



AUTISM WEST
BEHAVIOR PARTNERS



PREPARING FOR YOUR EVALUATION



A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING YOUR VISIT, THE
PROCESS, AND WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

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HELLO!

Welcome to Autism West Behavior Partners!

We're glad you're here.

We understand that starting an evaluation process can bring a mix of emotions – relief, uncertainty, curiosity, even anxiety. Whether this is your first assessment or part of an ongoing journey, we're here to help you navigate the process with clarity, compassion, and expertise.

This guide is designed to help you feel prepared and supported. Inside, you'll find answers to common questions about your appointment, information about the conditions we often assess (like ADHD and Autism Spectrum Disorder), and an overview of how we can support you afterward.

At Autism West, we believe that understanding your mind is a powerful tool. Let's begin!

Warmly,

The Autism West Team



HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR APPOINTMENT

Feeling unsure about what to bring or how to prepare? Here are a few things that can help:

- Get a **good night's sleep** before your appointment if possible.
- **Eat beforehand** – it can be hard to focus if you're hungry!
- Bring necessary **paperwork**, such as past evaluations, school records, or relevant medical history.
- If you're taking any **medications**, please have a list ready.
- Bring **comfort items**, such as headphones, fidgets, water, or anything that helps you feel grounded and comfortable.
- If this is your **child's appointment**, feel free to bring snacks, a comfort object, or anything they might need to feel at ease.
- If the individual being assessed uses **communication supports** (e.g., AAC devices), they are encouraged to bring them.

There's no need to "study" or prepare answers in advance. **Just come as you are!**



NOTES FOR MY ASSESSMENT

SAMPLE PAGE - **NOT REQUIRED** FOR APPOINTMENT



CURRENT SYMPTOMS,
CONCERNS, QUESTIONS...

MEDICATION LIST:

TREATMENT GOALS:

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE EVALUATION

Your evaluation may include:

- **A Clinical Interview** – A conversation to understand your history, strengths, and challenges.
- **A Comfortable, Interactive Session** – The assessment involves structured activities, conversations, and interactions tailored to the individual's age and developmental level (i.e. play-based, trauma-informed).
- **A Standardized Approach** – The evaluator will follow a structured process to ensure accurate and objective observations.
- **Parent/Caregiver Input** – For children and adolescents, caregivers may be asked to provide additional background information to help contextualize the assessment results.
- **Observation Without Pressure** – There are no right or wrong answers. The goal is to observe natural behaviors in a supportive setting.
- **Behavioral Questionnaires** – You or someone close to you may be asked to complete forms about everyday functioning.

Testing can take anywhere from **2–6 hours**, sometimes over **multiple sessions**. We'll take breaks as needed and work at a pace that feels manageable.



WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE EVALUATION?



Once your evaluation is complete, we move into the **integration and feedback phase**. This phase (and receiving your results) will take time as your clinician will analyze the observations and combine them with other relevant information (such as developmental history and caregiver reports) to provide a diagnostic impression. A follow-up meeting will be scheduled to review the results and discuss recommendations for support, services, and next steps.

At A Glance:

- We carefully score and analyze all parts of your assessment.
- We create a comprehensive report that includes your strengths, areas of need, diagnostic impressions (if applicable), and personalized recommendations.
- You'll be invited to a feedback session to review your results, ask questions, and explore next steps together.
- We'll discuss what your results mean in real-world terms; whether that's accommodations, therapeutic support, or deeper self-understanding.



WHAT IS THE ADOS-2?

The **ADOS-2** (Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule) is considered the “gold standard” for assessing Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). It is a structured, standardized assessment that observes communication, social interaction, and behaviors associated with autism. The ADOS-2 helps clinicians determine whether someone meets the criteria for ASD, but it does not provide a full picture of an individual’s personality, strengths, or identity.

If you're undergoing an autism assessment, we may include the ADOS-2 as it is a widely used, research-backed tool:

- The ADOS-2 is not a test you can pass or fail. It's a set of structured, play-based or conversational activities designed to observe **social interaction, communication, and behavior**.
- There are different versions depending on **age, language, and developmental level**.
- It usually lasts **40–60 minutes** and is administered **one-on-one** with a trained clinician.
- The ADOS-2 is one part of the larger diagnostic process and is combined with interviews, history, and other tools to ensure



WHAT YOUR RESULTS MEAN



We know receiving results can feel overwhelming. Our goal is to translate clinical data into meaningful insight:

- Results highlight your cognitive, emotional, or social patterns; **not who you are as a person, but tools for understanding how you move through the world.**
- Diagnostic labels, when applicable, are used thoughtfully and only if they help explain experiences or guide support.
- We focus on both strengths and challenges, helping you understand how they interact and what supports might be most helpful.
- Your report is written in a clear, user-friendly way, and we're here to explain anything that feels confusing.

ASD Screening / ADOS-2 Note: Your assessment results are designed to provide clarity on whether an autism diagnosis is appropriate. However, we recognize that autism is just one part of an individual's overall identity. The ADOS-2 focuses on identifying clinical traits of ASD, and while it is a highly reliable tool, it does not capture aspects such as cognitive abilities, personality traits, or cultural identity.



NEXT STEPS & ADDITIONAL ASSESSMENTS

If you would like to explore additional perspectives beyond the clinical diagnosis, we can recommend specialists who provide further evaluations, such as:

- **Mental Health Medication Consultation** – Medication management also available through AWBP!
- **Neuropsychological Testing** – Assesses cognitive strengths and challenges.
- **Developmental Assessments** – Evaluates social, emotional, and adaptive functioning.
- **Identity & Strengths-Based Counseling** – Helps individuals understand their diagnosis in the context of their personal identity and life goals.
- **Occupational Therapy Evaluations** – Examines sensory processing and daily life skills.



