CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DIAGNOSTIC CENTER, CENTRAL CA

Parent Handbook

Carole Bence, Director
Diagnostic Center, Central CA
1818 W. Ashlan Avenue
Fresno, CA 93705-1802

559-243-4047 ~ Fax: 559-222-1673
http://www.dcc-cde.ca.gov

Dear Parents,

The Diagnostic Center, Central California was established to provide assistance and support to families and educators who endeavor to provide quality educational opportunities for their students with unique learning profiles and special education needs. Our services include individual student assessments, as well as consultation, technical assistance and professional development trainings.

As I have learned from parents, anticipation of our assessments can be stressful on both the parents and the students. In an effort to minimize your apprehensions, this handbook was developed to answer frequently asked questions, so you know what to expect.

Invariably, parents and students actually enjoy their experience at the Diagnostic Center! Many students wish to continue coming beyond their scheduled assessment times, which is always a delight to hear from our perspective. Evaluation findings are sometimes surprisingly positive, yet sometimes not always as positive as we would all wish. Regardless of assessment outcomes, parents invariably feel that they were a significant part of the assessment and treated with respect and validation for their contributions. Information gleaned from the assessment can be utilized for both parents and educators to make informed decisions regarding your child's educational plan.

The role of the parents in the education of their child is most significant and a key factor in home-school collaboration. We endeavor to contribute information to answer diagnostic questions posed to promote positive student outcomes.

Please feel free to contact me or my Assistant Directors for further clarification on any issue of concern you may have either before, during or after the assessment.

We are looking forward to meeting you and working with your child. Rest assured, I have an exceptional staff that will extend every effort to meet your needs.

Most Sincerely,

Carole Bence

Carole Bence, Director

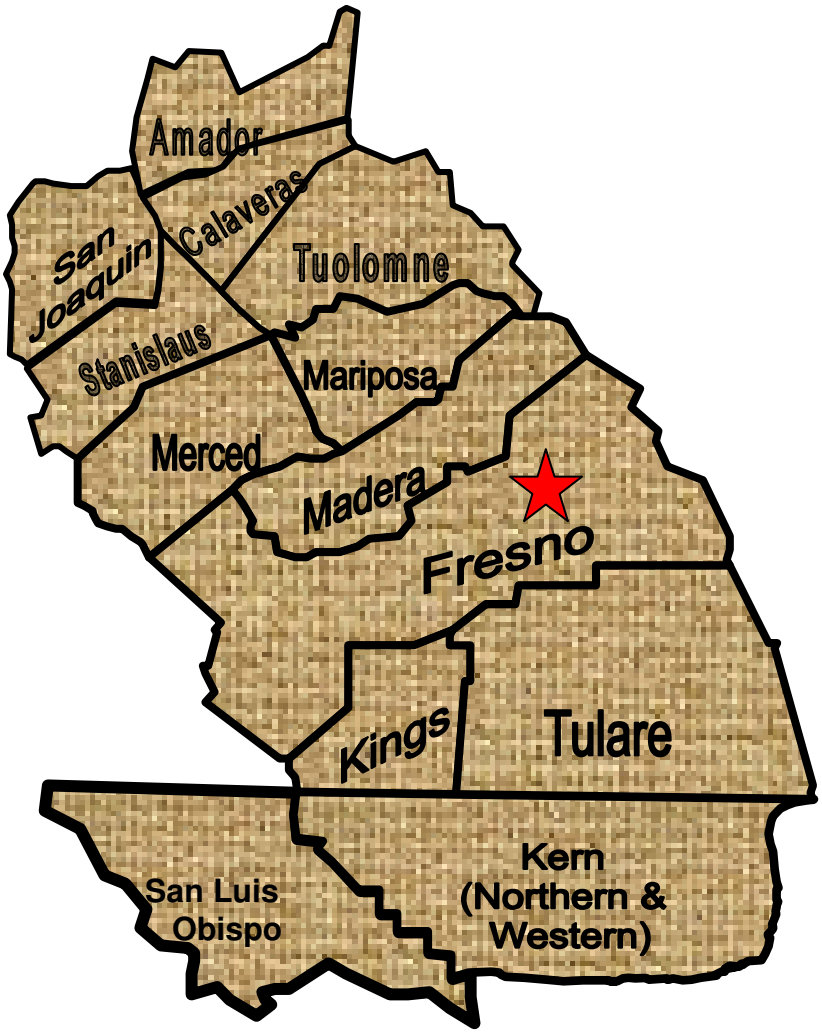
Assistant Directors:
Sarah Waterman
Sherry Fritts

