

Template: Steps to Start the Autism Assessment Process for Teens

This template is designed to guide you through the process of seeking an autism assessment for your teen. Follow these steps to ensure a smooth and organized approach, helping you prepare and access the support your teen may need.

Step 1: Consult with a Pediatrician or Mental Health Expert

The first step in seeking an autism assessment is scheduling an appointment with a healthcare professional, such as:

- **Pediatrician**
- **Psychiatrist**
- **Psychologist**

These experts can offer insights into whether the behaviors you're noticing are characteristic of autism. Be prepared to:

- Share any concerns you have about your teen's social interactions, communication challenges, repetitive behaviors, or other noticeable traits.
- Ask questions about the autism assessment process, what it involves, and how to prepare.

Make sure to bring any past medical records, school reports, or observations that might be relevant.

Step 2: Prepare a List of Observed Symptoms and Behaviors

Before the consultation, create a detailed list of the behaviors and symptoms you've noticed. This will help the healthcare provider better understand your teen's challenges. Your list could include observations like:

- Difficulty making eye contact or engaging in back-and-forth conversation
- Repetitive movements or behaviors (e.g., hand-flapping, lining up objects)
- Sensitivity to sensory stimuli (e.g., loud noises, bright lights)
- Strong attachment to routines and becoming upset with changes
- Social isolation or preference for solitary play or activities

Tip: Keep a journal for a week to track your teen's daily behaviors, noting both unusual and routine actions. Bring this with you to the appointment.

Step 3: Reach Out to Local Autism Support Services or Specialists

Once your healthcare provider confirms the need for an assessment, contact local autism support services or specialists for more specific guidance. Here are some options to explore:

- **Autism support organizations** (They often provide free consultations or direct you to specialists)
- **Specialists** like developmental pediatricians, child psychologists, or speech and occupational therapists who specialize in autism.

You may want to ask:

- **What is the next step after the initial consultation?**
- **How can I schedule an autism evaluation?**
- **Are there government-funded assessment options available?**

Most local autism support services have detailed directories of specialists and resources you can use to guide your next steps.

Step 4: Follow Up with Relevant Professionals

Depending on your initial consultation, the autism assessment process may involve multiple professionals, such as:

- **Psychologists** – For cognitive and behavioral evaluations
- **Speech Pathologists** – To assess communication challenges and social interactions
- **Occupational Therapists** – For sensory or motor skill assessments

It is essential to:

- Ensure that the necessary professionals are involved in your teen's assessment.
- Make appointments with the recommended specialists.
- Confirm with your insurance provider or autism support service whether the costs are covered or if financial assistance is available.

Keep all paperwork organized, including referrals and appointment confirmations.

Step 5: Ensure You Have the Necessary Referrals for Government-Funded Assessments

If you're pursuing government-funded autism assessments, you may need to gather specific referrals from your pediatrician or GP. These assessments may take longer due to waitlists, but they often involve a **multidisciplinary team**, including:

- Pediatricians



- Psychologists
- Occupational therapists
- Speech pathologists

Here's what to do:

1. **Check requirements for your state or region** – Some areas may have different processes for accessing government-funded assessments.
2. **Get all the necessary referral documents** – Ensure your pediatrician has submitted the referral and you have copies.
3. **Follow up on wait times and scheduling** – Contact the autism assessment service to ask about waitlists and estimated timelines.

Step 6: Organize All Documentation and Follow-Up Care

After your teen's autism assessment is completed, you will receive a report with the results and potential diagnosis. Ensure you:

- Review the report thoroughly and ask any questions you may have.
- Work with your healthcare provider to create a follow-up care plan.
- Schedule any necessary follow-up appointments with specialists, such as therapists or educational consultants, to support your teen.

You should also consider contacting:

- **Autism support groups** for ongoing advice and community support.
 - **Educational specialists** to adapt your teen's learning environment if needed.
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