

## AUTISM ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

### ABOUT ABILITY ASSESSMENT SERVICES

Ability offers a suite of assessment batteries to clarify an individual's capacity, abilities and/or diagnoses as required to meet referral goals. We provide assessments across the lifespan, from early childhood through to adult populations. Ability offers services both clinic and by outreach as a mobile service, offering at home or at school assessment services (where suitable). Some parts of an assessment may be suitable for telehealth (i.e., video consultation), whilst not all assessments can be done via telehealth. We will discuss your options and personal preferences with you upon booking. To enquire about an assessment, please request an intake call by emailing: [assessmentteam@abilitypsychologyservices.com](mailto:assessmentteam@abilitypsychologyservices.com).

### AUTISM ASSESSMENTS

Ability provides comprehensive Autism (ASD) assessments, used to assess and diagnose children, adolescents and adults in need of additional support. These assessments are vital in the identification of ASD and provide opportunity for an individual to better understand themselves or their child, and if indicated, to access additional support through pathways such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), the NCCD (school-based support), and other relevant pathways.

### QUALIFIED TO DIAGNOSE & COLLABORATIVE

Unlike some allied health professions, Psychologists are qualified to both conduct the assessment process and make a diagnosis where an individual meets the specified criteria. Assessments conducted at Ability are approached in a collaborative manner. Assessments are overseen by our Clinical Governance and Quality Assurance team (Clinical Psychologist) and we also welcome and encourage the opportunity for consultation with a client's existing medical practitioners, health professionals and any other significant parties (e.g., parents and caregivers, current or former teachers, spouses), where indicated and available. We appreciate that other, reliable informants can offer valuable insight into an individual's experience and history. Of course, the assessment process and any involved parties will be discussed with you in advance with consideration of your personal circumstances.

### ASSESSMENT OUTCOMES

Diagnostic assessment commonly has two primary goals. The first, to better understand the nature and origin of the concerns that led to referral for assessment. That is, to better understand the individual. The second, to clarify a diagnostic presentation. This often arises when a person has identified emerging traits or other relevant queries of a specific condition, such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD; Autism). Through participating in the assessment process, there is the opportunity to learn more about the individual being assessed and where appropriate, we can provide recommendations to different resources and/or support that may be beneficial to the individual or their family. In the event further testing or support may be required (e.g., for other clinical concerns), we endeavour to provide information on what may be required and pathways through which this can be accessed.

### A TWO-PART APPROACH TO ASSESSMENT

To this effect, the Autism Assessment battery is approached in a two-part manner. The first part aims to gain a better understanding of the individual through clinical interviews and the administration of relevant screener measures to explore the referral question - i.e., the characteristics of ASD. This provides the psychologist with an opportunity to give brief feedback after Part 1 with regards to whether further testing is clinically indicated. This approach ensures that the testing administered in Part 2 is both reasonable (i.e., there are sufficient clinical indicators to evaluate the individual's presentation further), and cost-effective (i.e., by mitigating expenditure on unnecessary testing). This also allows for additional assessments to be discussed and/or recommended, where indicated by the results of Part 1 (e.g., if there other cognitive, learning, attention, developmental or behavioural queries are identified). We adopt this approach as it is client-led and allows for the client to be informed, to ask questions and to be involved in decision making throughout the assessment process.

## OVERVIEW OF THE ASSESSMENT

Our intake process allows for a phone-based consultation with a member of our team that briefly explores your individual circumstances and assessment needs. This allows us to better understand whether we are the best service provider for you and to provide you with an idea of what the assessment process would entail. The following provides an overview of a typical Autism Assessment Battery, whilst this can vary somewhat depending on an individual's age, history and circumstances.

Our holistic and collaborative assessments ensure a tailored & individualised approach. We focus on each individual's strengths, while acknowledging their support needs in a way that is neurodiversity-affirming. The term 'Autism Spectrum Disorder' is only used when required, such as in relation to DSM-5-TR diagnostic criteria or access within a medical model.

