

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Bill Yan to the Minister for Health:

Wait Times

- 1. What is the current average wait time after referral for an appointment with the child development team? What is the longest time someone has waited in the 2022/23 financial year?**

Children's Development Team Services in Darwin and Alice Springs are provided through a triage system that prioritises clients based on referral information. Wait times can fluctuate dependent on numerous factors such as staffing and patient related factors, including the ability of the service to contact the patient and their family, waiting for 'right time right place' to assess, determining eligibility (e.g. NDIS), entering/exiting other services (e.g. TFHC). There is no system which allows data to report accurately on waiting times

- 2. What is the current average wait time after referral for an appointment with a speech therapist? What is the longest time someone has waited in the 2022/23 financial year?**

See below.

- 3. What is the current average wait time after referral for an appointment with an occupational therapist? What is the longest time someone has waited in the 2022/23 financial year?**

See below.

- 4. What is the current average wait time after referral for an appointment with a physiotherapist? What is the longest time someone has waited in the 2022/23 financial year?**

There is no system which allows data to report accurately on waiting times. Estimated waiting times are provided. Response to Questions 2, 3 and 4:

CDT Darwin	SP estimated wait times	OT estimated wait times	PT estimated wait times	Developmental diagnostic clinic (Paediatrician referral in only)
0-5yrs (prior to full time school)	6 mths	6 mths	2 mths	6 mths
5-18yrs (full time school)	13 mths	18 mths	2 mths	

CDT Alice Springs*	SP estimated wait times	OT estimated wait times	PT estimated wait times	Developmental diagnostic clinic (Paediatrician referral in only)
0-5yrs (prior to full time school)	9 mths	14 mths	7 mths	6 mths
5-18yrs (full time school)	20 mths	24 mths	7 mths	

*CDT Alice Springs offer a weekly Drop In Service during the school term, so families can attend with their child for a consultation with a Speech Pathologist and/or Occupational Therapist for an initial screening/assessment, strategies/recommendations, family support, and referral on to other specialist or mainstream services

5. What is the current average wait time after referral for an appointment with a specialist regarding ASD? What is the longest time someone has waited in the 2022/23 financial year?

See below.

6. What is the current average wait time after referral for an appointment with a specialist regarding FASD? What is the longest time someone has waited in the 2022/23 financial year?

See below.

7. What is the current average wait time after referral for an appointment with a specialist regarding learning difficulties? What is the longest time someone has waited in the 2022/23 financial year?

Response to Questions 5, 6 and 7:

The diagnostic process for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), and a child with learning difficulties is complex and these conditions fall under the overall term - Neurodevelopmental Disorders.

Children are usually referred to a Paediatrician with a broad concern about their neurodevelopment, rather than for a particular diagnosis. Diagnosis for neurodevelopmental disorders in children requires a multi-disciplinary assessment, involvement of a speech pathologist, occupational therapist, clinical psychologist or neuropsychologist, physiotherapist and the school is required to fully understand the child's deficits (delays) before a diagnosis can be made.

There is no system which allows data to report accurately on waiting times. Referrals to the Paediatric outpatient service with concerns about neurodevelopment are triaged as category 3

In Top End

- The waitlist for this group of children averages about 12 months.

In Central Australia

- Children referred to general paediatrics clinic have an average wait time between 3-9 months.
- Central Australian Aboriginal Congress provides diagnostic services in conjunction with ASH Paediatrics and wait times range from 12-18 months.
- Children presenting with ASD symptoms through CDT will usually be seen in 2-6 months.

8. What is the current average wait time after referral for an appointment with a child behavior specialist? What is the longest time someone has waited in the 2022/23 financial year?

'Child Behavioural Specialist' is not a recognised qualification or position in the NT.

9. What is the current average wait time after referral for an appointment with a hearing specialist? What is the longest time someone has waited in the 2022/23 financial year?

- Top End average wait time: 61 days and for urgent referrals are seen within 1 day
- Alice Springs average wait time is within 2 weeks and urgent appointments are available.