

Seeking Assessment

There are many reasons why an individual may have difficulty learning to read. Learning to read is a complex process. As a result, it is important to find a qualified psychologist who has been trained to complete a thorough psycho-educational assessment to identify the reason(s) for the reading difficulty.

Psycho-Educational Assessments for Students Attending Elementary or High Schools

If your child is currently attending a publically funded school, speak to your child's teacher and the school's administrative team (e.g., principal) to learn more about how your child may access the school's psychological services.

- Make an appointment to speak with your child's teacher. Discuss your observations and concerns.
- Ask good questions to learn more about your child's current level of support and progress.
- If your child is struggling, initiate a written request to discuss your concerns further at the School Support Team meeting. A School Support Team Meeting is made up of the school's teachers, administrators and professionals who specialize in varied areas such as identifying learning disabilities. Most schools in Ontario have an educational psychologist on staff whose role it is to complete standardized assessments of learning and to recommend appropriate instructional methods for the child post-assessment.
- If a school does not hold School Support Team Meetings, you may wish to ask the school to set up a meeting with the school's psychologist so that you may ask questions and learn more about the services.
- Remember to be clear and objective when communicating with the school. Bring evidence to support your child's needs.

Assessment of Young Adults Attending a College or University

If you are a student or young adult attending or planning to attend a college or university in Ontario, investigate the accessibility services offered by the selected institution.

- Most post-secondary institutions offer accessibility services for students with learning disabilities. These offices will also provide you with more information about psycho-educational assessments.
- It may also be worthwhile to investigate your eligibility for either the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) or the equivalent program from your home province. Eligibility may allow you to access funds to assist with the funding for a psycho-educational assessment.
- If you already have a diagnosis, an updated assessment may be necessary. Contact a Disability Counsellor at your institution to learn more about the next steps, updates of assessment and your eligibility for additional grants (e.g., Canada Study Grant for Accommodations of Students with Disabilities; Bursary for Students with Disabilities).

Private Assessments

If you have attempted to communicate with the school or educational institution but wish to pursue a private assessment, please note that not all psychologists specialize in assessments of learning disabilities. As a result it is your responsibility to take the time to ask good questions when interviewing the assessor. See *Appendix A* for suggested questions and responses.

Seeking Assessment cont'd

To find a private practitioner you may wish to:

(Please note to check with your insurance company to see if and how much of the assessment will be covered.)

- Speak to your family doctor to see if he or she may initiate a referral to an assessment clinic or psychologist;
- Self-refer to teaching institutions that provide psycho-educational assessments to students with learning difficulties if you live in the Greater Toronto Area. These clinics offer services that are provided by graduate students of psychology under the supervision of registered psychologists. Services are provided at a reduced fee;

York University Psychology Clinic
Faculty of Health, York University
[416-736-2100 x 30428](tel:416-736-2100)

OISE Counseling and Psycho- educational Clinic
University of Toronto
416-978-0620

- Contact individuals on ONBIDA's Assessor List (See *Appendix B*);
- Contact the Ontario Association of Psychologists to find a practitioner in your area.
The College of Psychologists of Ontario
Suite 500 – 110 Eglinton Avenue West
Toronto, Ontario M4R 1A3
Tel: (416) 961-8817/(800) 489-8388
Fax: (416) 961-2635
E-mail: cpo@cpo.on.ca

After the Assessment

Once a formal psycho-educational assessment has been completed, the report should be shared and discussed with the school. Additional recommendations such as increased support in a special education class, development of an individual education plan or putting together an application to present the findings in front of an Identification, Placement and Review Committee for formalizing a diagnosis and classroom placement may be made.

International Dyslexia Association Disclaimer:

The Ontario Branch of the International Association (ONBIDA) supports efforts to provide individuals with dyslexia and their families with appropriate information regarding reading instruction and formal identification of individuals with reading difficulties. The Association; however, does not endorse any specific program, speaker, individual, product or instructional methods or materials, noting that there are a number of such which comprise of the critical components of instruction and identification as defined by IDA and reading research. While we cannot and do not make personal recommendations for your specific need, we do provide you with some guiding questions/suggestions to facilitate your initial discussion with an assessor or clinic. Please remember that the final decision must be and is your own. ONBIDA is not responsible nor may be held accountable for any pending outcomes.

APPENDIX A: Suggested Questions and Possible Responses

In your field, what is your area of focus or expertise? *Possible Response: Any response relating to assessing learning disabilities or identifying why individuals have difficulty learning or keeping up in school.*

What age group of individuals do you work with most often? *Possible Response: The assessor should have experience working with children within your child's age range.*

Have you worked with individuals who have reading difficulties in the past? *Response: Yes.*

Do you use the term dyslexia in your reports? If not how do you discuss specific difficulties in your report? *Possible Response: The answer may vary depending on the results of the assessment. Reading difficulties are complex and not all people with reading difficulties have dyslexia. The assessor may also indicate that if the difficulty is specific, the term 'dyslexia' is synonymous with the term 'specific learning disability in the area of reading'.*

Will you be assessing both cognitive skills and academic skills? *Response: The school system will require that the psychologist completes a detailed cognitive assessment as well as academic testing (math, reading, spelling, writing) to determine the child's grade level achievement. Testing cognition alone without academics will not provide the school with sufficient information. Additional testing will be required prolonging the process.*

How many sessions does it take to complete an assessment? *Possible Response: A comprehensive test requires more than one session to complete. In addition, the psychologist should take a thorough background history and request documentation from the school (e.g., report cards, a letter from the teacher, speech and language assessment) to better understand the needs of your child.*

How much do you charge and does your fee include a written report? *NOTE: A written report is necessary to share with the school.*

Will you be providing specific recommendations in your report (e.g., proceed to an Identification and Placement Review Committee for formal identification)? *Possible Response: If the psychologist communicates a diagnosis, that diagnosis must be clearly stated in the report and recommendations should directly reflect the diagnosis.*

Will you be recommending specific strategies or instructional methods (e.g., systematic and explicit instruction in phonics and phonemic awareness)? *Possible Response: If a diagnosis is communicated, the psychologist's report is used to develop additional legal documents (e.g., Individual Education Plan). The more specific the recommendations are regarding instructional methods or approaches the more effective the IEP will be.*

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APPENDIX B: Assessors

Registered Psychologists

Dr. Karen Ghelani, Ph.D., C. Psych.

Chrysalis Centre for Psychological and Counselling Services
3621 Highway 7 East; Suite 408
MARKHAM, ON
L3R 0G6

Ph: 905-752-6789 Ext 101

Fax: 905-752-1705

Mobile: 416-318-6917

www.chrysalispsychologists.ca

NOTE: All ages

Diagnosticians

Dr. Pearl Levey

200 St. Clair Ave., West, Suite 414,
TORONTO, Ontario
M4V 1R1

416-960-9813

pearl.levey@utoronto.ca

NOTE: Works with college and university students and the adult population