

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr 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 2021/22 financial year?**

Average wait times for urban based children for Child Development Teams from referral to appointments are based on urgency:

- Urgent (high risk): 1 month
- Non-urgent (lower risk): 4 months

For remote children, wait times are dependent on number of priority referrals in community, availability of families and caregivers in community at the time of a visit. Remote trip cancellations due to COVID-19 have also affected wait times.

- Average wait time varies between the regions from 6 weeks to 6 months

Longest wait times in 2021/22 financial year

Urban

- Urgent (high risk): 2 months
- Non-urgent (low risk): 6 months

Remote

Longest wait time varies significantly between regions and remoteness from 6 months to up to 2-3 years, depending on clinical priority and availability of family.

- 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 2021/22 financial year?**

Average wait times for urban based children for Speech Pathology from referral to appointments are based on urgency:

- Urgent (high risk): 1 month
- Non-urgent (lower risk): 6 months

For remote children, wait times are dependent on number of priority referrals in community, availability of families and caregivers in community at the time of a visit. Remote trip cancellations due to COVID-19 have also affected wait times.

- Average wait time varies between the regions from 6 weeks to 6 months

Longest wait times in 2021/22 financial year

Urban

- Urgent (high risk): 2 months
- Non-urgent (low risk): 8 months

Remote

Longest wait time varies significantly between regions and remoteness from 6 months to up to 2-3 years, depending on clinical priority and availability of family.

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 2021/22 financial year?

Average wait times for urban based children for Occupational Therapy from referral to appointments are based on urgency:

- Urgent (high risk): 1 month
- Non-urgent (lower risk): 6 months

For remote children, wait times are dependent on number of priority referrals in community, availability of families and caregivers in community at the time of a visit. Remote trip cancellations due to COVID-19 have also affected wait times.

- Average wait time varies between the regions from 6 weeks to 6 months

Longest wait times in 2021/22 financial year

Urban

- Urgent (high risk): 2 months
- Non-urgent (low risk): 8 months

Remote

Longest wait time varies significantly between regions and remoteness from 6 months to up to 2-3 years, depending on clinical priority and availability of family.

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 2021/22 financial year?

Average wait times for urban based children for Physiotherapy from referral to appointments are based on urgency:

- Urgent (high risk): 3 weeks
- Non-urgent (lower risk): 6 months

For remote children, wait times are dependent on number of priority referrals in community, availability of families and caregivers in community at the time of a visit. Remote trip cancellations due to COVID-19 have also affected wait times.

- Average wait time varies between the regions from 6 weeks to 6 months

Longest wait times in 2021/22 financial year

Urban

- Urgent (high risk): 6 weeks
- Non-urgent (low risk): 6 months

Remote

Longest wait time varies significantly between regions and remoteness from 6 months to up to 2-3 years, depending on clinical priority and availability of family.

- 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 2021/22 financial year?**

Average wait times for children regarding ASD from referral to Specialist appointment vary depending on the region's service model. Paediatricians can make the diagnosis without a specific ASD clinic.

It can range from immediate diagnosis in outpatients clinic to 8 months.

Longest wait time in 2021/22 financial year was 10 months.

- 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 2021/22 financial year?**

Average wait time for children regarding FASD from referral to specialist appointment vary depending on the region's service model and is generally 6 months.

Longest wait time in 2021/22 financial year was 10 months.

- 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 2021/22 financial year?**

As above

- 8. What is the current average wait time after referral for an appointment with a child behaviour specialist? What is the longest time someone has waited in the 2021/22 financial year?**

There is no data available to answer this question accurately.

A 'child behaviour specialist' may refer to a number of clinicians. A Paediatrician is usually the first reference for children with behaviour problems.

Children may also be managed via the Australian Government's Better Access initiative which gives Medicare rebates to help people access mental health professionals and care, regardless of where they live.

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 2021/22 financial year?

Average wait time for urban based children for a hearing specialist from referral to appointment is 1-2 months.

Longest wait time in 2021/22 financial year urban based children was 3 months.

Outreach hearing services for remote based children are based on priority. Outreach trips are scheduled based on need in each community.

There are multiple hearing service providers in the NT and high risk children that cannot be reviewed within a reasonable timeframe by NT Health or are not in community at time of visit, are notified to other service providers.