

## What is a Comprehensive Diagnostic Evaluation (CDE)?

A CDE is an in-depth evaluation of your child to help determine why your child is not developing or performing at a similar level as other children. If your child has a disability, a CDE can help determine severity and appropriate services.

The CDE must be completed by one of these licensed practitioners:

1. Primary care physician (PCP) specializing in family practice, internal medicine or a pediatrics specialty
2. Board-certified or board-eligible physician with a specialty in developmental behavioral pediatrics; neurodevelopmental pediatrics; pediatric neurology; or adult or child psychiatry
3. Licensed Psychologists.

Psychoeducational school testing by a school psychologist is **NOT** accepted as a CDE. A CDE must be completed (or supervised by) a licensed practitioner (as above) working within their scope of practice; meaning they must have formal training and experience conducting comprehensive diagnostic tests.

Obtaining a CDE is difficult, as there are too few in-network practitioners in this area. If your child is on Medicaid, contact the HMO (Sunshine Health, etc.) to obtain names of providers in your area. If you cannot find an in-network provider, ask if the licensed provider will accept a Single Case Agreement, then contact your child's HMO to request the provider receive a SCA. If your child has a caseworker, ask him or her to intervene. You may need to complain to the Agency for Health Care Administration (they oversee Medicaid HMOs) to indicate your child needs services but you can't get a CDE in a timely manner.

It is important to understand the CDE requirements and ensure the assessor will meet funder requirements. Although a diagnosis of autism or Down Syndrome is necessary for services through private insurance, ABA through Medicaid is available for **any child** with severe deficits or challenging behavior, a diagnosis of autism is **NOT** needed.

A Comprehensive Diagnostic Evaluation (CDE) must include:

1. A formal diagnosis made by the licensed assessor; a list of test scores without a formal diagnosis is not sufficient.
2. Background (family, prenatal, early childhood) and current presenting concerns
3. Diagnostic tools (tests) used (this will vary depending on the age of the child)
4. Treatment recommendations (Note: school accommodation recommendations alone are not sufficient.)
5. For ABA services, a recommendation for Applied Behavior Analysis should be included as appropriate, up to 40 hours a week for more severe behavior challenges.

A copy of the child's CDE and an ABA referral (identified below) must be submitted for services.

Information given to the assessor should include identifying the challenging behaviors or skill deficits that prevent your child and your family from participating in major life activities such as attending and making progress at school, eating a balanced diet, accessing recreational or retail opportunities in the community or going to medical or dental appointments, just to name a few. Some questions may be very personal, but details can be important. **CDEs do not expire for Medicaid recipients** and are not required to be updated annually.

### Referrals:

A "prescription", completed by the child's pediatrician or other practitioner qualified to assess and diagnose disorders related to functional impairment. The referral must specifically state ABA services are recommended for up to 40 hours a week (or fewer, if the challenges are not severe) and be signed by one of the following practitioner types:

1. Primary Care Physician (PCP) specializing in family practice, internal medicine or a pediatrics specialty.
2. Board-certified or board-eligible physician with a specialty in developmental behavioral pediatrics, neurodevelopmental pediatrics, pediatric neurology or adult or child psychiatry
3. Child Psychologist (PhD or PsyD)

Other practitioners may contribute to CDEs and/ or refer for ABA services, but the CDE or referral **must be signed by a licensed doctor, psychiatrist or psychologist, affiliated with the same practice, to be valid.**