



Psychology – Counselling - Allied Health

Providence House

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This issue of our Providence House Newsletter is intended to help parents, teaching professionals and medical practitioners understand the benefits of a timely psycho-educational assessment, and introduce the Providence House psychologists who specialize in this area.

Psychoeducational assessments can help understand the learning strengths and weaknesses of a child in preschool, through to adults studying at tertiary level.

It is often at this time of year when parents and teachers are talking about a student's progress at parent-teacher interviews that each become aware that the student may be experiencing difficulties. Alternatively, GPs may begin to see more children with unexplainable physical or emotional symptoms that prevent them from going to school. Some students simply refuse to go to school. The cause of these difficulties may not just be psychosomatic or behavioural but an underlying learning difficulty.

The aim of a psychoeducational assessment is to provide a thorough assessment of child or adolescent's cognitive, academic, behavioural and emotional functioning. It takes into account information from a number of sources and considers different possibilities for difficulties that a student may be having in progressing in their learning.

If a child is having difficulty, an assessment can identify whether this is because their cognitive or **intellectual (brain) development** is delayed or there is an uneven development of skills; or there is **memory and attention** difficulties. Such problems can make learning difficult for children. If a child does not have an intellectual problem yet is struggling to learn, consideration will be given to a diagnosis of a specific **learning disorders** (sometimes called learning disability or dyslexia).

Children who perform very well on an intellectual assessment may be of **superior intelligence (sometimes called gifted)**. Consideration is given to the need for extension in schoolwork to keep them interested and learning, as well as how they are developing socially and emotionally.

Providence House

is located in the inner Brisbane suburb of Spring Hill. It is a quiet and peaceful place offering psychology and allied health services.

Our practitioners include Clinical Psychologist, Counselling Psychologist, Educational & Developmental Psychologist, and an Occupational Therapist who work with children, adolescents and adults experiencing a variety of mental health and developmental issues.

You do not need a referral; however financial assistance may be available through your private health insurance or a referral from a GP can refer clients under a Medicare Mental Health Care Plan or Metro North PHN BrisbaneMIND.

Upcoming Events

May 19

Friday 12-1.30pm
Group program for Young Adults commences & continues fortnightly

June 6

Tuesday 12-1.30pm
Positive Health & Emotional Wellbeing Group program commences & continues fortnightly

Looking forward to seeing you there.

Young people's learning can also be impacted by other factors such as **emotional distress** or **behavioural responses** to their environment, such as family problems or friendships. A psycho-educational assessment can help differentiate between the child's cognitive functioning and their psychological functioning.

Being aware of a child's strength (more developed skills) and weaknesses (less developed skills) means parents and teachers can give children information in a way they are more likely to understand and enable them to learn at their level.

What is the process of an assessment?

An assessment begins with an **interview with the parents** and child to gain information about the nature of the problem, the child's developmental history and school history. It is useful to bring relevant school reports, from any other professionals consulted and any previous testing /assessments done.

Testing occurs with the child alone (parents use a waiting room) and usually takes two or three sessions. This is best done in the morning when children tend to be more focused and breaks are scheduled depending on the needs of the child.

In addition, parents, teachers and children are asked to fill out a **questionnaire** to gain their perspectives and observations. This information can then be compared to other children of the same age and can help to identify the nature of the problems the child or young person is experiencing.



A report is then compiled outlining the specific strength and weaknesses of the child or young person who has been assessed, and suggestions are made to assist in the educational planning for the students, as well as teaching strategies and support strategies for outside school.

Does the child need a referral?

Children and adolescents do not need a referral for an assessment. Parents can simply contact reception at Providence House to make the initial appointment. However for children who are experiencing emotional difficulties a referral from a Paediatrician, a Child Psychiatrist or a GP under a Mental Health Care Plan for assessment and treatment of these difficulties is recommended.

What Psychologists at Providence House have expertise in undertaking Psychoeducational Assessments?

- **Christina Hully** has experience as an Educational Psychologist in secondary school and is available to assess children preparing for the transition to high school
- **Phoebe Cooper** has experience assessing children with behavioural and learning difficulties from the age of 5 years in an out-patient hospital clinic
- **TeAna Pepperell** has completed a Masters in Educational & Developmental Psychology and is currently undertaking the registrar program. She works with children and parents who have emotional & behavioural problems and is able to assess children from Pre-school onwards.
- **Shannon Quinn** is a provisionally registered psychologist undertaking an internship at Providence House. He works 4 days per week with people with disabilities and he is available 1 day per week to assess both children and adults with cognitive & learning difficulties. All assessments with Shannon are supervised and minimal fees are charged.