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A Parent's First Guide to Learning Differences™



Book Excerpt: Appendix D: Types of Doctors and Learning Specialists

APPENDIX D:

Types of Doctors and Specialists

When parents first start trying to help their child, they often think that their pediatrician will handle everything. When I sat down to write this book, I wanted to make sure to include a table showing all of the different specialists and what they do.¹⁷¹ This list continues to grow, and lists the typical types of doctors and specialists who can help diagnose or support your child.

<i>Professional</i>	<i>What They Do</i>	<i>License/Education</i>	<i>What They Diagnose</i>
School Psychologist	Assesses learning and school problems. Provides therapy. Trained to do intellectual and educational testing. Can assess emotional functioning.	PhD or MA NASP ¹⁷²	LD: yes, ADHD: no
School Counselor	Counseling and help with school problems. Many schools no longer have one	ACSA ¹⁷³	LD: no, ADHD: no
Special Education Teacher	Teacher trained in identifying and teaching children with learning disabilities.	MA in Special Ed, NASET, different for states. ¹⁷⁴	Identifies, but doesn't diagnose
Education Specialist, also called Learning Specialist	Assesses learning abilities and can perform various functions, including teaching, tutoring, advising on a child's educational needs, and other roles.	Not licensed. (Note: there's also an Ed.S. degree)	May be part of a team LD: not alone, ADHD: no
Educational Therapist	No specific training required. Often have special education training and teaching experience, and training in specific methodologies. Sometimes is mentored by a school-based specialist.	Not licensed. Often has a MA. AET ¹⁷⁵	LD: no, ADHD: no

<i>Professional</i>	<i>What They Do</i>	<i>License/Education</i>	<i>What They Diagnose</i>
Occupational Therapist (should be Pediatric Occupational Therapist)	Specialist identifying and working with sensory, motor, and movement problems. The OT evaluates, and then sets up goals and works toward them in every session.	AA, MA, or Ph.D., In schools and private practice NBCOT ¹⁷⁶ Additional certification in various therapies.	LD: some, ADHD: no, Sensory Processing Disorder: yes, Reflex integration issues: yes, depending on training
Speech Language Pathologist (SLP)	Specialist diagnosing and treating speech and language problems. SLP often diagnose and treat feeding problems, auditory problems, and social skills issues, as well. Often, a SLP will offer a social skills class, where children can practice social skills with other children.	MA. In schools and private practice ASHA ¹⁷⁷ Additional certification in various therapies.	LD: not alone, ADHD: no
Physician (e.g. Pediatrician)	Medical doctor	State medical board certification ABP ¹⁷⁸	LD: no, ADHD: yes Can prescribe medication

<i>Professional</i>	<i>What They Do</i>	<i>License/Education</i>	<i>What They Diagnose</i>
Educational Psychologist	Provides educational testing. Some can provide assessment of cognitive, intellectual functioning as well. Needs Ph.D. to administer a “level C” test (most intellectual functioning tests). Not trained to assess emotional functioning.	MA or private practice NASP ¹⁷⁹ or Ph.D. for practice	LD: yes, ADHD: yes
Clinical Psychologist	Assesses intellectual and emotional functioning. Provides therapy for emotional and behavioral problems. Treats both individuals and groups. In general, does not do educational testing needed to diagnose LD.	Ph.D. and licensing for private practice NASP ¹⁸⁰	LD: no, ADHD: yes
Neuropsychologist	Ph.D. level psychologist who assesses brain processing and functioning. May not be skilled in administering educational tests. Does not typically assess emotional functioning. Often, does not perform a full movement-based neurodevelopmental exam on a child, so it's a good idea to also get an evaluation from an OT. An OT evaluation is good input for a neuropsychologist.	Ph.D. and licensing for private practice ABPP ¹⁸¹	LD: yes, but may need educational assessment from education specialist, and sensory/motor assessment from occupational therapist. ADHD: yes

<i>Professional</i>	<i>What They Do</i>	<i>License/Education</i>	<i>What They Diagnose</i>
Psychiatrist	Medical doctor specializing in diagnosis and treatment of mental health. A psychiatrist is often used to prescribe medication to children.	Certified. ABPN ^{1,82}	LD: no, ADHD: yes Can prescribe medication
Audiologist	Clinical expert with a Ph.D. or Au.D. who is expert in the anatomical structures of the middle and inner ear. Performs diagnostic tests to discover extent of damage and pinpoint cause.	National certification. ASHA	LD: auditory processing, ADHD: no
Developmental Optometrist	Optometrist plus completed post-graduate training & credentialing. Measures visual fine motor skills (oculomotor control) & can prescribe vision therapy for things like vision tracking and focusing. Brought in if symptoms indicate that vision deficits other than near or far-sightedness are affecting a child's functional performance. Optometrists are medical-school educated. Ophthalmologists are not.	Post-grad work and certification COVD ¹⁸³	LD: no, ADHD: no, problems with vision input and processing: yes

<i>Professional</i>	<i>What They Do</i>	<i>License/Education</i>	<i>What They Diagnose</i>
Kinesiologist	A kinesiologist is a movement therapist, much like an occupational therapist. Kinesiologists are more popular in Europe. Although occupational therapists are often paid for by US insurance, kinesiologists are not.	KFRP ¹⁸⁴	LD: no, ADHD: no, Sensory Processing Disorder: yes, Reflex integration issues: yes
Movement Therapist	Movement therapist is a generic term. There are many different types of movement therapy, including The Anat Baniel Method [®] , Bal-a-Vis-X [™] , Brain Gym [®] , Masgutova Neurosensorimotor Reflex Integration Method (MNRI [®]), Theraband [™] Rhythmic Movement Training [™] . Typically, these therapies require training and certification from the founder.	Certified by the founder of the therapy, at the end of a class series.	LD: no, ADHD: no, Sensory Processing Disorder: partially, Reflex integration issues: yes
Dyslexia Specialist	Dyslexia specialist is a certificate program for general and special education teachers who are trained in Orton-Gillingham methods.	Certification from the Dyslexia Training Institute ¹⁸⁵	
Educational Consultant	Helps locate and create situations where K-12 students can succeed. Some specialize in executive function, tools, or college placement.	Usually ed or Psychology degrees. Some belong to IECA. ¹⁸⁶	Might have other qualifications that allow diagnosis.

<i>Professional</i>	<i>What They Do</i>	<i>License/Education</i>	<i>What They Diagnose</i>
Dietitian, Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN)	Translates science of nutrition into information about everyday diet. Promotes health, educates doctors and clients about nutritional information. Can diagnose food allergies.	BA or MA in Nutrition, 1200 hours of supervised practice, ACEND ¹⁸⁷	LD: no, ADHD: no, Food Allergies: yes, Can perform a nutrition-focused physical exam, ¹⁸⁸
Nutritionist	May have University degree in Food Science or Human Nutrition. Often work for businesses. May work as dietitian assistants or food journalists.	No certification necessary. ¹⁸⁹	