DIAGNOSTIC CENTER, CENTRAL CALIFORNIA

Welcome to the Diagnostic Center, Central California. We are one of three Diagnostic Centers operated by the California Department of Education. Along with the other two Centers, located in Fremont and Los Angeles, our agency provides a variety of support services to families and educators in the form of student assessments, consultation, technical assistance and professional development opportunities.

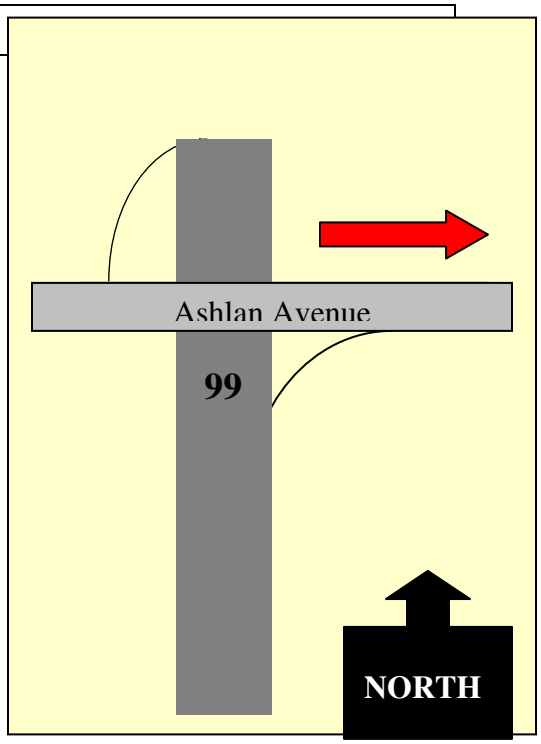
LOCATION AND SERVICE AREA

The Diagnostic Center, Central is located in Fresno and serves school districts and families within the following counties:



DIAGNOSTIC CENTER, CENTRAL CALIFORNIA

DIRECTIONS:



From Highway 99

- **Traveling Southbound**:

  1. Take the Ashlan Avenue Exit
  2. Merge onto N. Parkway Dr.
  3. Turn left at W. Ashlan
  4. Pass Hughes Avenue (keep in left lane)
  5. Make "U-turn" at Bengston Avenue
  6. The Diagnostic Center is on the right.

- **Traveling Northbound**

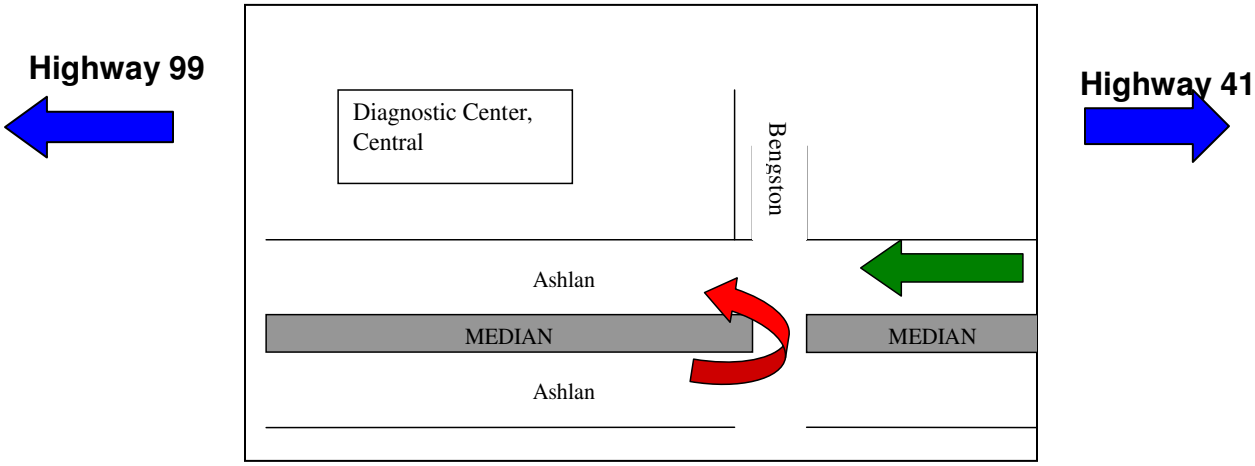
  1. Take Ashlan Avenue Exit
  2. Turn right onto Ashlan
  3. Pass Hughes Avenue (keep in left lane)
  4. Make a "U-turn" at Bengston Avenue
  5. The Diagnostic Center is on the right.

