





NC Department of Health and Human Services

Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services

What You Need to Know When a School Psychologist Completes an Evaluation

November 16, 2026

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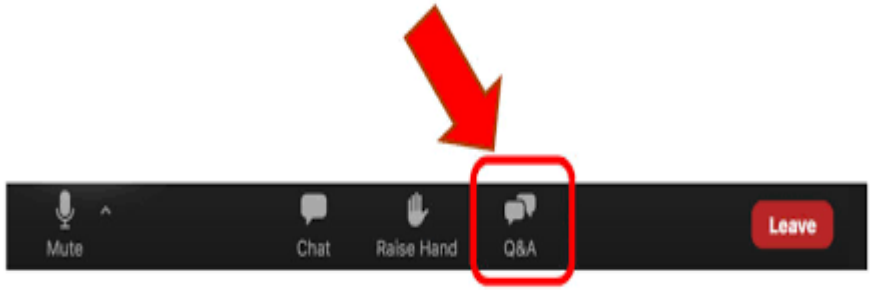

Housekeeping



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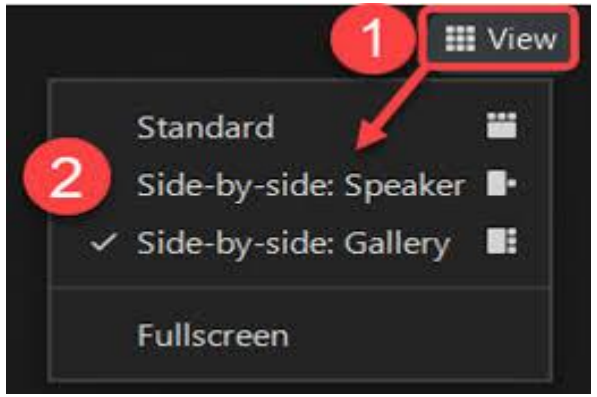

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Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Psychologists
3. Psychological Evaluations
4. Psychological Evaluations Results
5. Question and Answer Session

Tina Barrett, MA, LPA-IP, HSP-PA
Assistant Director, I/DD
IDD, TBI & Olmstead Section, DMHDDSUS



- MA in Psychology
- Licensed Psychological Associate Independent Practice
- More than 30 years of experience providing clinical and administrative services to people with IDD
- DMHDDSUS since 2023

Psychological Evaluations

- **People are often asked to have psychological evaluations completed in community or clinical settings & school settings.**
  - **Why is that?**
  - **What is the role of each?**
  - **How are they different? The same?**

Megan Cardin, MA
School Psychology Consultant
NC DPI



Megan Cardin is the School Psychology Consultant in the NC Healthy Schools section at the NC Department of Public Instruction. Her role focuses on recruitment and retention of school psychologists in NC, which includes implementation of two U.S. Department of Education-funded grant projects. Prior to this role, Megan served as a school psychologist in eastern NC for 19 years. Her roles included district Lead School Psychologist, school psychologist intern supervisor, MTSS Coordinator, and 504 Coordinator.

Jill Howard, PhD
Child & Family Clinical Psychologist
Duke Autism Clinic



Jill Howard is an associate professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Duke University School of Medicine and serves as director of the Duke Autism Clinic. A clinical psychologist by training, Dr. Howard works with children, adolescents, and families affected by developmental, behavioral, and emotional concerns. In particular, she specializes in autism spectrum disorder, conducting comprehensive diagnostic evaluations and delivering evidence-based therapy. Dr. Howard is an Early Start Denver Model (ESDM) therapist and trainer and is engaged in several research projects investigating autism-related questions.

Objectives

Making distinctions between psychological evaluations conducted by psychologists in the public schools and psychologists practicing in clinical or other settings

Discuss ways psychological evaluations can be applied across settings to support outcomes for children and efficiency for psychologists

Psychologists

Licensed School Psychologists
&
Psychologists Licensed by
NC Psychology Board

Training and Qualifications

School-based Evaluations:

- School psychologists: Minimum training at specialist (Master's + 30) level, though many hold Ph.D/ Psy.D
- 1200-hour internship required, at least 600 hours in a school setting
- Degree must be from an approved school psychology program
- Passing score on School Psychology Praxis required

Clinical or Community-based Evaluations:

- MA/MS or Ph.D/Psy.D in clinical, counseling or school psychology
- Supervision is provided for at least the first 3000 hours of practice, acquired both pre and post graduate degree
- Passing score on Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology (EPPP) and NC Psychology Board State Examination

Licensure and Practice Settings

School-based Evaluations:

- School psychologists licensed by the NC Department of Public Instruction
- License restricts practice to NC public schools, traditional or charter
- Schools may contract licensed psychologists or LPAs to provide evaluations

Clinical or Community-based Evaluations:

- Psychologists are licensed by the NC Psychology Board
- Licensed Psychologists (LP) must hold a doctoral degree in psychology from a board approved or APA accredited program; licensed psychological associates (LPA) must hold a master's degree in psychology from a Board approved or APA accredited program
- Supervision may be required based on licensure type, experience, and scope of practice

Psychological Evaluations – Where they are completed matters

School-based Evaluations

&

Clinical or Community-based Evaluations

Purpose of Evaluation

School-based Evaluations:

