

THE NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL EXAMINATION

An Introduction for Patients and Families



Diagnosis, Treatment & Forensic Analysis

WHAT IS THE NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL EXAMINATION?

The Neuropsychological Examination involves comprehensive assessment of brain function with standardized tests and clinical procedures. Various mental capacities are systematically evaluated, including:

- Intelligence
- Perceptual and motor abilities
- Attention, memory, and learning
- Language
- Planning and organization
- Problem solving and conceptualization
- Academic skills
- Emotional status, behavior, and personality

WHO IS QUALIFIED TO CONDUCT THE NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL EXAMINATION?

A Neuropsychological Examination can only be conducted by a psychologist who has specialized training and experience, including:

- Education and supervision in clinical psychology and neuropsychology

- Postdoctoral training in brain-behavior relationships and neuropsychological assessment
- Expertise in specialized techniques of assessment and clinical interpretation

ARE ALL NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL EXAMINATIONS THE SAME?

No. A Neuropsychological Examination does not involve a fixed set of tests that anyone can administer. Specialized training enables the neuropsychologist to use those procedures that yield the most comprehensive understanding of an individual's strengths and weaknesses.

WHAT IS THE EXAMINATION LIKE?

- The examination involves a variety of mental tasks, most of which are completed while sitting at a table. There are no painful or invasive procedures such as needles or electrodes.
- Clinical evaluations often involve 6 to 12 hours of face-to-face contact, although this can vary significantly based on the referral question and other factors. Forensic examinations may be up to twice as long.
- The examination can be scheduled in sessions of different duration and adjusted for patient endurance.

WHEN IS A NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL EXAMINATION NEEDED?

Neuropsychological Examination is indicated when impairment in cognitive, behavioral, and/or emotional functioning is suspected. Referral is typically made to rule out the following conditions and to describe their impact on a person's functioning:

- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Stroke
- Developmental Learning Disabilities
- Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
- Psychiatric or Neuropsychiatric Disorders
- Seizure Disorders
- Medical Illnesses or Treatments
- Effects of Toxic Chemicals or Chronic Substance Abuse
- Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias

The Neuropsychological Examination can systematically monitor progress in rehabilitation after brain injury or other neurological disease and to plan educational and vocational programs. It can also be invaluable for disability determination and forensic (legal) purposes.

WHAT KINDS OF OUTCOMES CAN RESULT FROM THE NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL EXAMINATION?

Depending on the referral question, the Neuropsychological Examination may:

- Confirm or clarify the diagnosis.
- Yield a profile of strengths and weaknesses to guide rehabilitation, educational or vocational interventions, or other treatment.
- Document effects of treatment and changes in function across examinations.
- Result in referral to other specialists such as educational therapists, cognitive rehabilitation professionals, neurologists, psychiatrists, psychologists, special education teachers, or vocational counselors.
- Identify treatment options and compensatory strategies to enhance function.
- Help both patient and family to understand and cope with problems that led to examination and to access relevant services.

WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP?

For additional information, to make a referral, or to schedule an appointment, please contact CNS at 203-271-3809 or cns@clinicalneuropsych.com.