



Options for an Assessment for ADHD for a Child

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) can be diagnosed by either a physician with expertise in this area or by a registered psychologist. The advantage of going to a physician is that visits are covered through Alberta Health and if medication is recommended for treatment, the doctor can oversee this. The advantage of having an assessment done with a psychologist is that they are usually far more detailed and provide more information about your child's learning strengths and challenges that can be used by classroom teachers to help determine appropriate supports to foster success. The disadvantage is that psychologists are not covered under Alberta Health and for some the cost of paying for the assessment can be a barrier.

There are some more affordable options (see below). Also, if medication is recommended, you will need to find a physician experienced with ADHD medication.

If you have an assessment for ADHD done by a physician, they should gather information on your child's development to date and family history. They will ask you to fill out some screening checklists and request permission to contact your child's teacher to complete them as well. The Canadian ADHD Resource Alliance (CADDRA) has published guidelines that you can view to ensure that your physician is doing a thorough assessment (<http://www.caddra.ca/>). If your child is diagnosed with ADHD, there will likely be some discussion about medication options available.

If there are any concerns around your child's learning in general, consideration should be given to getting a full psycho-educational assessment by a registered psychologist to determine whether there is a learning disability in addition to attention issues (and possibly other issues) affecting your child. Because a psychologist is not a medical doctor, you will need to follow up with a physician to discuss medication options.

Sometimes, an assessment can be arranged through your child's school. Beyond this, there are a few different options for getting an assessment done.

Your child's **school's psychologist** – sometimes an assessment can be arranged through your child's school. Due to budget constraints, this is becoming increasingly rare but it doesn't hurt to ask whether this might be possible. If an assessment is done through the school system, it is provided free of charge to the parents.

Private psychologist - A private assessment will likely cost approximately \$2000. Do you have any private health care benefits? Most health care plans have some coverage for psychological services ranging from \$500 to \$1000 per year. The psychologist can usually arrange the billing to try to maximize your benefits (ie. bill some



LDAA • Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta

in your name and some in your child's name.) A website search will indicate a large number of psychologists within the city., and a wide variety of psychological specialties. The website www.calgarypsychdirectory.ca lists many psychologists. They have a heading called 'Attention Deficit Disorder (ADHD)'.

Keep in mind that any fees that are not reimbursed by a health care plan can be claimed on your income tax as a medical expense.

The **CanLearn Society** has subsidies available depending on family's financial situation. <http://canlearnsociety.ca/>

The Integrated Services in Education Clinic at the University of Calgary offers assessments by Masters and PhD students who are supervised by a registered psychologist. You do not need to be associated with the University of Calgary to access their clinic. They currently charge a flat rate of \$1350 for an assessment. <http://werklund.ucalgary.ca/ise/>

The University of Alberta Clinical Services - has a clinic similar to the University of Calgary. They currently charge \$500 for an assessment and may have a lengthy waiting list. Travel to Edmonton would be required. <http://www.edpsychology.ualberta.ca/CentresAndInstitutes/ClinicalServices.aspx>

The advantage to the private assessment is that it can usually be done more quickly and you select the person doing the assessment. If you are going to pursue a private assessment, call a few different psychologists to find out more about their particular approach and get an estimate of cost. Some psychologists will quote a flat fee (meaning a definite price no matter how long the assessment takes). Some will quote an hourly rate and hopefully give you an approximate time-frame for the assessment so you can get an idea of how much the total cost will be.

Ensure that you are finding out exactly what is included in the assessment. Sometimes a school observation is included and sometimes it isn't. When there is a question about social skills or social/emotional development, a school observation can be really helpful to the psychologist because teachers can see behaviours that may not present themselves working one-on-one in an office setting with an adult.