EXPLORING NEURODIVERSITY AND SELF-IDENTITY

Assessment can be a powerful step in exploring self-identity, especially through a neurodivergent lens. Whether you're seeking an ASD, ADHD, or other neurodevelopmental diagnosis (or simply more clarity), our goal is to **affirm** who you are, not pathologize your experience. Neurodiversity recognizes that brains are wired differently – and that's okay. In fact, we celebrate that here at AWBP! Understanding your brain can open doors to **self-compassion, self-advocacy, and new ways of navigating life**. As a team, we hold space for processing any emotions that come up – grief, relief, joy, confusion, or all of the above.

Many individuals find it helpful to explore their diagnosis through a **neurodiversity-affirming lens**. This means recognizing ASD & ADHD as a natural variation in human thinking and behavior, rather than solely a medical diagnosis. If you are interested in learning more about neurodiversity and self-identity, here are some resources:

- **Books:** NeuroTribes by Steve Silberman, Unmasking Autism by Devon Price
- **Online Communities:** The Autism Self Advocacy Network (ASAN), NeuroClastic
- **Counseling, ABA, and Support Groups** are also offered through AWBP – ask your clinician for more information!



HOW WE CAN SUPPORT YOU

We are here to help answer any questions you may have. If you would like to schedule a follow-up consultation to discuss your results in greater detail or explore next steps, please reach out to us. Our goal is to provide you with the resources and support you need to move forward confidently.

Beyond the evaluation, we offer continued care and connection in the following ways:

- Counseling & ABA (in-house!)
- Medication management
- Consultation for school or work accommodations
- Referrals for occupational therapy, or executive functioning support
- Coaching or psychoeducation for individuals and families
- Letters or documentation when needed for IEPs, 504 Plans, or disability services

We believe in a **collaborative approach**. If ongoing support would be helpful, we'll help you build a network that works for you.

We appreciate the opportunity to support you on this journey and look forward to assisting you further!



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Does Autism West Behavior Partners offer ADHD & Autism screening?

Yes, our skilled clinical psychiatric team takes an age-appropriate approach to screening, using the latest clinical tools and protocols. The screening feels more like play for children, and more like an interview for adults.

Who can get screened?

Screening is recommended for anyone experiencing symptoms commonly associated with neurodiversity, at any age. A pediatrician, primary care physician, or educator may recommend testing, but no referral is required for many insurances.

Why get Autism testing?

A neurodiversity diagnosis often opens doors to new services and therapies that help individuals succeed in school, social settings, parenting, and work.

What are common neurodiversity diagnoses?

Each person has a unique way of processing sounds, smells, touch, and the world around them. While Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and Anxiety are the most frequently diagnosed conditions, we help clients embrace their neurodiversity and find new ways to successfully interact with people and their environments.

What is the wait to get tested?

We've recently added a Doctoral Nurse Practitioner to our team to expand our testing capabilities, and are typically able to offer testing in just a few weeks. With many Denver-area behavioral health providers running months-long waitlists for this testing, we place a high priority on access to this important early intervention care.

What if English is not the client's primary language?

We do our best to deliver inclusive services to all clients, regardless of language. We are proud to have several Spanish-speaking providers and schedulers on our team, and do our best to accommodate language needs. A client is also invited to bring a family member or friend to testing to help with interpretation if needed.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Does my child need to be present for the parent interview?

Not always. In many cases, we prefer to speak with parents or caregivers privately during the initial interview, especially when gathering developmental history. This helps us get a more detailed background without distractions or pressure on the child. Your provider will let you know what's best for your specific evaluation plan.

Will I stay with my child during the ADOS-2?

Usually, no. The ADOS-2 is designed to be conducted one-on-one in a controlled setting to observe natural responses. However, for very young children or when clinically appropriate, we may have a parent present in the room. Your provider will discuss the plan with you ahead of time.

How long after the ADOS-2 will I receive the results?

You can expect to receive results during a scheduled feedback session, typically within 2–3 weeks of completing the ADOS and all related evaluation components. We want to ensure your results are thoughtfully reviewed, scored, and interpreted before sharing them with you.

Should I send my child with a snack or other materials?

Yes, depending on your child's age and the type of evaluation, snacks may be part of the testing process, particularly if your child is completing the ADOS-2 or assessments that involve social communication. Snacks help us observe natural behaviors like requesting, labeling, and motor coordination in a way that feels playful and non-intrusive. If snacks are not needed for your child's evaluation, your provider will let you know in advance.

****** If your provider asks you to bring snacks, here are some helpful guidelines:***

- Please bring two types of snacks; for example, a crunchy snack like crackers and a sweet or chewy option like cookies.
- Include a sippy cup or small container with juice or water.
- Let your provider know in advance if your child has any food allergies. **This is very important for safety and for planning the testing environment.**
- If your child does have allergies, we may ask you to send the snacks in two separate containers that are harder for your child to open independently; this helps us avoid any risk of cross-contamination if testing materials are used during snack-based tasks.

QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

We know assessments can bring up lots of feelings and questions, and we are happy to address them! You're welcome to reach out to our office before or after your appointment, request clarification about the process, testing tools, or your results, and share any access needs or accommodations - we want this process to work for you! Your voice matters. This is a partnership, and your comfort is important to us.

We appreciate the opportunity to support you on this journey and look forward to providing a thorough and compassionate evaluation experience!

CONTACT US!



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