

Diagnosing ADHD: Conducting Valid, Comprehensive, and Collaborative Assessments

Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common childhood psychiatric diagnoses and is associated with long-term pervasive impairment across several domains of functioning (Barkley & Mash, 2007; Ramsay, 2010). ADHD is heterogeneous in nature (Barkley, 2005) and can be extremely difficult to demonstrate diagnostic specificity (Hale, Reddy et al., 2010). Currently, there are no critical diagnostic tests for ADHD, making it difficult to reach a conclusive diagnosis. Despite empirically supported guidelines to promote best practices in diagnosing ADHD (e.g., American Academy of Pediatrics, AAP, 2000; National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence [NICE], 2013), clinicians often do not follow these guidelines (Koonce, 2007; Kovshoff et al., 2012). In general, there continues to be significant variability and inconsistency in how ADHD is diagnosed (Kovshoff, 2012; Lilienfeld, Ammirati, & David, 2012) and a lack of agreement in how various information sources should be integrated (Wright et al., 2007).

Despite the difficulties in assessing for ADHD, psychologists are often required to provide accurate, valid, reliable, and quality assessments that reflect students' unique needs to promote their ongoing success across all areas of functioning. This session delineates a comprehensive approach to diagnosing ADHD. Participants will learn: a) strategies to increase the likelihood of obtaining valid assessment results; b) how to integrate the data to highlight students' areas of strengths and challenges; c) how to maximize collaboration with parents to promote their engagement with treatment recommendations; and c) how to link data to intervention, thereby creating meaningful and effective recommendations for students to maximize their success in all areas of functioning.

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