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# Ten Things Every Parent Should Know About: Behavioral Assessment

1. Every parent or caregiver has an “imagined future” for their children. It is normal to be stressed or frustrated when faced with information about your child’s behavior that conflicts with your sense of who they are or what their future might bring.
2. A formal assessment by a health professional or licensed psychologist is the best thing that could happen to your child. The assessment will provide an opportunity for you to get answers to whatever questions you, or others, have about your child.
3. If these behaviors of concern are not significant, you will have some reassurance. However, if there is an issue of concern, you can have confidence in the fact that finding and treating health problems of any kind as early as possible in childhood has positive, long-lasting effects on the lives of those children and their families.
4. One challenge is that diagnosing behavioral health and other learning or developmental disorders is a little complicated, since there is no medical test (like a blood test or brain scan) to diagnose these disorders.
5. The process of the diagnostic evaluation is usually determined by the policies of your state or the managed care organization that handles your health coverage.
6. Diagnosis is accomplished through a comprehensive clinical evaluation, including but not limited to: a detailed review of the child’s medical, social, educational and developmental history; parent interview and questionnaires; observation of the child; and formal testing of a child’s behavior and development using professional assessments.
7. Sometimes these assessments take place in one day, over a few hours; other times, they require a few days.
8. The outcome of an assessment is a diagnostic report, which documents the process of the assessment and the clinician’s observations, findings and conclusions. If your child receives a diagnostic report, keep a copy of it and sign the consent forms to allow it to be sent to healthcare professionals and therapists who will be helping your child now.
9. Once the specific condition is identified, you will have to make some decisions as to the best approach to therapy or treatment. Don’t rely on any one person to guide you; gather information from lots of legitimate sources and ask lots of questions. Find a trusted professional to help you sort through what you’ve learned and decide what’s best for your family.
10. Behavioral and developmental conditions do not resolve overnight, but require patience and commitment. The good news is that early identification and treatment of these issues leads to long-lasting positive outcomes for both children and their families.

For more information, ask your child’s healthcare professional.