Assessment Day Frequently Asked Questions

How can I help prepare my child before the assessment?
Your child may be curious and possibly nervous about the assessment. Some things that may help your child to feel more comfortable would be:

- To be well rested.
- Take any medications that they would normally take that day.
- Be dressed in clothing that will be comfortable and allows for easy movement.
- Have your child talk to his or her therapist before their assessment, to help alleviate any fears.
- Talk to your child about what will happen after they go home, such as “After the assessment we will drive home, eat dinner and then sit together and watch a movie.”

What should I say to my child about why they are getting an assessment?
Telling your child about the assessment ahead of time and what to expect is really important. The following is a good example of what you can say to your child about the assessment. Feel free to call and talk to one of our clinical staff if you would like additional support in preparing your child.

“On Friday we’re going to a place called the Children’s Assessment Center. It’s in Kalamazoo. The reason we’re going to this appointment is so that we (foster parents, teachers, caseworker, therapist) can get a better understanding on the things you’re really good at, what you need more help with, and how we can be helpful in supporting you because we want you to feel safe and successful. We’ll be there from 9:30-3:30. You’ll work with a couple people on the CTAC team. They’ll have you do some activities and take some time to talk to you so they can get to know you better. You can be honest with them about what you think and what you need.”

What happens on an average CTAC assessment day?
The assessment day can feel like a long day for both children and caregivers. We want you to be fully prepared on what to expect. The following is a general outline of the day. We have to be flexible, so sometimes this outline changes based on the needs of the kids, but this will give you a picture of what it typically looks like.

Arrival
- Please arrive at 9:30. Check in at the front desk on the 3rd floor of the building.
- You and your child will be greeted by someone on CTAC’s clinical team and introduced to the staff that your child will be working with that day. This may include a CTAC clinician and/or 1-2 of our interns from Western Michigan University (occupational therapists, social workers, and speech language pathologists).
- CTAC staff will give you some additional paperwork that will need to be completed. These will need to be filled out and returned before the end of the day.
- Staff will check in with you throughout the day, to answer/ask questions and possibly do a brief interview with you to gather more information about your child.

Morning (9:30-11:30)
- Your child will participate in developmental testing. This includes activities that involve movement, talking, drawing/writing and storytelling. These will help us gather information on your child’s memory, attention and academic strengths as well as speech and language development and coordination (fine/gross motor development).
- Your child will meet with CTAC’s pediatrician for a brief physical exam. This includes measuring your child’s height, weight and head circumference. The doctor will also look at your child’s facial features, check his or her pulse/heart rate, and facilitate a few movement activities such as balancing on one foot, jumping on one foot, etc. This will not require the removal or changing of clothing and there will be no shots.
Lunch (11:30-12:30)
- Your child will take a lunch break with you around 11:30.
- Lunch can be brought and eaten here at CTAC, or you may take your child to a local restaurant. Leaving the building for lunch can be a nice break for your child.
- Lunch is one hour and the assessment starts back up at 12:30.

Afternoon (12:30-3:30)
- Your child will complete any tests or activities that were not finished from the morning.
- Your child will also meet with a social worker for a one-on-one interview. The purpose of this time is to get to know your child better, listen to how your child perceives him/herself and his/her life experiences, and listen to what’s important to your child (past, present and future). This interview usually involves drawing, conversation and sometimes play.
- If it’s been requested as part of this assessment, there may be a time to observe your child playing with you (the caregiver). If this is the case, a CTAC staff member will give you a list of activities to play with your child and the materials you would need.

End of the day
- Children under the age of 4 years old are usually done before 2:00 pm. Children over the age of 4 are usually done by 3:30.
- Prior to leaving, a CTAC staff member will check in with you to let you know if there are any urgent concerns that need to be addressed. If you have any questions that remain, please feel free to ask those prior to leaving and/or feel free to call the office the following week.

Do I have to stay at the clinic during the assessment for the whole day?
Yes. During the assessment day, caregivers (and transporters) must stay at CTAC for the entire time. This is required by law, and helps to give your child a sense of safety that you are available if they should need you. We ask that you remain in the waiting area for the full day so that your child can check in with you as needed. If your child is uncomfortable or anxious beginning the assessment alone, you are welcome to accompany them to the assessment room to provide support until they are more comfortable.

What should I bring with me to the assessment?
- All completed paperwork. You should have received a packet in the mail. Please call our office if you have any questions about the forms. We are happy to help you complete any of the forms on the day of the assessment if you want assistance.
- It can feel like a long day for caregivers while you wait during the assessment. Many people bring a book or electronic device to pass the time.
- Snacks or beverages for yourself. We will have coffee and water available for you.
- CTAC will have snacks and beverages available for your child during the assessment. You can bring your own snacks for your child if you have a preference or your child has an allergy.

How can I best support my child after the assessment?
Great question. Your child may be extra tired after a long day of hard work. He or she may also experience reminders of his or her traumatic experiences that are triggering or bring feelings of anxiety and stress. Having a plan to provide extra support and comfort for your child will help. Here are some suggestions:
- Plan on communicating with your child’s therapist to help him or her process any triggers or emotions that may have surfaced during the day.
- Plan the evening following the assessment and talk to your child about what the plan is. If they are going somewhere for the night (i.e. a family visit), remind them of the plan and provide them with a way to contact you if they need to.
- Provide soothing items or familiar activities to do with your child, such as special toy, stuffed animal, etc.