

Estimates Committee 2016
Questions Taken On Notice

(14/06/2016 to 23/06/2016)

Date: 22/06/2016 Output: Whole of Government
Sub Output:
Subject: Length of time to establish an assessment for a disability

From: Ms Nicole Manison to Hon Peter Chandler
Education

Question: **8-5**
If a student is requiring an assessment to see if they have a disability, how long on average does this take to occur from the moment it is decided the assessment is required? By region as well please.

Answer:
Answered On: 07/07/2016

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Question Taken on Notice

Date: 22/06/2016 **Output:**

Subject: Length of time to establish an assessment for a disability

From: Member for Wanguri, Ms Nicole Manison MLA

To: Minister for Education, the Hon Peter Chandler MLA

Agency: Department of Education

Number: 8.5

Question: If a student is requiring an assessment to see if they have a disability, how long on average does this take to occur from the moment it is decided the assessment is required? By region as well please.

Answer: The current referral system in place does not allow at a system or regional level to determine aggregate wait times. However, there are clear, agreed timelines and referral processes that are monitored at an individual student level. The department is continuing to refine the data capture of the referral process to enable enhanced regional and system reporting.

The Department of Education (DoE) has a process for schools to undertake if a student presents with learning difficulties in class. The teacher collects evidence of learning and implements targeted program support to assess if learning gains are made over a minimum of a 10-week period. If no improvement is evident, the school will consult with the parent and permission must be given to undertake further investigation. Once parent authorisation is obtained, referrals are forwarded by the school to the regional office. There is an agreed 2 week turnaround to analyse the evidence and allocate the appropriate education advisor.

Diagnoses must be made by professionals such as clinical psychologists, paediatricians, and speech pathologists.

DoE practitioners are able to diagnose disability categories such as Intellectual Impairment and Communication Disorders, and may support a paediatrician to explore other possible diagnoses. All referrals to a school psychologist are overseen by the senior school psychologist and regional support is implemented if wait times are unreasonable. If students are not at the school on the day the assessment is scheduled, this can lead to delays.

Diagnosis for Autism Spectrum Disorder can take between 9 to 18 months. Private practitioners and the clinic based at Charles Darwin

University provide this service. The length of time taken to diagnose is due to the complexity of the assessment tool which involves a multi-disciplinary team that includes a paediatrician.