From Highway 41

- **Traveling Southbound**
  1. Exit Ashlan Avenue
  2. Turn right onto Ashlan
  3. Travel past West Avenue
  4. The Diagnostic Center is on the right.

- **Traveling Northbound**
  1. Exit Ashlan Avenue
  2. Turn left onto Ashlan
  3. Travel past West Avenue
  4. The Diagnostic Center on the right.

Ashlan Avenue



DIAGNOSTIC CENTER, CENTRAL CALIFORNIA

Eligibility Criteria for Assessment Services

Students are eligible for Diagnostic Center assessment services if they meet the following criteria:

- Have a current public school Individual Education Program (IEP)
- Are between the ages of 3 and 21 years
- Have been referred by their local school district

Children with learning problems or differences are challenging to assess, plan for and teach. Local districts, having utilized all available resources in attempts to serve a child, may continue to have unanswered questions related to how to best serve a special child. When this is the case, the local educational agency (LEA) may refer the child to the Diagnostic Center for an assessment.

Cost of the Assessment

Assessments at the Diagnostic Center are provided at no charge to parents or the referring school district. Expenses are funded by the California Department of Education.

Overview of Assessment Services

The Diagnostic Center provides a variety of assessment services for special education students residing in Central California. Our assessments are designed to address the individual needs of your child and are planned to answer the diagnostic questions submitted to us within the referral application. Therefore, each student's assessment is unique and different.

Generally, assessments are completed within one to three weekdays. Some students may need the services of only one or two of our specialists, while others may require additional staff expertise in order to complete their assessments.

Assessments are conducted either at the Diagnostic Center (Center-Based), at the school site (Field-Based), or in a combination of both locations. We highly value observations of a child within his/her natural setting. Therefore, observations of the child at school, as well as interviews with educational staff, are completed whenever possible. The diagnostic questions, coupled with the student's learning profile, guide the planning and implementation of the assessment. The Center's Admission and Review Committee will consult with the school district if there are questions about which location will be most helpful. However, the final decision rests with the Diagnostic Center.

Unique Qualities of Diagnostic Center Evaluation

The Diagnostic Center employs a staff of highly-trained and experienced specialists from the fields of education, psychology, speech-language pathology, motor development and pediatric medicine. Our staff frequently works with children with unusual, perplexing and challenging educational needs.

Beyond their areas of specialization, our staff functions as members of a team to provide objective, impartial assessments. They have daily opportunities to consult with one another, and such ongoing communication contributes toward a more complete understanding of your child. With all staff located in one building, we are truly fortunate in that we can utilize each other's expertise, seeking additional information as needed.

ACCOMMODATIONS

You live at a distance from Fresno. What assistance is available?

Lodging

The Diagnostic Center will provide lodging for families residing more than 50 miles from the Center at no cost to parents or the school district. A reservation for one room will be made for the student and up to two adults who will accompany the student to the assessment. **The Piccadilly Inn requires a credit card or $100.00 deposit upon arrival. The deposit will be refunded (charge voided) at the end of your stay if there are no incidental charges. While the Diagnostic Center will cover the cost of the room, all other incidental expenses are the responsibility of the parents or guardians. Therefore, we do not pay for your use of the phone, room service, taxi cabs, in-room movies, etc.**

DCC staff will make reservations for you at the Piccadilly Inn at 2305 W. Shaw in Fresno – www.piccadillyinn.com. The Piccadilly Inn is 4 minutes driving time from the Center and less than 2 ½ miles. Amenities include an outdoor swimming pool, complimentary extensive continental breakfast and free parking. Guest rooms feature coffeemakers, mini-refrigerators, hairdryers, irons, ironing boards and freshly baked cookies upon arrival. You will receive the Inn's postcard with your assessment plan package in the mail.