### **Assessment for Children, Adolescents & Adults**

Packages can be designed for children, adolescents, and adults who require a comprehensive assessment to explore an ASD diagnosis under Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition, text-revision (DSM-5-TR, 2022). Diagnostic guidelines require a Psychologist, Psychiatrist or Paediatrician to formalise a diagnosis. Accordingly, our team of psychologists can offer formal diagnosis when the criteria is assessed to have been met. This helps to reduce further investments of time and financial commitment for verification purposes, which is required when an assessment is conducted by a health professional who is not qualified to diagnose. Individuals may also use this package to review an existing diagnosis (e.g., to re-evaluate level). Whilst individual assessment batteries may vary, the usual **cost of this assessment is \$3000** (excl. GST and travel, if applicable). The assessment typically includes:

#### *Part 1:*

- Biopsychosocial Interview and Autism Diagnostic Interview (ADI-R or similar);
- Administration of the Social Responsiveness Scales (SRS-2; parent & teacher forms) and other applicable screener measures (e.g., Sensory Profile).

The cost of this initial screening in Part 1 is from \$900 (excl. travel and GST, if applicable). If the progression to further assessment is not clinically indicated after concluding Part 1, the assessment process may conclude here. In these circumstances, a letter can be provided to briefly summarise engagement and outcomes, upon request. Where indicated, an individual will progress to Part 2. Finally, if Part 1 suggests that additional assessment is required (e.g., for attention-deficit, learning or cognitive concerns), a revised quote for any additional add-on assessments can be provided accordingly.

#### *Part 2:*

- Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS-2, or similar);
- Monteiro Interview Guidelines for Diagnosing Autism (MIGDAS-2, or similar);
- Adaptive Behaviour Assessment System (ABAS-3);
- Scoring and interpretation of assessment findings;
- Provision of a comprehensive report and recommendations;
- Feedback session.
- *\*Further investigation, consultation and follow up, if required (additional costs apply and will be quoted where recommended).*

\*Examples of additional assessment components that may be required include cognitive assessment; consultation with treating health practitioners, educators or similar; school observations; additional measures or questionnaires; home or community visits, and/or additional follow up appointments to explain assessment results. The cost of Part 2 is from \$2100. The cost of the total assessment battery (Part 1 & 2) is approximately \$3000. As noted, services are tailored to the needs of the client and therefore prices will vary depending on client needs and the assessment conducted.

## REFERRAL FOR ASSESSMENT & FUNDING PATHWAYS

An individual may be referred for assessment by their medical practitioner (e.g., GP, Psychiatrist or Paediatrician). Alternatively, an individual can self-refer for services by contacting us directly. Where referred by a medical practitioner, a referral letter is requested. In some cases, this may provide an individual with the opportunity to access a government rebate, such as under the Helping Children with Autism Scheme.

Under the government funded Helping Children with Autism (HCWA) initiative, Medicare rebates can be available for assessment and treatment services for children and young people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Assessment and treatment can be provided by a number of eligible allied health professionals under this initiative when a referral is provided in advance of service commencement. Under this initiative, up to four assessment sessions (e.g., a rebate of \$93.35 per session) provided by a psychologist are available to assist the referring practitioner with diagnosis, or to contribute to a child's treatment and management plan. At the time of writing, the total rebate accessible for assessment under this scheme is \$373.40 across 4x sessions. For more information, visit [https://psychology.org.au/psychology/medicare-rebates-psychological-services/helping-children-with-autism-\(hcwa\)](https://psychology.org.au/psychology/medicare-rebates-psychological-services/helping-children-with-autism-(hcwa)) or speak to your local GP.

At times, a third party scheme or service provider will fund all or part of assessment. For instance, Ability regularly partners with local schools to provide assessment services on-site, where requested by the educational institute. Participants of the NDIS may also be eligible to use NDIS plan funding, as informed by their NDIS plan. It is noted that the NDIS is not designed to 'fund supports more appropriately funded or provided by the health system'. The NDIS advises that the assessment, diagnosis and treatment of health conditions are not covered by the NDIS. However, in some cases components of assessment may be mutually applicable to both an assessment query and an individual's NDIS participation. For example, some NDIS goals can pertain to building a better understanding of an individual's social, behavioural, functional and/or executive function to inform their NDIS participation and progress towards the established goals. Where there is reasonable overlap with NDIS priorities and/or objectives, some components of engagement may be covered by your plan. Please defer to your NDIS Plan and ensure you seek relevant advice, where required (e.g., via a Support Coordinator or NDIS website).

