

Brief Interaction Assessment & Recommendations



What is a brief interaction assessment?

Some people with developmental disabilities have difficulties interacting with other people. They might have difficulties using speech or understanding speech. Some people have very severe disabilities, and other people might struggle to interact with them.

All people have interactions with other people. People with very severe disabilities have interactions, even if they appear to have very few communications skills. Interactions can involve hanging out with someone, letting them know what's happening, reading their expressions of pain or pleasure, making choices, sharing what happened yesterday or in the future... there are many things that can be shared in interactions. Sometimes things are shared using words, and sometimes they are shared in other ways: body language, eye gaze, sounds, pictures, typing, signing, pace of movements, electronic communication devices.

An interaction assessment can be very helpful. It can give ideas for helping the person have better interactions. It can also document what is currently working best for the person.

Other terms for an interaction assessment are speech pathology assessment or communication assessment. I have chosen to use the term interaction assessment to emphasize that it is communication between two people, requiring skills from two people. My question when meeting some is "how do I need to be in order to be with you?"



I can do an interaction assessment. I have particular skills in working with people with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities. I also work with adults with cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, Rett syndrome, congenital deafblindness, autism, and other disabilities.

Photo used with permission from next of kin.
Source CDDHV/DHS project 2013

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What's involved in an interaction assessment?

Please request permission from the person (where possible) and their next of kin/ guardian, before requesting a service. You need to know that they are happy with the person being assessed and paying for the consultation. Sometimes I might ask to photograph or videorecord part of the interaction – please ask permission for person responsible prior to the visit.

An interaction assessment and recommendations involves the following:

- 1.5 hour home visit
- Observing the person and their support people (family/ support staff) in interactions
- Discussion with familiar interaction partners about their concerns about communication and what they feel works best
- Interacting with the person with a disability and trialling strategies
- A spoken summary of findings
- Written feedback from the visit including a summary of observations, strategies trialled and recommendations for next steps

This usually takes about ~ 2.5 clinical hours + travel

Sometimes people may request multiple visits for the interaction assessment. I might need to see the person in different contexts, interacting with different people. Each context might have different recommendations.

Additionally, some people may ask for me to talk about the recommendations at a staff meeting. This can be requested, and is costed separately.

The recommendations are custom written for each individual and their support network. These may include strategies to try immediately, recommendations for further assessment to explore particular skills areas (speech pathology or other), and documentation of the strategies that are currently working best.

What's involved in an interaction assessment?

There are a few different options for how to pay for an interaction assessment and recommendations.

I currently charge \$150 / hr for the visit and report writing. I charge 60% of the hourly rate for travel time to get to and from home visits.

A brief interaction assessment and written recommendations may cost \$375 (i.e. 2.5 hours x \$150) + travel time costs.

There are a range of options for how this might be paid:

- It can be paid entirely by the person with a disability
- The person may be able write the request in their NDIS plan, and NDIS may approve payment, or CarePlan
- The person with a disability or their supports can talk to their doctor about using the Chronic Disease Management Medicare item. This will allow them to have ~ \$50 of the fee from face to face contact covered by Medicare (i.e., if they have two face to face visits, then 2 claims for ~\$50 can be made – this cannot be made on the fee for the report writing).
Please note: The Chronic Disease Management Medicare item is only available for 5 allied health appointments each calendar year
- The person may be able to use private health insurance – please check with their insurer
- The person with a disability and the support provider may negotiate part payment by each.
For example the person with a disability pay for the assessment visit and the supporting organisation pays for the report writing and travel time.

Please indicate how the payment will be made prior to the consultation.

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Sheridan is a Certified Practising Speech Pathologist. In 2011, she completed doctoral studies, looking at interactions between adults with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities and their support staff.

She has worked in the government and non-government sector in Australia and the UK. Sheridan currently combines research and practice, being aware and contributing to best practice in the communication support of adults with disabilities.



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