Lodging is only provided for the student and parent(s) or legal guardian(s) at the Piccadilly Inn. We do not house extended family members, nor cover lodging expenses at another location. Once arrangements have been made, parents are to notify our receptionist of any changes as soon as possible @ 559-243-4047.

Available Meal Reimbursement

- **Commuting Families (residing less than 50 miles from the Center:** Lunch is provided for up to $5.00 per person (student and parents/guardians only). Parents are to submit itemized restaurant receipts to the receptionist each day upon return to the Center after lunch.

- **Families staying at the Piccadilly Inn (residing 50+ miles from the Center):**

  - **Breakfast:** A complimentary continental breakfast is provided at the Inn.
  - **Lunch:** $5.00 per person is provided for lunch (student and parents/guardians only). Parents are to submit itemized restaurant receipts to the receptionist each day upon return to the Center after lunch.
  - **Dinner:** Meal reimbursement rates are available at $10 per person the evening before the initial assessment day, as well as on full days of assessment on days of the assessment. Parents are to submit itemized receipts to the receptionist upon arrival the following day.

NOTE:
We are not able to reimburse you without itemized receipts or for breakfast eaten at another location (i.e., complimentary continental breakfast only).

Should you bring snacks?

Snacks are available at a minimal cost at the Center's General Store located within our building, although bringing them from home will ensure you have family favorites on hand between meals and in the evening. We do not reimburse families for snack purchases.

What if you don't have a car?

If you will need transportation during your stay at the Piccadilly, please notify us as soon as possible. If you were dropped off at the motel, we will transport you to-and-from the Center. Transportation will also be arranged for you to go to lunch and dinner. You will have approximately one hour for each meal and be transported back to the Center or to the hotel. All other travel expenses are not reimbursed by the Diagnostic Center.

What parking arrangements are available?

There is ample parking at no cost at both the Diagnostic Center and the Piccadilly Inn.

When can you check in at the Piccadilly Inn?

You may arrive and check in at the Piccadilly Inn after 2:00 on the day before the assessment begins. If you will arrive after 6:00 PM, please contact the hotel so they will hold your room. You will be required to provide a credit card security deposit of $100 upon arrival. This is not activated (voided) if there is no damage to the room during your occupancy and you have not charged incidental expenses.

When should you check out at the Piccadilly Inn?

Parents should check out of the hotel on the last morning of the assessment, prior to coming to the Center.

What if you want to stay at another hotel?

If you decide to stay at a different hotel, (not the Piccadilly Inn), you will be responsible for lodging expenses. Please notify the Diagnostic Center if you cancel your hotel accommodations.

What do you do when there is a need to cancel hotel reservations?

Parents or Guardians have the responsibility of cancelling any hotel reservations made on their behalf at least 24 hours in advance. The Diagnostic Center will not be responsible for the room rate, tax and service fees if you fail to cancel this reservation.

DIAGNOSTIC CENTER, CENTRAL CALIFORNIA

ASSESSMENT CONDUCTED AT YOUR LOCAL SCHOOL SITE

Our "Field-Based" Assessment Service

After reviewing and accepting your child's referral, the Diagnostic Center staff may decide that our "field-based" assessment program is the most appropriate and efficient way in which to assist your child and the school district. This decision is usually reached when the referral issues are limited in nature and do not require the services of a large number of our specialists.

Since we serve hundreds of school districts, it is impossible for our small staff of specialists to travel to each child's school program for purposes of conducting an assessment of 2-3 days. Therefore, this decision is made only when the following conditions occur:

- A limited number of Diagnostic Center staff are needed for the assessment
- The educational concerns for your child are best addressed within the school setting
- There are no medical issues involved in your child's referral

Decisions regarding the possibility of conducting all or a portion of your child's assessment at his/her local school program are shared with you and the district prior to scheduling the assessment. If this assessment service is offered to your child, you will be notified of the date(s) our staff will be conducting the assessment and what will be involved in the process.

An "Assessment Plan" is mailed to parents with detailed information regarding the assessment and conference. Parents are required to sign and return the Assessment Plan to the Diagnostic Center, prior to the beginning of the evaluation. A copy of this plan is also provided to the referring district.