- ❑ Identification of disability and need for specially designed instruction through special education eligibility; educational planning
- ❑ Referral can be made by parent or school staff; IEP team must consider request and decide whether to evaluate based on suspicion of disability
- ❑ Decisions about evaluation and eligibility are made by the IEP team, which includes parents and school psychologist

Clinical or community-based evaluations:

- ❑ Diagnosis, community support eligibility and planning, service eligibility
- ❑ Decisions about evaluation, assessment tools, and diagnosis are made by psychologist
- ❑ Evaluation results may be used to access treatment and/ or services, but eligibility for these is typically not determined during the evaluation

What Guides the Evaluation Process

School-based Evaluations:

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- NC Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities
- IDEA and NC policies include 14 categories of disabling conditions, each with specific evaluation components and eligibility criteria

IDEA:

- **IDEA and NC policies include 14 categories of disabling conditions, each with specific evaluation components and eligibility criteria**

IDEA and State Special Education Policies

- First authorized in 1975, the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) established the rights of students with disabilities to:
  - Receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE)
  - In the least restrictive environment (LRE)
  - As detailed in an Individualized Education Program (IEP)
  - Public schools implement Part B, which includes all children, ages 3-21
- Child Find
  - Public schools must find, identify, and assess students suspected of disability
  - Referrals to the IEP team to consider evaluation can be made by parents or school staff members
- NC Exceptional Children's Information: https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/classroom-resources/exceptional-children

What Guides the Evaluation Process

Clinical or community-based evaluations:

- Reason for seeking evaluation
- DSM-V-TR
- Professional and clinical standards
- Individually tailored assessment battery

Additional Considerations:

- Payer / Insurance Coverage or Restrictions
- Specific requirements for some services

How is an Evaluation Paid For?

School-based Evaluations:

- School system funds or NC Medicaid
- Note: If NC Medicaid pays for school based evaluation, a separate fund from Medicaid is used for community-based evaluations (# of units billed in school do not impact limits on units billed in community)

Clinical or community-based evaluations:

- Health Insurance
  - Private – e.g., Employer based
  - Public – e.g., NC Medicaid, Medicare
- Out-of-Pocket

Disabilities That Can Be Assessed or Identified

School-based Evaluations:

- Autism spectrum disorder
- Intellectual disability
- Developmental disability
- Specific learning disorder (doesn't require psychological evaluation)
- Emotional disability
- Multiple disabilities
- Traumatic brain injury

*The IEP team can also identify other disabilities that don't require psychological evaluation, e.g., hearing impairment, visual impairment, deafness, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, deaf-blindness (requires psychological), speech or language impairment.

Clinical or community-based evaluations:

- Any within scope; may need to refer out for those not within scope, or if additional clinical information is needed.

Types of Assessments Administered

In all Settings

- All Assessment Tools and Instruments are Evidence Based
- If looking at the same presenting need, the assessment tools used are often similar, or even the same

Setting Dependent

- Evaluations performed in school settings will be focused on what is needed for supports at school.
  - IDEA and NC policies guide and limit the scope of these evaluations
- Evaluations performed in clinical and community settings will be guided on why someone is seeking the evaluation
  - Evaluation can look at broader concerns or support needs; assessment tools used can also be broader
  - Generally only limited by scope of practice of psychologist completing evaluation

Psychological Evaluation Results

What to Expect
&
How to Use Them

Potential Psychological Evaluation Results

School-based Evaluations:

- Used to help support team's decision of whether a student qualifies for an IDEA disability category
- Recommendations to support student in school setting accessing free and appropriate public education
  - Accommodations
  - Modifications
  - Intervention Strategies

Clinical or community-based evaluations:

- Diagnosis
- Recommendations to support person in a variety of settings
  - Psychoeducation about Diagnosis
  - Treatment / Intervention Recommendations
  - Service Recommendations
  - Referral(s) to Potential Supports

Using Results of School Evaluation in Community Practice Setting, and Vice Versa

- Even when evaluations are conducted for different purposes, the assessment tools used are often the same
- Evaluation reports from clinical/community psychologists shared with the school can be considered by the IEP team for making decisions
- Evaluation reports from school psychologists can be considered by clinical/community providers, even when a diagnosis isn't included

Benefits of Leveraging Results of School Evaluation in Community Practice Setting (and Vice Versa!)

- Saves time for child and family
- No need to repeat assessment if not clinically indicated
- Improved capacity in system as a whole

Improving Communication and Coordination Between Systems

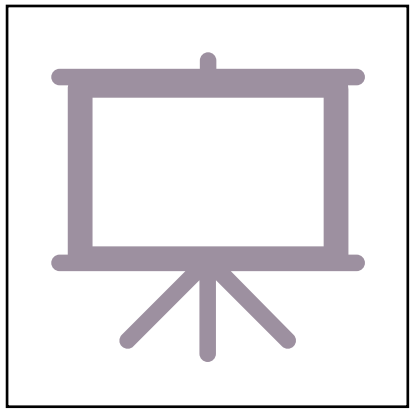
- HIPAA vs. FERPA
- Ensure parents/guardians sign consents for both, so school psychologists and clinical/ community psychologists can communicate when needed
- Understanding the benefits and limitations of systems across settings

Questions?

Please remember to put questions into Q & A box



Questions and feedback are welcome at DMHIDDCONTACT@dhhs.nc.gov



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