With regards to the Medicare Better Access Scheme, this scheme aims to encourage more people in Australia to seek mental health treatment and support and covers some psychological conditions. A Mental Health Care Plan may be provided by a GP to access support for an eligible condition. Unfortunately, this scheme does not cover diagnostic testing, such as the assessment of Autism and other neurodevelopmental conditions, and thus cannot be utilised in an assessment battery. With regards to Private Health Insurance, Psychology is a service that can be included in the extras cover of Private Health Insurance (unlike psychiatry, which is usually covered under hospital cover). There are likely to be annual limits that apply. To find out more, please consult the Product Disclosure Statement (PDS) or your Private Health Insurer.

## PAYMENT OPTIONS

Unless otherwise arranged in advance, payment is due on the respective date of service (e.g., Part 1 and Part 2). If you wish to pay by instalments, this must be requested at the time of booking. Where a client is paying in instalments, the following payment terms apply.

INSTALMENT 1: 50% of total assessment cost after first appointment.

INSTALMENT 2: 25% of total assessment cost after second appointment to allow for report commencement.

INSTALMENT 3: Final 25% of total assessment cost due 1 month from first appointment commencement to allow for report finalisation & feedback session booking.

Where an individual is utilising a third party provider or scheme to access services (e.g., private health, NDIS), this should be advised at booking in advance of service provision. This will allow our team to obtain any specific requirements (e.g., invoice details) with you in advance of service commencement.

Please be aware that service provision is informed by the established agreement in place and timely payment of any outstanding invoices. Accordingly, full payment must be received before a feedback session can be scheduled and the corresponding report finalised for release. Payment can be made via direct deposit or by card using a secure online payment platform. Please contact our service should you have any payment related queries.

### **OTHER ASSESSMENT OPTIONS**

Ability offers a range of assessments for children through to adults to investigate a variety of presenting concerns, queries and/or diagnostic characteristics. When an individual is already engaged in an assessment process and another assessment query arises, it is often possible to add these on to the existing assessment package. By consolidating assessments into the same episode of care, it reduces the cost compared to completing these same assessments consecutively or independently as several cost factors (e.g., developmental history, reporting) can be consolidated into the one assessment process. Your psychologist will discuss any additional assessments that may be valuable to explore or otherwise required to clarify a diagnostic profile. You can also discuss any queries you may have during the intake process and/or in your initial appointment with your assessing practitioner. Some examples of our additional assessment options include:

- Cognitive Assessment (Intellectual Ability)
- Learning & Achievement Testing
- Functional Assessment & Adaptive Behaviour
- Attention-Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (children & adults)
- Sensory Profile Assessment
- Behavioural Assessments (Functional Behaviour Assessment - FBA)
- Diagnostic Queries (e.g., mood, anxiety, psychotic, personality, neurodevelopmental, trauma, behavioural and other DSM-5-TR related concerns).
- Executive Function
- Evidence for Applications, e.g., Supported Independent Living (SIL) or Disability Support Pension (DSP).

Ability also offers options for psychological treatment and support through a variety of referral pathways. Please visit our website [www.abilitypsychologyservices.com](http://www.abilitypsychologyservices.com) for more information or call us on 1300 229 906.

## What's Next?



### **CONTACT US:**

[www.abilitypsychologyservices.com](http://www.abilitypsychologyservices.com)

E: [assessmentteam@abilitypsychologyservices.com](mailto:assessmentteam@abilitypsychologyservices.com)

Ph: 1300 229 906.

For more information, book in your intake call. Contact us via phone or email at: [assessmentteam@abilitypsychologyservices.com](mailto:assessmentteam@abilitypsychologyservices.com) or on 1300 229 906 during business hours.