know the child or young person now or when they were younger. On occasion, they may conduct an observation at school or day care.

A feedback consultation is provided to the parents on the outcome of the diagnostic assessment and intervention and treatment suggestions are discussed. The feedback session usually lasts about an hour. At the feedback session, parents are asked to sign a consent form for diagnostic reports to be distributed according to their wishes.
7. What happens after the assessment?

Once the parents have been provided with feedback, a comprehensive report of the assessment is provided to the parents/guardian, referrer, paediatrician and other relevant services according to parent/guardian consent.

8. How much does it cost?

There is no charge for this service.

This service is a joint initiative between the Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Education.

9. Any Questions? Contact Us

Please feel free to contact us at:

Telephone: (03) 6230 7629
Fax: (03) 6230 7547
Postal Address:
GPO Box 125, Hobart 7001, Tasmania
Email: autismassessment@dhhs.tas.gov.au

10. Related Documents

The following documents are available from www.education.tas.gov.au (Search for the Doc ID)

- Autism Specific Programs (Doc ID: TASED-4-1383)
- TADS Referral Form (Doc ID: TASED-4-1385)
- TADS Parent Letter and Forms (Doc ID: TASED-4-1384)
- TADS Teacher or Service Provider Questionnaire (Doc ID: TASED-4-1386)
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Please refer to the online copy of this document (TASED-4-1387), located on the Tasmanian Department of Education's website to ensure this version is the most recent (Version 2.0).