The results of our assessment and recommendations will be shared with you and your school district in written form. Whenever possible, we may also schedule a conference with you and your local school district to review our findings and recommendations.

ASSESSMENTS CONDUCTED AT THE DIAGNOSTIC CENTER

Overview of our "Center-Based" Assessment Service

After reviewing your child's referral, Diagnostic Center staff may decide that your child's assessment would best be conducted at our Center location. Typically, center-based assessments are conducted when the nature and number of referral issues are sufficient to warrant a larger number of specialists or when the services of our pediatrician are needed. The specific team of specialists involved in the assessment is determined by the areas of assistance you and your school district are requesting and your child's educational profile (needs and strengths).

An "Assessment Plan" is mailed to parents with detailed information regarding the assessment and conference. Parents are required to sign and return the plan to the Diagnostic Center, prior to the beginning of the assessment. A copy of this plan is also provided to the referring district.

How long will the assessment take?

The length of time to complete your child's assessment at the Center is generally 2-3 days. Typically, daily sessions are from 8:30 to 3:00. Occasionally, only one day is needed. All children are unique and are treated as individuals. As a parent, you know that children work at variable rates and require different accommodations, assistance and assessment procedures. Therefore, while we try to approximate how much time your child will need to be at our Center, it is difficult to predict the exact amount of time before the assessment begins.

Who should accompany your child to the Diagnostic Center?

At least one parent or legal guardian is required to accompany each student we assess at the Diagnostic Center. Our assessment will not take place unless we have the commitment of the parent(s) to accompany their child. Depending on your area of residence, students living less that 50 miles from the Diagnostic Center will be asked to commute to the Center on a daily basis. Students living outside a 50-mile radius from the Center will be offered lodging at a nearby hotel at no cost to parents or the school district. Either way, whether you commute or are offered housing, other children are not allowed to accompany the parent(s) and student being tested. The Diagnostic Center is not staffed to provide babysitting services, nor to supervise children. Typically, you will receive at least four weeks notice prior to the assessment, allowing you time to make necessary childcare arrangements.

As parents, you play a critical role in your child's life and educational planning. **Parents observe the majority of the assessment sessions of their children** through our specially designed observation rooms. These observation rooms have two-way mirrors, so you can observe your child without distracting your child or being seen. Our sound system allows you to listen as you watch your child working with our specialists. This is a unique opportunity for most parents and a most valuable opportunity. Also, this experience allows you to become an extension of our assessment team by asking questions and sharing

thoughts/concerns with us as we complete the evaluation. We believe your parental perspective is critical to our understanding of your child's needs.

What can you expect to do upon arrival at the Center?

For security purposes, all parents and visitors must register as they enter and leave the Center. After you sign in, you will be asked to wait in the lobby for a brief period. One of our staff will greet you and conduct a parent orientation. The 10-15 minute orientation will provide an overview of the process and map of the facility to assist you in identifying various locations and activities (i.e., family lounge, assessment rooms, restrooms, posting of assessment schedules, etc.).

The layout of our building is such that visitors frequently become "disoriented." Please feel free to ask anyone in the halls for assistance. We all endeavor to make your visit as pleasant and confusion-free as possible.

What can you expect to observe during your child's assessment?

Your child will participate in a variety of activities, standardized tests and informal procedures – all designed to yield information that will be helpful in answering the specific referral questions. You may observe stylistic differences between our specialists, and a variety of techniques may be used to help your child stay on task and perform at optimal levels, as well as to determine frustration and challenging levels. It is expected that your child's performance may vary with different specialists. Such differences provide important diagnostic information in educational planning. Part of our evaluation is to ascertain the many different ways your child may cope with new situations, respond to frustration or pressure, and solve problems.

In some cases, you may observe your child "playing" or engaging in tasks that do not look like typical testing procedures. You may observe your child performing differently than you had expected. Feel free to discuss any questions or personal observations with any of the specialists working with you and your child. They are available to discuss your observations and contributions toward evaluation findings.

What interactions with assessment team members can you expect?

Assessment team members schedule time for a parent interview. You may be asked to relate information regarding your child's development, family history, medical issues, etc., and to express your major concerns for your child. As stated above, we believe your parental perspective is critical to our understanding of your child's needs.

