A FREE RESOURCE FOR COUNSELORS & THERAPISTS

Before You Refer Out for ADHD Testing: 5 Questions to Answer First

When a client asks "Do I have ADHD?", these five questions help you decide whether to refer, what to send with the referral, or whether testing could happen in your own practice.

1

What is the label actually for?

Clarify the real question: self-understanding, school or workplace accommodations, a medication conversation, or ruling something out. The purpose shapes what kind of evaluation is needed, and how much.

2

Is there evidence across time and settings?

ADHD is a lifelong pattern, not a hard season. Look for several symptoms present before age 12 and impairment in two or more settings (home, work, school, relationships). Ask for report cards, a parent's or spouse's view, and work history.

3

What else could explain this?

Anxiety, depression, trauma, poor sleep (including sleep apnea), substance use, thyroid or other medical issues, and learning differences can all look like inattention. A good evaluation rules these out, and you probably already know a lot of this history.

4

What would a solid evaluation include?

A clinical interview, standardized rating scales from more than one person, a developmental history, and a written report that explains the "why," not just a score. Subjective and objective evidence together.

5

Is this within your scope, and could it be?

Many licensed counselors can use rating scales and conduct ADHD assessments within their license and training. Check your state's scope of practice and the qualification level each instrument requires. You may be closer to offering this than you think.

> **Free screeners worth knowing:** the ASRS v1.1 (adults) and the SNAP-IV and Vanderbilt scales (children and teens) are free to use from their official sources. A screener is a starting point, never a diagnosis on its own.

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