



Frequently Asked Questions

What child should be referred to PAWS?

Any child with developmental delays that are not better explained by another disorder should be referred to PAWS. For example, a child who is not speaking at an age-appropriate level, not responding to their name consistently, or not following simple directions may require further evaluation. A child who may be labeled as a “sensory kid” may also have concerns for Autism and would benefit from a PAWS evaluation.

What does an evaluation consist of?

Expect to be at the assessment for a few hours. We provide a multidisciplinary approach to achieve a comprehensive examination. There is a parent interview that will address specific concerns, as well as gauge how the child is meeting specific developmental milestones. We will conduct a play-based assessment to assess the child’s ability to participate in simple activities and convey needs or wants (whether verbally or nonverbally). Other team members will also perform specific tests in the areas of speech, fine and gross motor skills, and behavioral traits, as indicated.

How old must my child be to be evaluated?

An evaluation can be conducted as early as 18 months; however, if we are unable to gain sufficient information from the evaluation to feel confident in providing a diagnosis, the child may be required to return in 6-12 months for re-evaluation.

How old is too old for an examination?

Autism can be diagnosed at any age. However, at PAWS, we only conduct assessments from age 18 months through 18 years. If you have concerns beyond age 18, we can help refer you to an outside facility for diagnosis.

Why is it important to have my child diagnosed?

Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder. It is a difference in how the individual interprets and responds to their environment. It does not prohibit these individuals from having very fulfilling lives. By gaining a diagnosis, individuals with autism can qualify for services to support their unique strengths and challenges. Research tells us that early intervention services are instrumental in gaining positive outcomes for these children. With an autism diagnosis, most insurance companies have specific coverage outlined for medical and therapy services. These services may not be as easily covered without a diagnosis. It is also beneficial for qualifying for and developing individualized education plans for the school system to support the child as they navigate their educational paths. A diagnosis may also be beneficial for the family of the individual. A family that is properly informed of their child’s diagnosis will experience clarity in understanding why the child acts and responds to their environment in a way that may look different from their other children.

Do I need a provider referral for PAWS?

Parents may self-refer by calling our direct line or by entering information on our website. They are also welcome to request a referral from their primary care provider.