

DEVELOPMENTAL AND AUTISM ASSESSMENT INTAKE

REFERRAL ALLOCATION GUIDELINES FOR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER ASSESSMENT

Purpose

To provide guidelines for allocation of referrals for autism spectrum disorder assessment, of children under 6 years, to the RCH departments who provide these assessments. This will cover referrals that meet the criteria to be managed by the Autism Project Coordinator (see Referral Triage Pathway and Referral Intake and Allocation Pathway).

Departmental Referral Allocation Guidelines

Centre for Community Child Health

Service Details:

- Accepts referrals from GPs and paediatricians
- State wide service
- Provides paediatrician only appointments through the Behaviour Clinic, Learning and Behaviour Clinic and Preschool Development Clinic. Children will be allocated to clinics by department. *NB: Children referred for an autism assessment will not be seen in Communication Clinic*
- Referrals for allied health assessments will typically need to be made to external public or private services. In some circumstances referrals can be made to RCH allied health departments. Cases that are more complex than initially indicated from the referral and intake information may need to be directed to CAMHS.
- Paediatricians can provide ongoing medical follow up if required

Referrals to be allocated:

- Children who have seen a speech pathologist, occupational therapist and/or psychologist from whom a written report can be provided to intake that indicates that the child presents with signs of autism.
- Information from referrer / parent / other service providers indicates a diagnosis of autism is likely – there is some consensus.
- Screening tool completed by parents indicates clear signs of autism
- No diagnostic dilemma around autism
- Families who can afford to access private psychology and/or speech pathology diagnostic services as indicated on the Child Information Form during intake.
- Children attending school who cannot access an RCH multidisciplinary autism assessment team.

General Medicine

Service Details:

- Accepts referrals from GPs, and paediatricians if to take over ongoing care
- State wide service
- Provides paediatrician only appointments through outpatient clinics

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Developmental Medicine

Service Details:

- Accepts referrals from GPs and paediatricians. Referrals are also accepted from health and education professionals (e.g. MCHN, teachers, speech pathologists) and parents; however a referral letter from a GP needs to be presented at the initial appointment.
- State wide service
- Provides paediatrician only appointments and a multidisciplinary assessment team (Team 2) for children who have not started school (preschoolers). Team 2 consists of a paediatrician, psychologist and speech pathologist who offer primarily separate single discipline appointments (6 – 7 appointments). Preschool children will initially receive an appointment with a paediatrician in the department who may then decide to refer onto Team 2. When multidisciplinary assessment is required for preschoolers, referral to Team 2 is made unless it is a tertiary case where a CAMHS service may be more appropriate.
- Can provide ongoing medical follow up if required however Developmental Medicine is happy for referring paediatricians to provide ongoing care if appropriate.

Referrals to be allocated:

- Children who have had no previous developmental assessments
- Children who have had developmental intervention from medical or allied health professionals but they have not provided a written report strongly indicating or diagnosing autism.
- When there is a query about global developmental delay in conjunction with autism
- Families who cannot afford to access private services
- Children who are yet to start school (preschoolers). School age children (under 6 years) requiring an autism assessment will not be referred to Developmental Medicine as a general rule.

Travancore

Service Details:

- Accept referrals from paediatricians / trainee paediatricians who have provided an initial assessment and sent referral with any relevant reports.
- Services the western region of Melbourne (Child Adolescent Mental Health Service Boundaries). Children from outside of the western region will be directed to the relevant CAMHS service
- Offers a single multidisciplinary team assessment for tertiary assessment by a paediatrician, psychologist and speech pathologist.
- Referring paediatrician to provide ongoing follow up as indicated.

Referrals to be allocated:

- Referral requests an autism assessment
- There are conflicting professional views regarding diagnosis (diagnostic dilemma) or request for a second opinion. *NB: Paediatric fellows and registrars are advised to liaise with their consultant before making a referral on this basis.*
- There are complexities about the child's presentation that make them best suited to a single session multidisciplinary assessment, such as:
 - History of attachment difficulties
 - Complex medical history
 - Multiple previous assessments from other services
 - Children less than 2 years of age
 - Co-morbid mental health disorders
- There are family circumstances that mean the family is best suited to a single session multidisciplinary assessment, such as:
 - Non English speaking family
 - Parent mental health issues
 - Limited financial resources to access private assessments. *NB: these families may also be appropriate for Developmental Medicine.*
- This is the only multidisciplinary team assessment option available through RCH for children under 6 years who have started school.

Psychology Department

Service Details:

- State wide service for children aged 0-18 years who are currently outpatients at RCH, or present with complex problems more suited to assessment in a tertiary service.
- Accept referrals from RCH staff (e.g. Paediatricians, Allied Health) as well as external referrers (e.g. GPs, Paediatricians, Allied Health, parents, Teachers) if child is a current RCH outpatient.
- Psychology offers a full psychological assessment including specialised autism assessment (clinical interview and ADOS, intellectual assessment) when indicated.
- Ongoing therapy/monitoring/follow-up is also offered when indicated.

Referrals to be allocated:

- Referrals from RCH Paediatricians and departments for autism or any neurodevelopmental / psychological disorder
- Preferably a diagnosis of autism will not have been made prior to referral.

Speech Pathology Department

Service Details:

- In regards to autism assessment, the RCH Speech Pathology department offers assessment services through the following specialist multidisciplinary clinics at RCH:
 - Developmental Medicine – Team 2
 - Centre for Community Child Health – Communication Clinic: This clinic does not accept referrals specifically requesting an autism assessment, however when an autism assessment is indicated, it is conducted.
- The Speech Pathology department does not typically accept referrals for an autism assessment sent directly to the department.

Referrals to be allocated:

- Referrals for autism assessment sent directly to the Speech Pathology department will only be accepted under the following special circumstances:
 - Referred child has a complex medical history and prior treatment at RCH

- Referral is for a second opinion from a treating professional regarding diagnosis or there is a diagnostic dilemma related to the child's language function.
- Children need to be under the age of 18 years
- Assessment is requested by an RCH paediatrician for a current RCH outpatient where there is a critical window for conducting an assessment and/or urgent need. Requesting clinician must liaise directly with the intake speech pathologist prior to forwarding a referral.

Occupational Therapy Department

The Occupational Therapy department currently does not provide autism assessments. Clinicians who would like an opinion from an occupational therapist regarding an autism assessment are advised to contact the Occupational Therapy Manager.

**Approved by Autism Project Steering Group
12 May 2011**