DIAGNOSTIC CENTER, CENTRAL CALIFORNIA

Fragrance and Chemical Sensitivities

Due to the growing number of individuals that are hypersensitive to everyday chemicals and products, we request that all individuals refrain from using products that may trigger life-threatening allergic reactions. We strive to ensure the comfort and safety of our staff, students, families and visitors by encouraging a fragrance-free environment. Thank you for not wearing perfume, aftershave, scented lotions and/or similar products.

Building Temperature Control

The layout of our facility makes it challenging to heat and cool to everyone's comfort level. Please bring sweaters and jackets, or dress in layers, so that you are prepared to make adjustments for your personal comfort.

Should you bring your child's medications?

Yes! If your child is on a prescribed program of medication at the time of the scheduled assessment, please bring the medication. Continue to give it to your child as prescribed during the evaluation. If a Diagnostic Center pediatrician is assigned to your child's assessment, she will advise you if any changes are necessary for evaluation purposes. Since the Diagnostic Center is an educational agency and not a medical facility, medical tests will not be conducted as part of our assessment.

Please note: The Diagnostic Center cannot provide medication or medical supervision for parents. Please bring any required medication with you.

What will your child's testing schedule look like?

Upon your arrival at the Center, you will be given a written schedule of testing for the entire evaluation. The schedule will identify the times each specialist will work with your child, as well at the assessment room number & color. Photos of each assessor are provided for easy identification. The testing schedule may be revised during the assessment as needed. All revisions will be clearly indicated on a master schedule that is posted in the hallway. The specialists assigned to your child's assessment will alert you to any changes made.

How will you be given the results of your child's assessment?

A Family-School District conference is generally scheduled the week following the Center evaluation to discuss findings and recommendations. Following the conference, a final written report is mailed to parents and district personnel, generally within 4-6 weeks.

FAMILY-SCHOOL DISTRICT CONFERENCE

What is the purpose of the conference?

During the conference, the assessment team members share their findings and recommendations. Participants have the opportunity to ask questions for further clarification as needed. Generally, a draft of the "Assessment Summary" is provided to you and district personnel at the conference. Videoconferencing is available to those traveling extended distances upon request of the district, and depending upon district access to videoconferencing equipment. Frequently, districts will travel to their County Office of Education for the videoconference.

Who is invited to the conference?

Parents attend the conference and may invite others involved with the student at their discretion. School District personnel who are involved with the student or representing the district are invited as well.

Can you record the conference?

Audio-taping the conference is allowed. Advance notification of this intention is appreciated. Videotaping a conference is not allowed in accordance with the policies and procedures of all three Diagnostic Centers.

What if you have questions after the conference?

You may contact any of the individuals involved in your child's assessment at 559-243-4047.

COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT REPORT

What does the report contain?

The completed assessment report contains the team's findings, recommendations, educational resources, test scores, the final Assessment Summary and individual discipline reports, as warranted.

Who receives a copy of the report?

Reports are mailed at the same time to parents, a district representative and your child's special education teacher. Parents are responsible for providing copies of our report to other individuals involved with their child (agency personnel, medical care providers, attorneys, parent advocates, etc.).

When can you expect to receive the final report?

Typically, the report is mailed within 4-6 weeks after the conference.

What if you have questions after reading the report?

The specialists involved in your child's assessment are available for consultation regarding the contents of the report @ 559-243-4047.

After reading the report, what "next steps" are recommended?

Parents and educational teams are encouraged to hold a collaborative meeting after reading the Diagnostic Center Assessment Report. Discussions generally involve the recommendations made which may or may not result in changes to a child's placement, supportive services, instructional program, etc. Changes of this nature are made at the discretion of the child's IEP team, made within an actual IEP meeting, and documented within the IEP. (IEP – Individual Educational Program)

CLIENT EFFECTIVENESS SURVEYS

A Client Effectiveness Survey is mailed with each report, as well as 6 months later. It requests information regarding the impact of the assessment and your satisfaction. The surveys are used as a self-evaluation tool for the Diagnostic Center staff to continue efforts to maintain the high level of quality services we provide. We thank you in advance for completing the survey and hope you find your experience at the Diagnostic Center to be a valuable experience providing information to guide your efforts in the educational planning for your child.